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The Citizens of Serbia'S Views of Democracy:

Limited Sovereignty as an Essential Restriction of Legitimacy of the Political System ond Development of Democracy

Abstract

This paper deals with the results of a thematic and empirical research of the citizens of Serbia's attitude toward democracy on several levels, with the main conclusion that the views of democracy are not at all unambiguous. Majority acceptance of numerous criticisms of democracy is more widespread than the majority acceptance of democracy as a common value, a system of institutions and set of behavioural patterns, as well as acceptance of general, positive and concrete standpoints on specific aspects of democracy. The ratings on the degree of democratism of functioning of the political system in Serbia as well as the trust in its key institutions are negative, too. Although these findings are mainly expected, there is a surprisingly low percentage of citizens with consistent pro-democratic orientation as well as is suprising the dominant attitude of the public opinion that democracy is impossible when big countries dictate the small ones what to do. Citizens' standpoints on this precondition for the development of democracy have not been analysed so far, and they unambiguously indicate the conviction that the democratic character of the structure and functioning of the political system within a country are strongly limited by the democratic character of the international economic and political relations.

Key words: democracy, political system, legitimacy, public opinion, Serbia.

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Views of Citizens on Democracy in General, and its Respective Elements

There are numerous theoretical discussions on democracy in general, especially in the recent decades on democracy in countries in so-called transitions in general, followed by somewhat less numerous, and yet numerous empirical researches of citizens' attitudes toward democracy. It should represent a solid empirical basis for serious analyses, comparisons and generalisations, however they are greatly limited by the complexity of the content of the concept of democracy, its different determinations in theoretical considerations and different operationalization in empirical studies, the fact that the empirical studies mainly partially covered specific thematic aspects and similar, as well as the fact that the views of people on democracy have many, often contradictory elements, which complicates the interpretation of the research results. One of the latest thematic public opinion researches is the research of CPIJM IDN (The Center for Political Studies and Public Opinion Research of the Institute of Social Sciences) „Democracy in unstable societies: Serbia“ at the end of 2010², the results of which refer to the main conclusion that the attitude of the Serbian citizens toward democracy is generally multilayered and mainly inconsistent, and that their rating of the democratic character of the system in Serbia is very unfavourable.

Firstly, the two-thirds majority of the citizens in Serbia accept democracy in its most general sense – as a value, as a system of institutions and set of behavioural patterns of people, so they view democracy within a general, long time ago established cliché – „regardless of all the shortcomings, democracy is the best form of government as it allows for the participation of citizens in decision making“ (68%). This is the absolute majority standpoint of all the socio-demographic groups members, as well as the members of all parties. Absolutely accepted by the majority is the standpoint that it is important for democracy to „respect all the rights of minorities“ (53%), just as the absolute majority of citizens link democracy with better living conditions and improvement of living standards.

And yet, the position of the Serbian citizens towards democracy is not unambiguous. Namely, from acceptance of general positive views

2 IDN research of the Centre for political studies and public opinion research, carried out in cooperation with the Institute for the Danube region and the Central Europe of the University in Vienna, was carried out from 17 until 30 November 2010 using respective interviews „face-to-face“ on a representative three-phased stratified sample with 1090 randomly selected respondents over 18 years of age.

		Agree	Disagree	Don't know
1.	In democracy everybody talks too much instead of efficiently making and implementing decisions	71,5	7	11,5
2.	There is no democracy whilst powerful countries dictate to small countries what to do	71	12	9
3.	Regardless of all the shortcomings, democracy is the best form of government as it allows citizens to participate in decision making	68	18	14
4.	Democracy is just a screen behind which the rich people hide and pull all strings	56	25	19
5.	It is most important for democracy that the majority respects all the rights of the minority	53	26	21
6.	Without democracy there is no better life or improvement of living standards	53	29	18
7.	Democracy would develop faster if a strong leader were to lead the country	50	32	18
8.	It was better in the time of socialism when there was only one party	42	38	20
9.	Democracy is impossible in poor countries such as is ours	40	45	15
10	It would be better should a strong leader rule instead of the parliament and parties	37	48	17
11	Western democracies should represent the model to all the countries in the world	28	54	17

In/consistency with some statements on democracy (% of the total number of respondents)

of democracy, even more spread is acceptance of general, the same clichéd criticisms of democracy, such as „in democracy everybody talks too much, instead of efficiently making and implementing decisions“ (72%). Or, even with belief of the two-thirds that democracy is the best form of government, the absolute majority of citizens express their

agreement also with the standpoint that democracy is just a screen hiding the real power of the rich (56%)!

When it comes to certain conditions for establishment and development of democracy, the citizens of Serbia express serious reserves towards the whole series of common elements of ideas of democracy. For example, the absolute majority does not accept the standpoint that „Western democracies should represent the role model to all the countries in the world“ (54%). Western democracies as a role model are only unconditionally accepted by LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) members (78%), by the absolute majority of DS and G17 Plus (56%) and relative majority of other parties, mainly those of national minorities. Amongst members of all other parties, as well as abstinees and those undecided whether to vote and for whom to vote, the disagreement is dominant, and it starts from the absolute majority (DSS and NS), the two-thirds (SPS/PUPS/JS and SNS), even the three-quarters (SRS). In the public opinion, a belief prevails that democracy is a pledge for better lives and higher standard (53%), however the public opinion is almost divided in half regarding the issue whether democracy is possible in poor countries (only 45% of them think that it is possible versus 40% of those that think it is impossible).

Especially widespread is the agreement of the citizens of Serbia with the standpoint that „there is no democracy in small countries as long as the powerful countries dictate to them what to do“ (71%). This kind of a viewpoint reflects utterly unequal distribution of economic, political, military and other powers in the world and in principle brings into question the sheer possibility of introducing and implementation of democracy worldwide. However, this attitude explicitly formulated as such has not been the subject of empirical research in Serbia until now.

Taking into consideration serious challenges of economic and political developments that follow the citizens of Serbia from the beginning of transition, the spread of the more radical criticism of democracy is not surprising, which in the end results in almost divided public opinion regarding enouncing preferences towards the political system from the time of socialism or the time of the „transitional capitalism“, preferences towards single-party or multi-party system, the rule of a strong leader or a parliament. Thus for example, there are more citizens (42%) thinking that life was better in the time of socialism when there was only one party, than those (38%) who think that it is better now in the pluralist system, which reveals the reasonably relevant correlation of preferences of socialism, on one hand, and education and age of the re-

spondents, on the other, – the less educated and older the respondents are, the more they prefer socialism. Interconnection of education and preferences of the socialism is getting closer to statistically very important correlation ($C = 0.336$), whereas statistical relevance of interconnection between the age of respondents and their preferences of socialism is somewhat lesser, still however reasonably relevant ($C = 0.290$). The rule of a strong leader instead of a parliament is somewhat weaker (37% agree, having against them 48% of those who disagree), but what is indicative is that the rule of a strong leader in the mid of 1996 was preferred by less citizens (28%) (Mihajlovic 1999: 198) than at the end of 2010. However, no matter the certain deviations, the wish for the rule by a strong leader has been deeply rooted amongst a certain part of the citizens in Serbia, so even half of them think that „even democracy would develop faster should a state be ruled by a strong leader“!

Legitimacy of the System and Trust in Institutions as „Generators“ of the Process of Transition And The Democratisation of Society

Legitimacy of the political system shows support, and agreement of citizens with institutions and the way institutions function in accordance with their expectations, and many determinations of legitimacy refer to the main indicator of the system legitimacy and legitimacy of its institutions being the support, or trust of citizens in the system as a whole and its respective institutions³. Judging by that, systems of almost all countries in transition, even the system and its institutions in Serbia, face deep crisis of legitimacy.

Results of many studies on legitimacy of the political system in Serbia (and Yugoslavia earlier)⁴ refer to the conclusion that the “old” communist system was changed under the pressure made by difficulties of its own functioning, past the desires and expectations of the dominant political actors and people, most often as a consequence of the balance of political powers fighting to stay in power. Therefore, political institutions are not designed according to their original „logic“, the logic of a guarantor of the democratic structure of a state and development of a society, and of the rights of citizens to take part in decision making, but they are designed and function as instruments to keep parties in power: they are introduced, modified and cancelled in accordance with the needs of the political government and politics. Even the new

³ See for example, Easton, D. (1965), Lipset S. (1969), Tadić, Lj. (1988).

⁴ For example, Mihailović, S. (ed.) (1997), Slavujević, Z., Mihailović, S. (1999), Slavujević, Z. (2010).

Constitution of Serbia adopted at the end of 2006, based on the wide consensus of almost all the parties in the parliament and after it had been confirmed by the referendum, did not bring the establishment of the institutional design which, in addition to undisputed legality, enjoys full legitimacy. It turned out that the praised consensus of the relevant actors was not built on the logic of spreading the possibility to express the complexity of the interest structure of society, to channel and efficiently solve conflicts, through the institutions of a political system. On the contrary, it was built on an unprincipled compromise of the partocracy to preserve its own positions. Some institutional solutions that initially had a democratic potential were not applied, while other were changed quickly. Finally, today the demands from majority of political parties that only few years ago praised the Constitution and voted for it, are more and more frequent to urgently change it! All in all, even the redesigned institutional arrangement is not able to make the integrative function and mobilise the support of citizens. According to the public opinion research results, the system in Serbia is facing deep crises of legitimacy after 2006 as well. It is also confirmed by the results of the research from mid November 2010 on a whole set of indicators, with two key indicators being highlighted here: first – the evaluation of democratism of the political system in Serbia, and second – the trust in the system institutions in Serbia.

Democratism of the political system in Serbia – The system in Serbia is democratic only to every sixth citizen (17%), non-democratic to the same number (18%), while the absolute majority considers it „mixed“, or both democratic and non-democratic (53%), with 11% of those who cannot say. Correlations between ratings of democratism of the system in Serbia and socio-demographic features of the respondents are not relevant, however correlation with party preferences ($C = 0.420$). The system is deemed democratic mainly by the members of the strongest ruling party (45% of DS supporters, although a bit more of them deem it mixed – 48%), most supporters of other parties, abstinees, and the undecided consider it mixed (from 77% of G17 Plus supporters and 73% of LDP supporters to 47% of SNS supporters), while it has been evaluated non-democratic most often amongst the opposition parties supporters SRS (45%) and SNS (34%). Such evaluations of the system do not represent a progress compared to the time of S. Milosevic. In the mid 1996, almost fifteen years ago, almost the same number of respondents (16%) considered the system in Serbia democratic, and a bit more than today non-democratic (23%) (Mihailovic 1997 : 158). It could be useful to remind that it is about citizens' ratings of the system and not its real structure and way of functioning, it is about evaluations

that are based on the more developed criteria for evaluation on democracy, however results as such are always warning.

Trust in the system institutions – An average trust in institutions on scale from 1 to 5 does not even reach the average value of 3 which indicates an ambivalent ratio, but it is between answers „there is mostly no trust“ and „there is and there is no trust“.

General average		2,68
I	Average for state order institutions (Serbian Armed Forces, police and judicial system)	2,98
II	Average for civil society institutions (religious organizations, media, unions, employer associations, NGO)	2,66
III	Average for political institutions (President of Serbia, government, parliament and political parties)	2,49
1.	Serbian Armed Forces	3,30
2.	Police	3,18
3.	Religious organizations	3,12
4.	Media	3,02
5.	President of Serbia	3,00
6.	Unions	2,49
7.	Government	2,48
8.	Judicial system	2,46
9.	Parliament	2,38
10.	Employer associations	2,35
11.	NGO	2,34
12.	Political parties	2,11

Ranking of institutions according to distrust/trust of citizens⁵

⁵ The rank was made based on the average value obtained by pondering of answers "Have high trust" with 5, "Mainly have trust" with 4, "Undetermined, dont know" with 3, "Mainly do not have trust" with 2 and "Have no trust at all" with 1, followed by dividing the score with the total number of answers.

Ranking of institutions according to the positive/negative opinions⁶ shows similar picture.

Institution		Trust	Distrust
1.	Armed forces	55	26
2.	Police	52	32
3-4.	Religious organizations	46	33
3-4.	Media	46	33
5.	President of Serbia	46	37
6.	Government	25	55
7.	Judicial system	24	56
8.	Parliament	23	58
9.	Unions	19	47
10.	NGO	16	52
11.	Businessmen associations	12	51
12.	Political parties	12	68

Ranking of institutions according to trust, or distrust of citizens (% of the total number of respondents)

Only two institutions – army and police, both institutions of order, enjoy absolute majority, and three institutions – religious organizations, media and the president of Serbia relative majority of trust of citizens. Other 7 institutions, including all the political institutions (except for the president of Serbia) face the absolute majority distrust. Trust toward institutions is in a strong correlation with party preferences of respondents (contingency coefficient ranges between the high 0.497 in the case of the president of the Republic to 0.303 in the case of judicial system), while the interconnection of other socio-democratic features and trust in institutions is not relevant.

The extent of citizens' distrust toward political institutions from this research is worrying, but this information is a bit more favourable compared to the results of a research conducted by CESID in mid 2010,

⁶ Positive opinions is the sum of the answers „Have high trust“ and „Mainly have trust“, negative opinions is the sum of the answers „Mostly no trust“ and „No trust at all“, and undetermined is the sum of the answers „There is and there i no trust“ and „Dont know“, and these answers make up the difference to 100%.

two months earlier. The general average of trust toward institutions has not significantly changed, however the changes have been noted in the shown dis/trust toward certain political institutions – according to the results of the CESID research, trust toward the president of the Republic was lesser for the whole of 18%, toward the parliament for 9%, and the government for 5%⁷. It is about differences which overcome the standard sample error, therefore assuming that both field researches were correctly conducted, the more favourable evaluations of the political institutions could be of a situational nature – part of an explanation for these differences could be found in some political developments that took place during those two months between the two studies, although their impact could not have been unambiguous either.⁸ Still, having in mind a general diffuse dissatisfaction with the situation in the society and the republican rule during the IDN research in November (71% of respondents), dissatisfaction with the future prospects (72%), with personal financial situation (76%) etc. as well as the worsening of economic and social situation at the end of 2010, in relation with the certain increase of trust towards political institutions from September to November 2010, are a dilemma. This especially because the vast majority attributed the responsibility for the situation in the society to the actual authorities (72%), far less than the global economic crisis and pressures from the EU and USA (6%, and 5% respectively). Therefore this certain increase in trust could be interpreted more like an unexpected conjunction oscillation rather than the turnover of a longer term trend of decrease in trust towards institutions and delegitimisation of the system.

7 More on the results of CESID research in: Slavujević, Z. (2010) „Institucije političkog sistema – umesto simboličkog izraza prava građana da vladaju, sredstvo vladavine nad građanima“. In: grupa autora, *Kako građani Srbije vide tranziciju – Istrazivanje javnog mnjenja tranzicije*. Beograd: FES, CSSD, CeSID, pp. 59-70.

8 From mid September to mid November 2010 the following developments could have lead to differences in evaluations of the president of Serbia and other political institutions: The Council of Europe forwarded Serbias application for the EU membership to the Commission for accession, which came across a strong media publicity, although the authorities still hid the letter with EU objections on the reform of justice system; support given by the authorities with regard to "The Pride parade" and the events taking place around the „Parade“ could have had a strong, but also controversial effect on public opinion; bringing the Declaration of the parliament on condemning the crimes against Serbs could also have had controversial consequences, however forming multiethnic local authorities in Bujanovac municipality could have had positive impact; recommendation to Serbs not to participate at the elections in Kosovo and Metohija came across mainly positive response in Serbia; positive impact on part of supporters of the ruling parties, electoral undetermination and absences could have had preparations for holding the Election assembly of DS and panegyrics of B. Tadic, the partys only candidate for president, as a head leader in the region, or intensive campaign of DS „from door to door“ in Vojvodina etc.

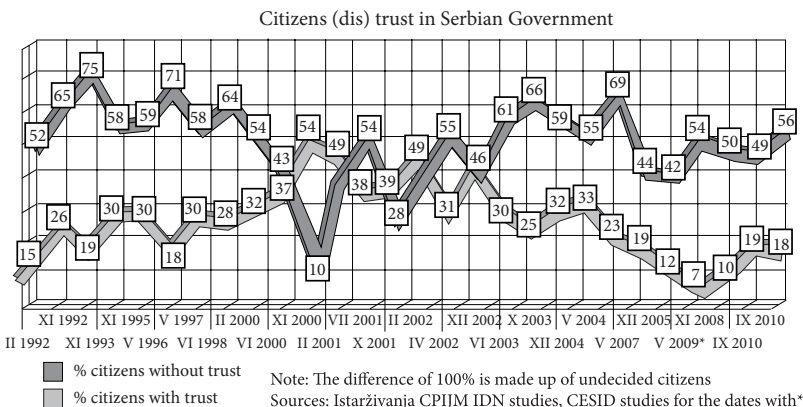
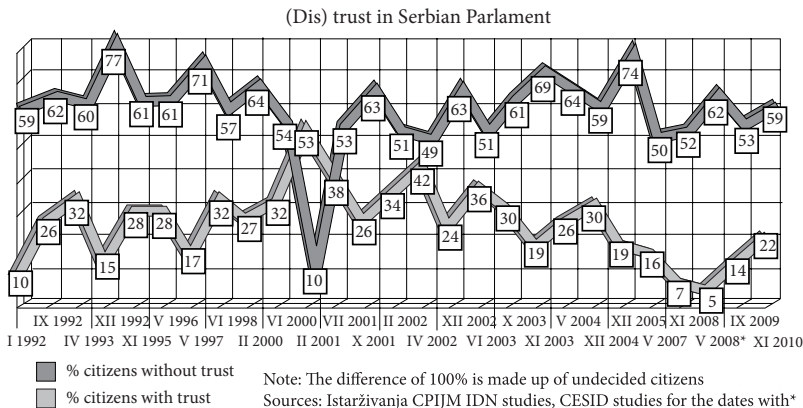
During the ten years of roaming through transition the „democratic“ authority struggled between the demands posed by the so-called international community on the path of European integrations and harsh economic situation, pressures from monopolists and tycoons, as well as the open social dissatisfaction of citizens belonging to wide range of social levels⁹. But, although the so-called disciplinary function of crisis has been recognized in the world on many occasions, it has also been recognized that deep and wide dissatisfaction can unannouncedly take devastating forms as far as material goods, institutions, and state order, as well as the eminent personal proponents are concerned.

When it comes to distrust/trust of citizens toward certain institutions, the institution of the president of the Republic has been, from the beginning of multi-party system, facing lower or higher deficit of legitimacy, so it has always been disputable whether this institution has the capacity, regardless of how hard the proponents of such function tried, to be the real inspirator, initiator and guarantor of a successful transition. After all, according to the results of IDN research from November 2010, trust towards the president of the Republic is only just prevailing over distrust (46% : 37%). Besides, the distribution of trust and distrust towards the institution of the president of the Republic has

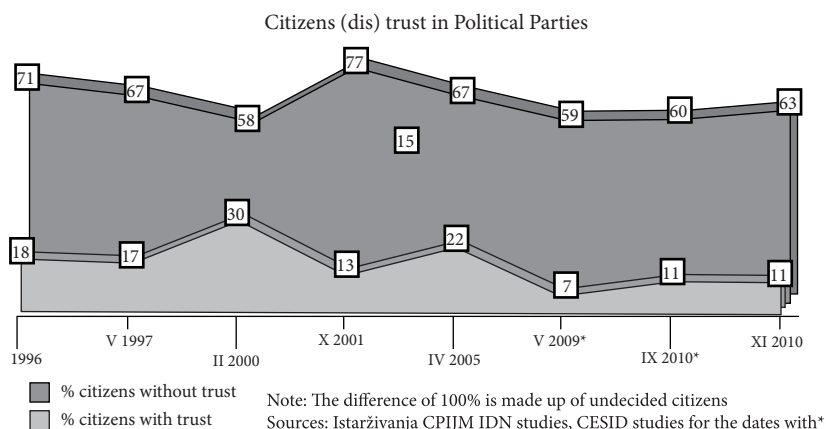
9 This wandering has many forms of appearance: handling the regulations in the time of Z.Djindjic due to constitutional and legal framework inherited from the time of S. Milosevic; suspicious privatisations and numerous corruption affairs without any political will to question at least the most drastic cases pointed out by the controlling bodies; announcement of Kosovo's independence, perking up with the politics of „Both Europe and Kosovo“ and its own proposal of UN Resolution on Kosovo, and then taking side of the EU dictatorship and submitting significantly changed „joint“ proposal; passing anti-constitutional laws; passing many laws by use of emergency proceedings and their even more urgent changing; radical changes to the government draft bills by means of amendments of the government itself or by members of the ruling majority at the parliament assembly; an attempt to discipline the media by passing the Public Information Law with draconic financial penalties even with the EU warnings, and then changing it only after repeated warnings; the judicial reform and general election of judges which came across criticisms by expert public from the beginning, to have its revision promised only after the determined intervention by the EU; contradictory announcements of changes to the tax system, adoption of decisions that the minister of finance, by her own words, could not recognise; public announcement of free legalisation of illegally built facilities, and then giving up on it after the pressure from the EU; confusion in the public regarding non/presence of the Serbian representatives at the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony in 2010; scandal with the sale of NIS to the Russian Gazpromneft without tendering process, in direct sale below cost, stopping monopoly on fuel importation, but also introducing double excise duties by law, and privileged excise duties for domestic fuel, and changes to the law under the EU pressure due to violation of equality of all the subjects on the market, whereas the Government hid the changed annex to the contract on sale of NIS to the Russians, in which it obliged itself to provide this company with better position on the market by 2012, a symbolic increase of salaries in the public sector and pensions that the inflation overcame several times even before the first increased payments etc.

been strongly connected with party preferences ($C = 0.497$). The whole of 94% of DS supporters, 88% of G17 Plus supporters or half of LDP supporters express their support to the president of the Republic, but supporters of opposition parties express majority of distrust towards him, as well as abstinees and those that are partywise undetermined. Hence, the president could not even consider to be the „president of all the supporters of the ruling coalition parties“ as more than half of SPS, JS or SPO supporters do not express trust toward him, so a stereotype of „the president of all citizens“ used by the media in such a way is unfounded.

It is no consolation that the institution of the president of the Republic is rating somewhat beter than other political institutions, because all of them all the time, including the time of this research, are illegitimate: only every fourth citizen trusts in the government, and every fifth trusts in the parliament!



Further on, political parties represent actors that, according to the election results, constitute state bodies, provide personnel for state functions, „feed“ institutions with initiatives to regulate relations in a society in a certain way and the like. In one word, the state rests upon activities of parties that, with the help of the state, establish very certain allocation of resources in the society, so if every eighth citizen trusts in parties, if distrust towards them is almost six times more expressed than the trust, if rating of these political institutions is hopelessly low throughout the entire existence of the multiparty system, what kind of foundations does the state rest upon?



An unfavourable picture is completed by unfavourable data of dis/trust of citizens in the civil society institutions that are normatively important for the civil society concept and modern democratic state functioning, by union data, employer association data, NGO data. All this refers to the conclusions that low integrative potential of political institutions, causing the low capacity of political institutions as inspirators, initiators, spokespersons, promoters and implementors of reforms in society, and above all mobilising forces of numerous social actors. That is why it is difficult to more precisely identify a political institution that used to be and could be in the future the so-called institution-locomotion, a sort of a generator of wider consensus in designing changes and general guarantor of their implementation. Institutions of state order (for example armed forces or police) or some of the traditional institutions of civil society (such as the church) obviously can't be the generators of transition processes, only their supporting pillars. It is quite uncertain whether the institution of the president of the Republic is the institution that more or less can be the so-called institution-locomotion.

tion, although it is mostly mentioned as the institution of the highest trust (16% of respondents). Nevertheless, diffusion of the view of the state president as the institution of the highest trust is in a very significant correlation with the party orientation of respondents ($C = 0.594$), so a certain dichotomy is established in which the absolute majority of election supporters of DS or the relative majority of G17 Plus supporters most often mention this institution as the institution of the highest trust, while supporters of other parties of the ruling coalition, opposition parties, abstinees and electorally undetermined express their highest trust in the Armed Forces of Serbia or church, or have no trust in any institution. In other words, although the institution of the president of the Republic comes first as the institution of the highest trust, due to the strong party conditionality of distribution of dis/trust in it, it is obvious that it does not figure as an integrative institution, therefore its potentials like the potential of the so-called institution-locomotive of the transitional and democratic changes are very limited.

Political and Social Activism as the Path Toward Including the Citizens of Serbia in the Decision Making Processes

When expressing their opinions regarding obstacles on the way to the more successful solutions of the problems in society or local communities, respondents rarely mention political passiveness of citizens (less than 1% in the first and 5% in the second choice). Statements of some respondents that a great number of citizens has experience with various forms of political and social employment confirm that citizens are entirely passive.

Expectedly, more than three quarters of citizens attended the polling stations and voted, having in mind that around 3-4% of the 17% who did not participate at the elections are persons who only after the elections in 2008 reached the age of adulthood and got the right to vote. Of course, these data do not tell of the frequency of practising certain forms of activism, but whether the respondents, generally speaking, ever participated and have any experience with them. According to the statements of the respondents, at the latest parliamentary elections on 11 May 2008, 25% of them did not vote, including 18% of those who answered that they don't remember or didn't want to answer this question, and 3-4% of those who did not have the right to vote, we get approximately exact voting turnout (61%). Otherwise, as reasons for not voting the respondents most often mention dissatisfaction with all parties as they only fight for the power (6%), disinterest for politics

Forms of activism	Practiced	Not practised
1. Voting at elections	83	17
2. Activities in the local communities	50	50
3. Political gatherings, meetings, tribunals	45	55
4. Discussions on politics and convincing others	32	68
5. Union or employer association membership	29	71
6. Participation in demonstrations, protests, blockades	29	71
7. Party membership	21	79
8. Letters to media and authorities	15	85
9. School board membership	14	86
10. Financial contributions to parties	11	89
11. NGO activity	7	93

and being unable to vote due to objective reasons (5% each). The data obtained on practising other forms of activism as well, are quite favourable. First of all and quite unexpected, the information that half of the citizens participated at voluntary activities in their places of residence is very favourable, or that almost the same amount of them (45%) attended political gatherings, party meetings and conventions, tribunals and alike. Even bigger surprise is the finding that every fifth citizen is a member of a political party. This, according to the Western standards massive membership in political parties, can as far we are concerned be interpreted not only as a recidive of socialisation in the times of socialism, the times of massive political organisations, but as an experience gained in the recent times – membership in a party is very often rewarded with various privileges – from getting employed, thought quick professional and social promotion, to other material benefits. Quite high percentage of those who participated in demonstrations, street

protests, sieging facilities, blockading roads, strikes etc. is not unexpected (29%), considering turbulent developments since the multiparty system has been introduced, especially great dissatisfaction of citizens all the time with suspicious privatisations, harsh economic situation, low standard and alike. Even with all that, relatively high percentage of those who are union or employer associations members is unexpected (29%). On the other side, it is quite a surprise that only every third citizen had discussions on politics and convinced other people in correctness of his/her certain political views, to vote for a certain political option and alike, taking into consideration the widespread impression that politics deal with us on daily basis and therefore it is the unavoidable subject of conversation in almost every place and every occasion. Writing letters to state and party authorities and media (15%), as well as donating financial contributions to political parties (11%) as a form of political activism are not popular, even though it can be rated that there is a relatively high percentage of those who were engaged with school board activities (14%)! Finally, a very low number of those who were engaged with NGO activities (7%) confirm that these organisations still have not found their place in the society.

Readiness to practice certain forms of political and social engagements in the future is somewhat higher than their practicing so far. Hence, for example, only 5% of the total number of respondents do not express readiness anymore to engage with activities in their places of residence, however half of those who have not practiced this form of activity are willing to activate (25% of the total number of respondents). Or, 9% of respondents – members of unions and employer associations plan to drop the membership, but 14% of the total number of respondents – those who have not been members so far are willing to join the membership. Even more expressed is the readiness to engage with NGO activities (in contrast to 1% of those who are dissatisfied with this form of engagement 15% of those who have not been engaged so far are willing to get activated), especially in school boards (instead of 3% of the dissatisfied, the willingness to engage is expressed by 29% being passive so far). Such an expression of willingness, however, can be attributed in good part to giving socially favourable answers. Otherwise, practicing certain forms of activism and willingness to their practicing so far is not in a statistically significant correlation with the basic socio-demographic features of respondents, except for there is a moderate correlation between voting at elections and age – the youngest category from 18 to 29 years of age voted below 50 %, while with the increase of age the percentage of voters increased as well ($C = 0.362$). Practicing various forms of activism, however, is in a more moderate

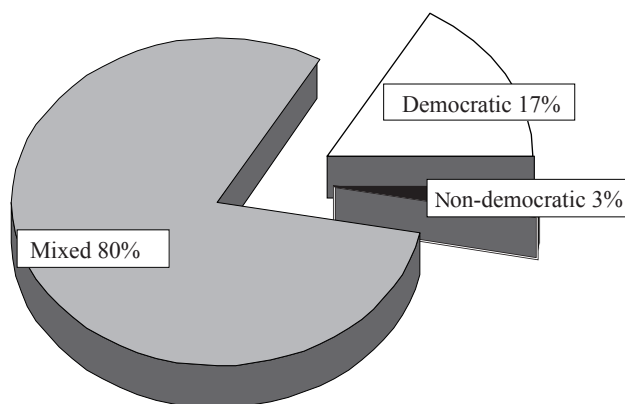
correlation with the election orientation – more active and willing to be engaged are respondents with the shaped election orientation compared to abstinees and undecided voters. And, quite expectedly, very significant is also a correlation between election preferences and two special forms of activism – voting at elections ($C = 0.638$) and membership in political parties ($C = 0.458$).

All in all, when index of proactive and passive orientation¹⁰ is made up, a very unfavourable picture is shown: a half of it are passive (51%), a third are undecided whether to activate or not (34%), while only every seventh falls into a proactive (14%) population. Some sort of consolation could be the fact that this index equilibrises all forms of activism, although significance of each one of them respectively is not equal.

A few final statements in the end. Citizens of Serbia attitude toward democracy is extremely ambivalent. Option for democracy as the best form of government, regardless of all the shortcomings, as well as acceptance of some elements of the general notion on democracy, such as inclusion of citizens in decision-making processes, protection of minority rights or connection between democracy and better living conditions, show acceptance of democracy at a normative level. However, at a level of rating the preconditions for the development of democracy and what has been achieved in the development of democracy, negative views prevail. Banal is a statement that such views represent the expression of disapproval because of many bad experiences from the practice so far, whether on a international, or internal political level. Far more important is an implication that such a longterm expression of unfavourable attitude of the citizens of Serbia toward a number of concrete aspects of democracy establishes a credible basis for principled dispute of democracy as a system. This is pointed at by a summary showing that a half of the inactive citizens, and citizens who do not even think of getting employed, to what extent a confusion amongst the citizens of Serbia is present regarding pro-democratic, or non-democratic orientation, is illustrated by the structure of the citizens of Serbia based on the index of non/democratic orientation¹¹:

10 Index was come up by recoding the answers on 11 questions of practicing so far and willingness to practice in future all forms of activism, as well as answers to the question of voting at the last elections and the question of intention to vote in the upcoming parliamentary elections (the score within range of 13 to 49), the citizens of Serbia are classified into proactive (from 13 to 24), undecided in terms of willingness to practice certain forms of social and political arrangements (from 25 to 37) and passive (38 to 49).

11 Index was come up by recoding the answers (1 – pro-democratic orientation; 2 – ambivalent and 3 – non-democratic orientation) to 29 questions that looked for the views of respondents on certain elements of democracy, ratings regarding its development and functioning, as well as expression of willingness for certain forms of political engagements.



Regardless of all the problems with the system and functioning of institutions, it would be simplified to say that, in the case of Serbia, it is about some „corrupt“ politicians who can hardly wait for the opportunity to deceive their „good“ citizens. Their existence and multiplication is very much served by a tough „resistance of material“, a number of hard, structural factors – a backward and dead economy, growing unemployment, *over-indebtedness* of the state, lack of investments for starting the economic process, unfinished insitutionalised arrangement, unsuitable political, economic and social ambient, incomplete modern regulatory patterns of governing the economy and society, establishment of speculative rather than entrepreneurial mentality, the prevailing psychology of hopelessness in which demagogues profit. It is followed by extremely unfavourable impact of the international environment, constant and unprincipled conditioning of the authorities in Serbia by the most powerful members of the international community, even straightforward blackmailing, which produce strong internal tensions. The entire international community is organised to function on the basis of multiplication, even on the increase of economic, technology, communication, military and political inequality. Organised as such, it justifies its military interventions and bombardments thoguhtout the globe also with the supposed care to establish „democratic orders“, to „protect the human rights“, to „prevent humanitarian catastrofies“ and alike. However, the most powerful countries acting under the mask of

Respective scores (from mininum 29 to maximum 87) are classified in three fields of the same range, or the respondents are classified in the field of democratic orientatione (from 29 to 48 points), in the filed of ambivalent attitude toward democracy (from 49 to 68 points) and in the field of non-democratic orientation (from 69 to 87 points).

the international community in fact and conceptually destroy the possibility of establishment and functioning of democracy not only at the international level, but also at the internal level of the weaker states, and then democracy in general, democracy as a value, as a system of institutions and a set of patterns for behaviour of institutions and people. In that regard, the citizens of Serbia have no illusions: development of democracy is not possible in unequal and non-democratic international relations, nor could the so-called developed democracies of the West be the role model for others. Anyway, what to think at all about the „sovereignty“ of the state of Serbia and „democracy“ in Serbia when the EU determines the state borders and designs the laws, Hungary regulates the issues of restitutions, Turkey resolves religious disputes, Russia leads energy and party politics...

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