

Most importantly, it includes those actions that led to the persecution and conviction of Thaksin. In an ABAC poll conducted in mid-August 2011, 53 per cent of respondents expressed concern that amending the Constitution could result in more conflict and violence (Bangkok Post, 2011e).

Relations with the military will be another important factor influencing how long Yingluck stays. After all, it was the military that, along with Thailand's courts, brought down her brother's backed government in 2006 via a coup. Rumours suggest that Pheu Thai have struck a deal with the military (Crispin, 2011); however, these rumours have yet to be substantiated. Defense Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha has reassured the public that the army will not intervene in politics (Sullivan, 2011). Though history suggests scepticism on that front, some analysts suggest times may genuinely have changed.

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The parliamentary elections in Croatia, December 2011

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1. Background

The parliamentary elections on 4 December 2011 were held on schedule at the end of a full parliamentary term. However, political events during that four-year term were anything but 'business as usual'. Prime Minister Ivo Sanader,

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who won the 2007 elections, resigned in the middle of his term without reasonable explanation (Even today, it is still not clear what was the main reason for his resignation.) After resigning, he appointed his deputy, Jadranka Kosor, as prime minister.¹ Kosor had been a very faithful ally of Sanader, and her phrase “where Ivo [Sanader] is going I am going too” (“kud Ivo tu i ja”) was frequently quoted in the media. Yet she eventually expelled him from the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) on January 2010. Finally, Sanader was arrested because of corruption charges. Several other ministers from the ruling party were also arrested and indicted for corruption.

2. Electoral system

According to the Article 71 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the number of seats in the unicameral Croatian parliament (Hrvatski sabor) may vary between 100 and 160. Members serve four-year terms. All Croatian citizens older than 18 years are eligible to vote. The 2003 electoral law (“*Narodne novine*” (OJ) 69/03) instituted a ‘closed list’ system of proportional representation for parliamentary elections. Within Croatia, MPs are elected from ten electoral districts, with each district electing fourteen representatives from party lists or independent lists. A 5% threshold is applied to all electoral districts. Seat allocation within a district is calculated using the d’Hondt method.

Croatian nationals residing outside the country vote in a single, separate constituency (diaspora vote) and they have three representatives,² with seats again distributed using the d’Hondt method. National minorities vote in a twelfth constituency but based on a plurality system. Electoral law allocates eight seats in total to national minorities: three to the Serbian national minority and five for other minorities.

3. Parties and coalitions

Altogether 313 parties, coalitions and lists of candidates ran in these elections (Večernji list, 2011). However, in the end, only eight of these won mandates in the parliament (Table 1). The main coalitions and parties were the following. HDZ formed a coalition with two minor parties, the Citizen’s Party (GS) and Democratic Center (DC). Four parties – the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Peoples Party-Liberal Democrats (HNS), the Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS) and the Croatian Party of Pensioners (HSU) – formed the so-called “Kukuriku” coalition.³ Since all of these parties ran independently in the 2007 elections, this was an entirely new alliance. The Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) ran in coalition with Green Party (ZS) and the Party of Pensioners (SP). Dr. Ante Starčević’s Croatian Party of Rights ran together

with the Croatian Pure Party of Rights (HČSP). Four further parties – the Croatian Labourists, the Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja (HDSSB), the Croatian Social-Liberal Party (HSLS), and the Croatian Party of Rights – ran alone.⁴ Finally, the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS) competed in the twelfth (national minorities) electoral district.

4. Electoral campaign

The formal campaign period started on November 17 and lasted for just sixteen days. However, all the main parties and coalition had started to present their programmes and candidates much earlier. Symbolically, HDZ launched its official campaign from the house where the party’s first president and the first President of the Republic of Croatia was born. Furthermore, Tudman’s son was also one of HDZ’s candidates for the parliament. With this, HDZ wanted to stress continuity with his father’s policies. The party’s slogan for the elections was “We are the best when the situation is the most difficult”. Since early polls showed the Kukuriku coalition was leading by a wide margin,⁵ HDZ campaigned very aggressively in trying to close this gap. They claimed that the Kukuriku coalition – led by SDP, successor party of the former Union of the Communist of Croatia (SKH) – wanted the reunification of the former Yugoslavia and the establishment of “red Croatia”. Kukuriku’s leaders were also charged with a lack of patriotism and there were even claims that the coalition might reopen concentration camps (“Goli otok”) for its opponents. Even though all of these claims were groundless, they served to mobilize right-wing voters. Furthermore, HDZ stressed its main success: completion of negotiations for entry into the European Union.⁶ The party also asserted its anti-corruption credentials, noting that during its term in office even former ministers (including Prime Minister Sanader) were indicted for corruption.

For its part, the Kukuriku coalition pointed out that HDZ could claim little credit for campaigning against corruption because almost all of the indicted people were members of that party. The coalition’s other main line of attack was to accuse HDZ of having pursued very unsuccessful economic policies. During the Kosor premiership, Croatian economy contracted, on average, by 2.2% a year (Eurostat, 2011).

On 27 October, the state attorney officially announced that HDZ is under investigation over secret funds from which party financed its previous electoral campaigns. This announcement was probably the fatal blow for HDZ, after which the party stood virtually no chance of winning the elections. That is one reason why the pre-campaign was much more interesting than the formal campaign. Another

¹ Formally, it was the parliament (Sabor) that elected Kosor as prime minister on 6th July 2009 but, in reality, no one in HDZ dared to challenge Sanader’s decision.

² In the 2007 elections the diaspora had five mandates in the parliament. However, electoral law was changed in 2010 to reduce this quota (see *Narodne Novine* (OJ) 145/10).

³ This somewhat facetious name *Kukuriku*, meaning ‘cock-a-doodle-doo’, was taken from a restaurant of the same name where this coalition first convened in July 2009. The nickname became well known and eventually became the coalition’s official name.

⁴ The “right(s)” in the party’s name refer to the legal and moral reasons that justify the independence and autonomy of Croatia. Croatia has several “parties of rights” (with different acronyms). They all have very similar programs and the main difference among them is in style of their leaders (see page 5). However, their leaders – due to personal animosities – have not been able to make a coalition of these parties.

⁵ According to “Cro demoskop” “Kukuriku” coalition was supported by 36.7% of voters and HDZ by 19% of voters (Večernji list, 5 October 2011).

⁶ Croatia should become the 28th member of the EU on July 1, 2013.

Table 1

Results of the Croatian parliamentary election, 4 December 2011.

Parties	Valid votes	Valid votes (%)	Seats	Seat change since 2007
Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP) + Croatian Peoples Party-Liberal Democrats (HNS) + Croatian Party of Pensioners (HSU) + Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS)	959,828	40.0	81	+17
Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) + Citizens Party (GS) + Democratic Center (DC)	563,215	23.5	47	–19
Croatian Labourists – Labour Party	121,785	5.1	6	+6
Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia & Baranja (HDSSB)	68,995	2.9	6	+3
Independent list Ivan Grubišić	66,266	2.8	2	+2
Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) + Green Party (ZS) + Party of Pensioners (SP)	71,450	3.0	1	–5
Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević + Croatian Pure Party of Rights (HČSP)	66,150	2.8	1	+1
Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS)	48,773	2.0	3	0
Other national minorities ^a (winners)	7999	0.3	4	0
Other parties and candidates	423,199	17.6	0	–3
Total valid votes	2,397,660	100.0	151	–2
Null votes	42,094			
Total votes cast	2,439,754			
Total electorate/turnout	4,504,251	54.2		

Sources: Antić and Dodić-Gručić (2008); Election Commission of the Republic of Croatia ([http://www.izbori.hr/izbori/dip_ws.nsf/0/2DF9D413BA2DA73BC125796500586759/\\$File/konacni_sluzbeni_rezultati_2011.pdf](http://www.izbori.hr/izbori/dip_ws.nsf/0/2DF9D413BA2DA73BC125796500586759/$File/konacni_sluzbeni_rezultati_2011.pdf)).

^a Since a representative of the Czech and Slovak national minority was a candidate of the SDP-led coalition, his result is included in numbers for this coalition.

is an illogical electoral rule that treats the main parties no differently from those which do not have any chance in the elections. As a result, the official campaign is dominated by contenders who use their allocated airtime largely for self-promotion.

5. Results

The clear winner of the elections was the Kukuriku coalition (Table 1). It will have a stable majority (81 out of 151 representatives) in parliament. Interestingly, the parties within this coalition received 124,660 fewer votes than in the 2007 election yet won 14 more mandates. The main reason for this disjuncture is the coalition's capacity to pass the threshold across the country. This time HNS and HSU did not miss out completely in those districts where they had not passed the threshold in the 2007 elections.⁷ In other words, the coalition served as more than the sum of its four parties.

The main loser in the election was HDZ, the party being left with 44 mandates, 22 fewer than after the 2007 elections. It won 41 mandates in Croatia and all three mandates from the diaspora. HDZ's small coalition partners won just three seats and thus were unable to contribute much to the overall showing of the coalition. Other significant losers in 2011 were HSS, HSLS and HSP, the former losing all but one of its six seats while the latter two lost parliamentary representation altogether. HSS and HSLS had been in coalition with HDZ and look to have been punished for it.⁸

The biggest surprise in the elections was the result for the Labour Party, which won five per cent of the votes and six seats on its electoral debut. Obviously the party's leader, Dragutin Lesar, was successful in presenting himself as a defender of workers' rights. Another surprise was the

success of the independent list of Ivan Grubišić, a retired priest. Grubišić was very active in civil society and did not hesitate to criticize even the official policy of the Catholic Church. As a result, he gained a reputation for honesty and this image resonated well among voters. A third significant gainer in the election was HDSSB, which increased its number of representatives from three to six. During the last four years, HDSSB criticized HDZ very strongly (sometimes even impolitely) in the parliament and this obviously proved popular among the voters, as did the party's performance in local governments in Slavonia. The Croatian Party of Rights-dr Ante Starčević also gained a seat in the parliament, mainly because of the popularity of its leader, Ruža Tomašić. This former police officer in Canada gained popularity when she initiated the prosecution of drug dealers in southern Croatia.

The winning coalition received most votes in 21 of the 22 biggest cities (HINA). This result highlights the contrast between urban areas (which vote for leftist parties) and the rural population (which votes for right-wing parties). These elections also showed up regional divisions. The Kukuriku coalition won in eight out of ten electoral districts, and especially decisively in the western parts of the country, but HDZ won in the East and South districts as well as in the Diaspora district.

The latter outcome should be qualified by noting the extremely low turnout among the diaspora, only 5% of whom participated in the elections. This raises questions about the usefulness of staging elections for the diaspora, as does the curious paradox that Croatia is probably the only country in the world with more voters than citizens.⁹ The great majority of diaspora are citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they are able to elect members – including those representing Croats within that state – to all levels of government. It is therefore questionable whether they should also be entitled to participate in

⁷ See Antić and Dodić-Gručić (2008).

⁸ HSLS left the coalition with HDZ in July 2010 but this was evidently too late to regain trust among voters.

⁹ According to the official census of population, Croatia has 4,290,612 citizens (Croatstat, 2011). For the number of voters see Table 1.

Croatian elections. The mass abstention among the diaspora dragged the overall turnout rate down to 54%. However, in the ten “regular” districts within Croatia (i.e. excluding the national minorities as well as the diaspora), turnout was a more respectable 62%.

Due this time to the electoral law rather than to low turnout, those elected from the national minorities district were also returned on much lower vote counts than those elected elsewhere in Croatia. Aside from the Serbian group, representatives of the other national minorities needed, on average, fewer than 2000 votes to get a parliamentary seat. In contrast, HSP did not win any seats in spite of the fact that it received 70,255 votes. Clearly, national minorities other than the Serbians are heavily overrepresented in Croatian parliament, and future discussions about changes of electoral law should include discussions about that issue.

6. Implications

In her speech following the announcement of the electoral results, Kosor, the president of HDZ, refused to congratulate the winners of the elections. This withholding of “losers’ consent” can be seen as showing the fragility of democratic political culture. In contrast, however, the winner of the election and future prime minister, Zoran Milanović, made a conciliatory speech in which he promised to be the prime minister of all Croatian citizens. These two speeches revealed one of the reasons for HDZ’s defeat: Milanović’s style was much more attractive to the independent and swing voters than was the rigid style of Kosor. In addition, HDZ refused to take responsibility for the negative features of their time in office, including corruption and economic decline, and this lack of accountability also failed to attract the voters.

On 9 December, shortly after her election defeat, Kosor and President Ivo Josipović signed the Treaty of Accession with the European Union. This was to be her last important

activity before the handover of power. On 14 December, the President gave Milanović the mandate to form a new government. The first session of the new elected parliament took place on December 22 and the next day the new government was established (with support from 89 of the 151 MPs).

So what we can expect from this new government? Since all Croatian main parties are in agreement concerning strategic goals – notably membership of the EU and NATO – we would expect only some minor changes in foreign policy. For example, Vesna Pusić, the new minister of foreign affairs, said in an interview that she supports Palestine’s membership in UNESCO, in contrast to the policy of HDZ-led government (NATO.hr, 2011). On the home front, it might be expected that the new government will be less corrupt than Sanader’s administration. To date, not one member of the new coalition has been prosecuted for corruption – in contrast to the HDZ-led government. However, the main challenge for the new government will be the strengthening of Croatia’s economy. Put simply, Croatia, like the majority of the EU countries, spends more than it earns. Success in dealing with this issue will determine not just the country’s economic future but also the prospects for this government in future elections.

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