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# The Political Impact of the Global Crisis in Poland: Delayed and Indirect Effects

*Radosław Markowski & Agnieszka Kwiatkowska\**

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**Abstract:** »Die politischen Auswirkungen der globalen Krise in Polen: Verzögerte und indirekte Effekte«. While the global economic crisis brought no decrease in support of democracy in Poland, its effects turned out to be delayed and indirect. In the pre-crisis survey, a great difference in normative visions of democracy between citizens and MPs, especially concerning economic welfare, has been recorded. Citizens expressed a preference for more redistributive and protective policies while parliamentarians focused mostly on procedural aspects of democracy. Seven years later, we observed a partial convergence of attitudes of these two groups: citizens had lowered their economic expectations, while for MPs economic and redistributive issues became more salient as essential normative characteristics of democracy. However, the extent of this convergence between citizens and political elites differed by political divisions. We argue that differences in post-crisis responsiveness of political elites formed the basis of a major change in Polish politics after 2015.

**Keywords:** Political elites, democracy, economic crisis, Poland, political linkage.

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## 1. Introduction

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The general aim of this article is to explain the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on support for democracy in a country which, of all countries of the European Union, has felt its impact the least. As in most of the related contributions in this HSR Special Issue, we use a nuanced, multi-dimensional concept of support for democracy. The overall design of the study is comparative: across time – both before and after the crisis; and across the two halves of what we term the ‘representative bond’ between members of parliament (MPs) and citizens.

In a more detailed sense, this article aims to answer the following questions. First, do attitudes towards three levels of democracy differ among Polish citizens and MPs? Second, how do evaluations of these levels of democracy im-

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pact overall assessments of democracy as an ideal and the performance of actually-existing democracy? Third, do party elites and party electorates differ in their attitudes toward and evaluations of democracy in Poland? Fourth, did the global economic crisis and economic slowdown in Poland affect Poles' attitudes towards democracy, both in terms of normative visions and performance evaluation?

It should be emphasized that the Polish case is a somewhat awkward fit for the overall design of this study (see Klingemann and Hoffmann-Lange, in this issue), as it did not experience a significant crisis in the last decade, apart from a relative decline in the pace of its economic growth in 2009. On the other hand, political developments in Poland since October 2015 have raised concerns about the predictive powers of political science. In short, while Poland has, against the backdrop of other Central and Eastern European cases, proven to be a genuine success story in the majority of domains we typically evaluate when explaining political stability and democratic consolidation, the country currently finds itself in the midst of a major democratic decay.

There was no indication of a decrease in support for democracy in the post-economic crisis wave of our study. On the contrary, after the crisis support for a democratic political system was more pronounced among the citizens and MPs than it had been prior to the crisis. The pre-crisis survey identified a significant difference between citizens' and MPs' normative visions of democracy, especially with respect to economic welfare. Citizens expressed a preference for more redistributive and protective policies, while parliamentarians focused mostly on procedural aspects of democracy. Seven years later, we observe a partial convergence of attitudes of these two groups: citizens lowered their economic expectations, while for MPs economic and redistributive issues became more salient as essential normative characteristics of democracy.

The global crisis not only brought about changes in the meaning of democracy; it also altered the relationship between satisfaction with democracy and normative visions of democracy. Among those citizens who emphasized the economic and redistributive component as an essential characteristic of democracy, the degree of support for democracy was found to be lower in the post-crisis survey, because the declining growth rate of the economy could not satisfy their policy expectations in line with their normative expectations. However, the extent of this convergence between citizens and political elites varied in accordance with political divisions. This is the basis of our central argument: that differences in the post-crisis responsiveness of political elites formed the basis of a major shift in Polish politics after 2015.

The next section gives a brief description of the Polish case, addressing the aforementioned issues and paints a broader picture of Polish development since its democratic transformation in the 1980s (for more details on the topic see Markowski 2016a, 2016b; Markowski and Kotnarowski 2016; Markowski 2006).

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## 2. Peculiarities of the Polish Development

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From the very beginning, Polish economic transition was marked by success. Poland was the first among all Eastern European countries to overcome the deep recession of the early transition period. By 1992, it was already enjoying a GDP growth of 2.4%. Over the entirety of the period between 1989 and 2015, Poland experienced the highest GDP growth of all Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, amounting to about 230 percent of its 1989 volume<sup>1</sup>. This impressive GDP growth was accompanied by a relatively moderate level of inequality (a GINI coefficient of 0.29 in 2016 as compared to 0.36 in 2002) and single-digit unemployment hovering between 7-9 percent, depending on the method of calculation. Several other Human Development Indices document the extraordinarily encouraging developments in Poland, such as increased life expectancy for both sexes, significantly lower infant mortality, and a boom in educational attainment (Czapinski and Panek 2015; Eurostat 2016).

The 2015 parliamentary election was distinct for a number of reasons. Above all, it was not about the economy. Indeed, evaluations of Poland's economic performance seem not to have been relevant for the decisions made by voters. It should be recalled at this point that under the two-term PO-PSL coalition between 2007 and 2015 – a period approximately spanning the global crisis – Poland achieved a remarkable cumulative GDP growth of approximately 24%, accompanied by a decline in income inequalities (Gini coefficient 0.29), inflation bordering on zero, and single-digit unemployment in 2015 for the first time in two decades (Czapinski and Panek 2015; Eurostat 2016). During this period, Poland became increasingly recognized as a political 'player', in particular within the EU. This was verified by the appointment of Jerzy Buzek and Donald Tusk – both major figures in the ruling senior coalition party, PO – to key positions within the EU. Yet the response of Poles was ambiguous: by the end of 2015, significant majorities of Poles were satisfied with their jobs and lives in general (70%) and with their household situation (80%) (CBOS 2015, 2016) but remained politically dissatisfied, distrusting elites, parties and parliamentarians, and expressing a preoccupation with alleged threats to Poland and the Polish way of life emanating from wider global forces (Markowski and Tworzecki 2016).

The events that followed the 2015 parliamentary election were highly surprising from the perspective of existing research: the decline of poverty, inequality and exclusion, and the rising of incomes, accompanied by more than two decades of improvement in all macro-economic indicators, should in theory preclude the possibility of democratic backsliding (Boix 2003; Przeworski et

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<sup>1</sup> The remaining CEE countries (save Slovakia) manifest a growth – compared to 1989 – of about 150%.

al. 2000). Indeed, the period prior to 2015 saw a steady improvement in evaluations of the quality of democracy (Freedom House, Bertelsmann, Polity indices), its institutional design, and the compatibility of its parliamentary system with democratic consolidation. Over the past 25 years, Poland can claim to have met two crucial benchmarks for democratic consolidation. The first of these is transition to democracy and a market economy, which was already largely accomplished by the mid-1990s, despite the accompanying growth of inequalities, social exclusion and massive unemployment. The second benchmark was successful preparation for and entry into the European Union, which brought about a massive inflow of funds for the development of various sectors of the Polish economy.

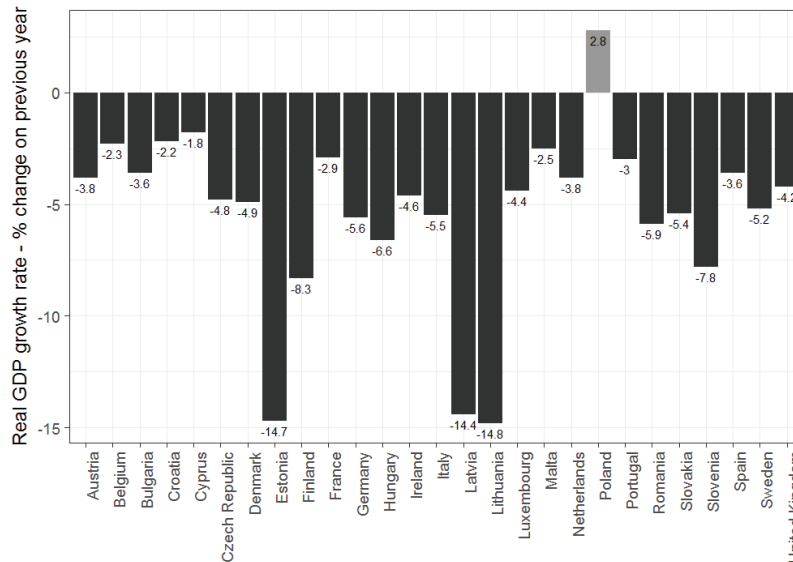
The issue of an ‘externally’ or ‘internally’ caused crisis is in a technical sense irrelevant, as Poland did not experience a crisis proper. However, two connected phenomena are of relevance: (a) a noticeable slow-downturn of GDP growth in 2009 in particular (down to 1.7%), although this was not accompanied by a comparable downturn in any other key socio-economic indicators (unemployment, inflation, inequality); (b) during the post-2007 period of the PO/PSL government, the major opposition party PiS disseminated an ‘alternative reality’ narrative of a ‘country in ruins’ which, although not based on any objective economic facts, proved successful in the 2015 election.

The relationship between the experience of an economic crisis and the support of and satisfaction with democracy in the short and the long run has been studied extensively (Armingeon and Guthmann 2013; Kroknes et al. 2015; Hoffmann-Lange 2015; Cordero and Simón 2016; Pennings 2017). As the impact of crises on democratic attitudes and trust in political institutions varied across countries, explorative studies searched for causal relations on the individual and the country level. Key findings include: a mediating effect of the level of education on the visibility of redistributive aspects in the understanding of democracy (Norris 2011) and general rise of importance in the conceptualization and evaluation of the performance of democracy via social-democratic values and redistributive issues, as well as its dependence on the maturity of democracy in a given country (Ferrín and Kriesi 2016; Markowski 2016a). On the macro level support for democracy remained greater in countries that experienced a bailout (Cordero and Simón 2016).

Poland remained a unique case among European countries because the global recession had little or no impact (Figure 1). The country did not experience a single year of recession after 2007, despite a brief economic slowdown. Poland also did not experience negative effects of the economic crisis on the social level, such as high unemployment or a crash of the housing market. There was no need to introduce austerity programs of the type introduced in many Western European countries. Moreover, political elites, members of the government in particular, constantly depicted Poland’s economic growth in a positive light. For these reasons, attitudes towards democracy remained relatively unaffected

by economic development, both at the level of the masses and of the parliamentary elites.

**Figure 1:** Annual % Change of real GDP Growth Rate in 2009



Source: Eurostat (2018).

As a consequence of the lack of a large economic crisis in Poland, Polish attitudes towards economy and democracy proved to be different from the remaining six countries of our study, both at the elite and citizen level. In short, in Poland we do not observe any significant general changes between the pre- and post-crisis period as far as attitudes towards and the evaluation of the performance of democracy are concerned. If anything, there has been a moderate growth in positive assessments of the performance of democracy in Poland.

### 3. Support for Democracy

To assess the impact of the global crisis on support for democracy at the level of citizens and political elites (MPs) we test several hypotheses, mostly linking the evaluation of the state of the economy with attitudes towards democracy, both in terms of normative visions of democracy and evaluations of its performance.

The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, we compare changes over time of the attitudes of MPs and citizens. Following Fuchs (2007), we distinguish three types of support for democracy: at the value level (measured as a general preference for a democratic system and democratic values), at the structural level (as an evaluation of democracy in the respondent's country) and at the process level (as confidence in the political authorities). The second section focuses on the normative aspects of democracy most important for the voters and the MPs, and explore the relationship between normative expectations and attitudes towards the actually-existing democratic regime.

To conduct these analyses, we use data from two projects. The World Values Survey (WVS) provides data on the level of citizens. The WVS is a global research project that consists of nationally representative surveys conducted in almost 100 countries. We use the WVS 1981-2014 Longitudinal Aggregate file, focusing on two waves of the study that were conducted before and after the global economic crisis: the wave 5 survey, which was in the field in Poland during the period 8.12.2005 - 15.12.2005; and the wave 6 survey, which was conducted in the period 25.01.2012 - 03.02.2012. Both waves were preceded by national parliamentary elections, which took place on 25.09.2005 and 9.10.2011 (respectively 2.5 and 3.5 months before the WVS fieldwork).

The Comparative Members of Parliament (CMP) survey provides data on the attitudes of members of parliament in Chile, Germany, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden and Turkey. The two waves of fieldwork in Poland took place before and after the Great Recession. Fieldwork was conducted in two periods: 21.05 - 14.08.2007 (first wave) and 11.06 - 24.09.2013 (second wave). The CMP project uses core questions of the WVS questionnaires regarding MPs attitudes towards democracy, their ideological positions, and their confidence in national and international organizations and institutions. The second wave of the study introduced new questions about evaluations of the economic crisis and assessments of the performance of political and economic actors in dealing with its consequences. In order to allow standardized comparisons, all variables related to attitudes towards democracy were rescaled to a range between 0 and 1, with 0 meaning non-democratic and 1 meaning democratic.

### 3.1 The Value Level: Support for Democracy as a Political System

The global economic crisis has not weakened preferences for a democratic system at the level of political elites and citizens. All Polish MPs (100% in 2013 and 97.8% in 2007) agreed with the statement that 'although democracy has many shortcomings, it is still better than any other political system'. According to MPs, the financial crisis did not undermine the quality of democracy in Poland; indeed, in the second wave, respondents expressed slightly higher

(0.59) satisfaction with democracy than in the pre-crisis wave (0.55), although the difference was not significant. Examining the various impacts of the crisis on their country, they agreed that the most adversely affected areas were the economy (on average 0.69 on a 0 to 1- scale, where 0 denotes no negative impact at all and 1 denotes a severely negative impact), the people's standard of living (0.66), and, to a lesser extent, the banking system (0.52). At the same time, quality of democracy was only slightly affected by the crisis (0.33) in the eyes of MPs.

When comparing attitudes towards the political system, preferences of MPs for democracy increased slightly ( $M_1=0.83$ ,  $M_2=0.86$ ) while support for alternative systems such as rule by the army ( $M_1=0.08$ ,  $M_2=0.02$ ) or a strong, non-democratic leader ( $M_1=0.24$ ,  $M_2=0.16$ ) decreased after the crisis. However, in the case of democracy as a form of government, effects were not statistically significant. In both waves, the vast majority of MPs were critical of non-democratic forms of government such as a dictatorship or rule by the army. About a third of the respondents expressed moderate criticism of dictatorship (36.2% in 2007, 37.4% in 2013) calling it 'fairly bad', with the number of people indicating high concern ('very bad') rising from 46.3% in 2007 to 57.1% in 2013. Juntas, on the other hand, are almost universally abhorred in Poland, and increasingly so: the percentage of respondents considering them 'very bad' grew from 77.9% in 2007 to 94.6% in 2013. At the same time, democracy continues to be the most popular form of government, perceived positively in almost all cases (only 2 respondents in 2007 and 1 respondent in 2013 thought it to be 'fairly bad'), although not flawless (47.7% respondents in 2007 and 41.5% in 2013 said that democracy was only 'fairly good').

**Table 1:** Support for Democracy as a Political System – MPs and Citizens

	Wave	Very good	Fairly good	Fairly bad	Very bad	Mean	SD
Strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections	CMP 2007	2.1	15.4	36.2	46.3	0.24*	0.27
	CMP 2013	0.7	4.8	37.4	57.1	0.16*	0.21
	WVS 2005	6.9	23.6	43.4	26.1	0.37**	0.29
	WVS 2012	2.9	18.7	44.1	34.3	0.30**	0.27
Army rule	CMP 2007	0	1.0	21.1	77.9	0.08**	0.15
	CMP 2013	0	0.7	4.8	94.6	0.02**	0.09
	WVS 2005	2.4	19.0	44.0	34.6	0.30	0.26
	WVS 2012	1.1	20.5	44.0	34.4	0.29	0.25
Democratic political system	CMP 2007	50.3	47.7	2.1	0	0.83	0.18
	CMP 2013	57.8	41.5	0.7	0	0.86	0.17
	WVS 2005	23.3	60.9	13.5	2.2	0.68	0.23
	WVS 2012	20.3	62.9	14.1	2.7	0.67	0.22

Source: Comparative Members of Parliament 2007&2013, World Value Survey 2005&2012. Weighted data. Data rescaled to [0;1] range. Differences of means ( $M_1-M_2$ ) significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*\*, significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*.



At the level of citizens, changes in the preferences for different political systems were no more pronounced. Support for a system governed by a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections has fallen ( $M_1=0.37$ ,  $M_2=0.30$ ), but changes were insignificant in the cases of army rule ( $M_1=0.29$ ,  $M_2=0.30$ ) and a democratic system ( $M_1=0.69$ ,  $M_2=0.67$ ). However, only 23.3% of citizens in the first wave and 20.3% in the second wave regarded democracy as ‘a very good’ political system, compared with, respectively, 50.3% and 57.8% in case of the MPs (see Table 1).

Comparing elite and mass preferences for different political systems, MPs express clearly more democratic attitudes in all three cases. Using the measure of unequivocal preference for democracy over an authoritarian system (Hoffman-Lange, 2015), the percentage of respondents who give a democratic system a higher rating than any of the two authoritarian systems, was, in case of MPs, 97.2% and 100% in consecutive waves, and 74.6% and 77.0% when citizens were surveyed. More than twice the percentage of MPs in the pre-crisis study and nearly three times the percentage in the post-crisis study argue that democracy is a ‘very good’ system. Moreover, while among MPs on average only 1.5% consider democracy to be fairly or very bad, this opinion is held by more than 16% of citizens. MPs express also much more negative judgements regarding non-democratic systems.

These results place Poland in the lowest rank among the seven countries analyzed when it comes to popular support for democracy, comparable to South Korea in both waves of the study (with means equal to 0.64 and 0.63 respectively) and to South Africa in the second wave (0.66). Conversely, in other European countries support for democracy is much more pronounced (Sweden: 0.91 and 0.89; Germany: 0.84 and 0.86). When it comes to support for authoritarian government, only South Africa (0.34 and 0.48) and Turkey (0.39 and 0.33) express greater acceptance of army rule, while in South Korea (0.47, 0.49), South Africa (0.42, 0.56), Turkey (0.54, 0.54) and – in the second wave only – Chile (0.39), the proportion of respondents who favor a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections is higher than in Poland. Among citizens of Sweden and Germany support for authoritarian government is much lower than in Poland: in the case of a strong non-democratically controlled leader (Germany: 0.21 and 0.24; Sweden 0.22 and 0.30) and especially in the case of army rule (Germany 0.07 and 0.09, Sweden 0.12 and 0.17).

The same applies to the Polish political elites. Despite displaying much more pro-democratic attitudes as compared to the general public and their counterparts in other countries, they have the lowest level of support for democracy as a regime type (and this difference is statistically significant in all cases except for South Korea in the first wave). At the same time virtually all German and Swedish MPs assess democracy as a ‘very good’ system (with averages in both waves equal to 0.99 in Germany and 1.00 in Sweden).

In comparative perspective, Polish MPs also express high levels of acceptance for an authoritarian system with a strong leader: in the first wave of the study only Turkey displays higher enthusiasm towards authoritarian leaders (0.40), while in Germany and Sweden almost all MPs describe such a system as ‘very bad’ (with a mean of 0.02 for both countries). In the second wave of the study, acceptance of authoritarian leaders by the members of the Polish parliament decreased, yet only Chilean MPs expressed greater support for this system (0.27), differences with South Korea (0.20) and Turkey (0.22) were not significant, and in Germany (0.02), Sweden (0.05) and South Africa (0.07) the corresponding figures were much lower. In the case of attitudes towards rule by the army, there are significantly fewer differences, with Poland closer to the cross-national average.

### 3.2 The Structural Level: Evaluation of Democracy in the Respondent's Own Country

At the structural level, measured by the evaluation of democratic governance in the respondent’s own country, there are large differences between elites and citizens (see Table 2). The former assess the political system of the country as rather democratic, while the latter place the country just above the mid-point of the scale. These evaluations and differences remain, on the macro level, stable across time. There is no significant difference in the position of citizens at the two time points ( $M_1=0.53$ ,  $M_2=0.54$ ). In both cases, the majority of citizens express attitudes close to the mid-point of the scale. On average, MPs evaluate the Polish political system as moderately or highly democratic. Although the mean assessment of democracy barely changes ( $M_1=0.70$ ,  $M_2=0.71$ ), the group that has a very positive evaluation of democracy (the three highest points of the scale) increases from 47.9% to 56.1%.

**Table 2:** Evaluation of the Polish Democratic Regime – MPs and Citizens

	Not at all democratic	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Completely democratic	Mean (rescaled to 0–1)	SD
CMP 2007	0	2.5	0.7	12.6	8.5	14.9	12.8	0	24.3	23.6	0.70	0.26
CMP 2013	0	4.1	5.4	4.1	8.1	6.1	16.2	20.3	16.2	19.6	0.71	0.25
WVS 2005	4.3	2.6	7.3	8.2	23.2	16.7	17.8	13.8	3.1	3.1	0.53	0.23
WVS 2012	3.9	3.2	8.6	8.6	18.1	15.5	17.6	14.1	4.7	5.7	0.54	0.24

Source: Comparative Members of Parliament 2007&2013, World Value Survey 2005&2012. Weighted data. Data rescaled to [0;1] range. Differences of means ( $M_1-M_2$ ) significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*\*, significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*.

Comparing the figures in Poland with those in other countries, we find that Polish citizens have a lower opinion of the condition of democracy's performance in their country than do citizens of nearly all countries in the study, in both waves. In all other cases, the averages are significantly higher than in Poland (the highest mean being found in Sweden: 0.73 and 0.72 respectively), with the exception of two cases where the difference is insignificant: Turkey in the first wave (0.56) and South Korea in the second wave (0.54).

While both citizens and MPs maintain stable average positions, declining evaluations of the democratic regimes in most countries (Germany: 0.83 to 0.78, South Africa: 0.84 to 0.78, South Korea: 0.72 to 0.60, Turkey: 0.63 to 0.56) have changed the relative position of Polish MPs. In the first wave, Germany, South Africa, and Sweden showed much higher levels of support for their democratic regimes than did their counterparts in Chile, South Korea, Turkey and Poland. In the second wave, the mean evaluation of Polish MPs is not significantly different from Chile, Germany and South Africa, while in Sweden the proportion of those who positively evaluate the performance of their democratic regime remains higher (0.89 in both waves), and in South Korea and Turkey the proportions are lower.

### 3.3 The Process Level: Support for Democratic Political Authorities

The process level refers to trust in three key national political institutions: political parties, parliament and government. Lack of trust in political institutions is a long-term phenomenon in Poland, with levels of trust very poor even after 25 years of a functioning pluralistic democratic system (CBOS 2014). Low levels of trust in key political institutions are typical for Central and Eastern Europe in general, while the highest confidence levels are expressed in Northern Europe (van der Meer 2017).

The confidence of MPs and citizens in all three democratic institutions (political parties, parliament, government) is mostly low (see Table 3), and it is lowest in the case of political parties. The majority of citizens and parliamentarians have 'not very much' trust in political parties. However, the average level of trust is much lower among citizens. Comparing levels of trust in political parties among MPs with their trust in other public organizations, only in the case of the media – including the press ( $M_1=0.29$ ,  $M_2=0.25$ ) and the television ( $M_1=0.30$ ,  $M_2=0.27$ ) – was there a significantly lower level of confidence, as was the case for labor unions ( $M_1=0.35$ ,  $M_2=0.26$ ) in the second wave. At the level of citizens, trust in political parties ranked the lowest compared to all other organizations.

**Table 3:** Support for Democratic Political Authorities: Confidence in Major Political Institutions – MPs and Citizens

	None at all	Not very much	Quite a lot	A great deal	Mean	SD
Confidence in political parties						
CMP 2007	4.9	75.5	23.4	1.1	0.40	0.18
CMP 2013	10.1	67.6	20.9	1.4	0.38	0.20
WVS 2005	41.7	51.3	6.5	0.5	0.22	0.21
WVS 2012	37.7	54.6	7.5	0.2	0.23	0.20
Confidence in national parliament						
CMP 2007	2.4	40.2	50.9	6.5	0.54	0.22
CMP 2013	6.2	31.0	54.5	8.3	0.55	0.24
WVS 2005	32.1	55.7	10.8	1.4	0.27	0.22
WVS 2012	28.6	59.7	11.5	0.3	0.28	0.21
Confidence in national government						
CMP 2007	24.2	32.8	28.3	14.7	0.44	0.34
CMP 2013	29.0	19.3	37.2	14.5	0.46	0.35
WVS 2005	26.6	55.5	15.3	2.7	0.31	0.24
WVS 2012	26.7	56.6	16.3	0.4	0.30	0.22

Source: Comparative Members of Parliament 2007&2013, World Value Survey 2005&2012. Weighted data. Data rescaled to [0;1] range. Differences of means (M1-M2) significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*\*, significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*.

Of the three institutions discussed, citizens are most likely to trust the national government, while MPs place most confidence in parliament. This trend exists in most countries (with the exception of Germany and Sweden at the MP level, where political parties are trusted more than the government), although sometimes the difference is not significant. Nevertheless, the average levels of confidence in parties, parliaments and governments are low in all seven countries, both among citizens and MPs. The impact of the crisis on these attitudes is insignificant in Poland at both levels.

In summary, among citizens the highest levels of support are for democracy as a form of government, that is as a set of values. If we consider the structural dimension, that is the evaluation of the democratic political regime in Poland as it actually operates, support is only moderate, and it is at its lowest when the focus is on the political process and key actors or institutions. Political elites tend to display rather high levels of support for democracy at the value and structure level, while support is below average when it comes to the process level. In comparative cross-national perspective, Poland has the lowest levels of trust in political institutions.

What is interesting is the relatively low correlation between these three levels of support: values, structure and process (see Table 4). In both waves, citizens who think that having a democratic system in a country is good tend to have a more positive evaluation of the actual democratic regime and more confidence in political parties. In the post-crisis wave, the relationship between their normative stance about democracy and the evaluation of the performance

of the system is slightly stronger, yet the relationship between support of democracy and confidence in political parties has slightly diminished. At the level of parliamentary elites, in the first wave there is no significant relationship between support for democracy as a political system and evaluation of the functioning of the Polish democracy. This result is however “created” almost exclusively by the very high appreciation of democracy as a value by the parliamentary elites and the fact that almost all of those who evaluate the functioning of the Polish democracy positively at the same time support democracy as a system<sup>2</sup>. In the second wave the picture is slightly different. We note a decline in the relationship between positive assessments of the quality of democracy in the respondent’s own country and confidence in political parties. In both waves, support for democracy as a political system is not related to confidence in political parties.

**Table 4:** Pearson’s Correlations Between the Degree of Support for Democracy on Three Levels – MPs and Citizens

	Having a democratic political system	Extent of democracy in own country	Confidence in political parties
WVS: Having a democratic political system	<b>1</b>	<b>.116 (.001)**</b>	<b>.088(.012)*</b>
WVS: Extent of democracy in own country	.157(.000)**	1	<b>.247(.000)**</b>
WVS: Confidence in political parties	.086(.014)*	.161(.000)**	1
CMP: Having a democratic political system	<b>1</b>	<b>-.181(.123)</b>	<b>-.149(.154)</b>
CMP: Extent of democracy in own country	.401(.000)**	1	<b>.448(.000)**</b>
CMP: Confidence in political parties	.102(.233)	.245(.004)**	1

Source: World Value Survey 2005 (bold text) & 2012, Comparative Members of Parliament 2007 (bold text) & 2013. Weighted data. Correlations significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*\*, significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*.

### 3.4 Differences in Support for Democracy

Support for democracy differs in subgroups of the analyzed populations. In the MP study, both waves show significant differences regarding support for democracy with respect to values, structure and process. MPs support for democracy as a set of values differs significantly between MPs of the pro-liberal-democratic center-right Civic Platform (PO) and the anti-liberal right-wing Law and Justice (PiS). On the other hand, levels of structural and process eval-

<sup>2</sup> Data not shown, available upon request from the authors.

uations vary in accordance with the government-opposition role of the parties (see Table 5).

**Table 5:** Support for Democracy by Parliamentary Club

Parliamentary club:		Support: democracy	Support: strong leader	Support: army rule	Evaluation of democracy	Confidence parties	Confidence: parliament	Confidence: government	
CMP 2007	PiS	Mean	0.76	0.38	0.07	0.94	0.51	0.68	0.69
	PO	Mean	0.95	0.09	0.07	0.54	0.32	0.43	0.17
	SRP	Mean	0.78	0.33	0.14	0.76	0.44	0.53	0.61
	LiD/SLD	Mean	0.84	0.16	0.00	0.45	0.31	0.42	0.18
	LPR	Mean	0.73	0.33	0.20	0.78	0.40	0.57	0.67
	PSL	Mean	0.90	0.10	0.00	0.57	0.30	0.47	0.13
	Total	Mean	0.83	0.24	0.08	0.71	0.40	0.54	0.44
CMP 2013	PiS	Mean	0.81	0.21	0.03	0.47	0.35	0.42	0.10
	PO	Mean	0.91	0.14	0.01	0.90	0.44	0.68	0.75
	SLD	Mean	0.88	0.08	0.04	0.71	0.38	0.50	0.17
	PSL	Mean	0.81	0.15	0.00	0.83	0.33	0.56	0.70
	RP	Mean	0.86	0.12	0.02	0.55	0.23	0.41	0.28
Total	Mean	0.87	0.16	0.02	0.71	0.38	0.56	0.47	

Source: Comparative Members of Parliament 2007&2013. Weighted data. Data rescaled to [0;1] range.

The degree of support for democracy as a set of values shows significant differences between the two major parties in 2007 ( $M_{PO1}=0.95$ ,  $M_{PiS1}=0.76$ ), at a time when the government was led by one of those parties, PiS. While the vast majority of MPs from PO claimed that having a democratic system was very good (82.8%) and 17.2% that it was fairly good, PiS MPs primarily evaluated democracy as a fairly good system (63.6%; followed by: ‘very good’ – 33.3% and ‘fairly bad’ – 3.0%). In the post-crisis study, when PO was the main party in office, the difference between party elites on this question was smaller, but still significant ( $M_{PO2}=0.91$ ,  $M_{PiS2}=0.81$ ). In 2013, the ratio of ‘very good’ to ‘fairly good’ assessments of democracy as a system of government declines among PO MPs from 3 to 1 (precisely, 74.2% to 25.8%). At the same time, compared with the first wave a larger proportion of PiS MPs claim that democracy is a very good system (45.2%), while fewer claim that it is a fairly good (52.4%) or a fairly bad (2.4%) system. When it comes to support for an authoritarian government with a strong leader, in the first wave of the study we find a large difference between the pro-democratic PO ( $M_{PO1}=0.09$ ) and the less democratic PiS ( $M_{PiS1}=0.38$ ). However, this difference is insignificant in the second wave. All parties reject a government led by the army.

The evaluation of the democratic regime in the respondent’s own country is strongly determined by whether the respondent’s party is in government or in opposition. During the pre-crisis study, with PiS the senior partner of a gov-

ernmental coalition, its parliamentarians evaluated democracy in Poland close to the maximum of the scale ( $M_{PiS1}=0.94$ , with 96.3% of PiS MPs on maximum of '10'). At the same time, MPs of PO, which was the main opposition party at the time, had a much lower opinion of the quality of democracy ( $M_{PO1}=0.54$ ), with none claiming that the country was fully democratic. Other opposition parties, such as the Left and Democrats (LiD) coalition led by the post-communist Alliance of Democratic Left (SLD,  $M_{SLD1}=0.45$ ), had an even lower opinion of the level of democracy.

This trend was reversed in 2013, when the parliamentary club of the incumbent Civil Platform expressed relatively high evaluations of democracy in Poland ( $M_{PO2}=0.90$ , 43.5% on the maximum point of the scale), while PiS MPs declared their disillusionment with the democratic progress of the country ( $M_{PiS2}=0.47$ ). Not only did the positions of the main parties significantly change, PSL (the agrarian Polish Peasant Party, the minor coalition government partner) unveiled high levels of support for the Polish democratic regime, while SLD members placed themselves close to the center of the scale.

Finally, the government-opposition dynamic is still visible in all three aspects of the process dimension, but to a lesser extent. The negative attitude towards political parties is so unanimous that only one type of difference between the parties is significant: the main opposition party is more distrustful of political parties than the main government party, both in the 2007 wave ( $M_{PiS1}(\text{government})=0.51$ ,  $M_{PO1}(\text{opposition})=0.32$ ) and in the 2013 wave ( $M_{PiS2}(\text{opposition})=0.35$ ,  $M_{PO2}(\text{government})=0.44$ ). These differences in attitudes are much more pronounced when the confidence in parliament and government is at stake. In this case two political blocs emerge, with government parties (in 2007 PiS and minor government parties: League of Polish Families (LPR) and Samoobrona RP (SRP); in 2013: PO and PSL) expressing significantly more confidence than opposition parties. Not surprisingly, in both waves the largest differences regarding attitudes towards government are between the main parties of government and opposition (2007:  $M_{PiS1}=0.69$ ,  $M_{PO1}=0.17$ ; 2013:  $M_{PO2}=0.75$ ,  $M_{PiS2}=0.10$ ).

At the level of citizens, support for democracy appears to be a consequence of electoral choice, although the differences among voters are smaller than those between parliamentary clubs. The differences between voters of the main political parties (PO and PiS) towards the normative idea of democracy as a political system are significant only in the second wave, following a decline in pro-democratic attitudes among PiS voters. The most authoritarian attitudes are expressed in the second wave by the electorates of the previous minor government parties SRP and LPR which did not manage to cross the electoral threshold and thus did not return to parliament during the second wave of the study.

The differences in the attitudes of voters of the two main parties with respect to the regime and process levels, i.e. appreciation of the way democracy works and confidence in democratic political institutions are similar to those observed

at the level of MPs. The electorate of the governing party is more likely than that of the opposition party to claim that the country is democratic, or to express support for key national authorities. However, differences between voters, and their change over time, are much less substantial than those among parliamentary elites. Differences in levels of support for democracy and confidence in parliament and government increase after the crisis, with voters of PiS (at that time the main party of opposition) much more disenchanted with the quality of democracy in Poland than voters of PO, the party of the incumbent government. Finally, voters of government and opposition parties alike show a lack of approval for political parties in general (differences in this case are not significant in either wave).

**Table 6:** Support for Democracy by Party Supporters

Party		Support: democracy	Support: strong leader	Support: army rule	Evaluation of democracy	Confidence: parties	Confidence: parliament	Confidence: government
WVS 2005	PiS Mean	0.69	0.41	0.30	0.58	0.27	0.33	0.41
	PO Mean	0.73	0.29	0.28	0.54	0.24	0.30	0.33
	PSL Mean	0.75	0.37	0.24	0.52	0.23	0.35	0.38
	SLD Mean	0.70	0.35	0.29	0.45	0.17	0.21	0.21
	SRP Mean	0.59	0.47	0.41	0.44	0.24	0.23	0.27
	LPR Mean	0.65	0.45	0.42	0.55	0.20	0.25	0.37
	Total Mean	0.70	0.38	0.31	0.54	0.25	0.30	0.35
WVS 2012	PiS Mean	0.64	0.30	0.36	0.45	0.27	0.26	0.25
	PO Mean	0.72	0.29	0.28	0.65	0.27	0.37	0.41
	PSL Mean	0.64	0.37	0.38	0.52	0.27	0.30	0.33
	SLD Mean	0.73	0.31	0.30	0.57	0.29	0.34	0.32
	RP Mean	0.67	0.27	0.29	0.57	0.22	0.26	0.27
	Total Mean	0.69	0.30	0.31	0.57	0.27	0.32	0.33

Source: World Value Survey 2005&2012. Weighted data. Main parties only (20 or more respondents). Data rescaled to [0;1] range.

The greatest change of attitudes in the electorate occurred among PiS voters (see Table 6), whose positions changed significantly towards an anti-democratic direction at all levels (with two exceptions: their support for an authoritarian strong leader fell, while their very low confidence in political parties remained stable). This pattern was reflected by the changes observed in the case of the parliamentary elite: PiS MPs displayed lower levels of support for a strong leader, but also significantly lower levels of support for democracy and confidence in political institutions. The extent of change was much more limited in the case of other parties. MPs and voters of Civic Platform and the Alliance for Democratic Left showed significant but smaller changes in support of democracy and – to a different degree – in support of democratic political



institutions. However, their attitudes towards democracy at the level of values remained stable.

Summarizing the differences in attitudes towards democracy, support for democracy as a political system (value level) reflects a long-term difference between the two main political parties: MPs and voters of Civic Platform are more democratic, while their Law and Justice counterparts are more authoritarian. On the other hand, differences regarding support of the democratic system in the respondent's own country (structure level) and confidence in political parties (process level) are primarily a function of position in the political system as a party of government or opposition. These patterns are more pronounced among MPs, while they are less visible among the electorate.

David Easton distinguishes between specific and diffuse support. The former is based on individual perceptions of actual policies and the actions of authorities, and an evaluation of whether citizens demands are met, whereas 'the level of diffuse support will normally be independent of outputs and performance in the short run [and as an] attachment to political objects for their own sake, will not be easily dislodged because of current dissatisfaction with what the government does' (Easton 1975, 445). Our analyses show that stable support for democracy among MPs and voters, independently of their party's current position in the political system, occurs precisely on the level of democratic values.

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## 4. Normative Visions of Democracy

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### 4.1 Essential Characteristics of Democracy

Which characteristics are considered by MPs to be essential components of democracy? In short, most of the characteristics listed in Table 7 are considered important. Respondents were asked to evaluate these characteristics using a 10-point scale, with 10 denoting 'an essential characteristic of democracy'. In both waves, nearly all thirteen characteristics (progressive taxation, human right to dignity, free elections, unemployment benefits, civil rights, a prosperous economy, women's rights, freedom to criticize government, equality of votes, provision of the basic needs of citizens, jobs for all, equal opportunity in education, and minority rights) were, on average, rated above the mid-point of the scale. No fewer than three components of democracy in the first wave and six in the second wave received a mean assessment of above 9. These were the human right to dignity (2013 only), free elections (2007 and 2013), civil rights (2013 only), women's rights (2007 and 2013), equality of votes (2007 and 2013), and minority rights (2013 only).

Furthermore, in all thirteen cases evaluations of whether a particular criterion is an essential component of democracy have increased in intensity between

2007 and 2013 (in seven cases significantly, see Table 7). This seems to suggest that Polish MPs are beginning to define ‘democracy’ in a broader and at the same time more specific way. Democracy is no longer just regarded a procedural mechanism of decision-making. It is seen as relevant to a wide range of substantive domains of life, including economic welfare, social justice and citizens’ needs (see as well Ferrin and Kriesi 2016; Markowski 2016a). Out of these seven, four aspects are concerned with economic issues (progressive taxation, unemployment benefits, prosperous economy, full employment economy), two with procedural aspects (free elections, equality of vote) and one with individual rights.

**Table 7:** Essential Characteristics of Democracy, MPs

	2007		2013	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor	4.24**	2.4	5.29**	2.8
The individual human right to dignity is upheld	8.94*	2.2	9.51*	0.9
People choose their leaders in free elections	9.27*	1.8	9.76*	0.6
People receive state aid for unemployment	5.56*	2.6	6.41*	2.4
Civil rights protect peoples liberty against oppression	8.98	2.0	9.43	1.1
The economy is prospering	6.97*	2.9	7.88*	2.3
Women have the same rights as men	9.40	1.8	9.45	1.2
Complete freedom for anyone to criticize the government	7.52	2.9	8.23	1.9
Equality of vote in elections	9.32*	1.7	9.74*	0.750
Basic necessities like shelter, food and water for everyone	6.38	3.0	6.75	2.9
Jobs for everyone	4.96*	2.8	5.87*	2.8
Equal opportunity in education	8.45	2.2	8.87	1.8
Minority rights	8.61	2.1	9.06	1.6

Source: Comparative Members of Parliament dataset 2007&2013, Poland. Weighted data. Differences of means ( $M_1 - M_2$ ) significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*\*, significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*.

On the level of citizens, we observe the opposite pattern. The average ratings of the seven items asked in the 2005 and 2012 waves of the World Values Survey were lower in comparison with the ratings of the elites (Table 8). Furthermore, the assessment of all characteristics as essential for democracy has declined between the two waves. This decline was significant in the case of two out of five items (progressive taxation, unemployment benefits). While the majority of characteristics were graded, on average, above the mid-point of the scale, the overall linkage between these characteristics and democracy as a system of government is lower in the case of citizens compared with MPs. Only one aspect (equal rights for men and women in the 2005 WVS wave) received a mean assessment above 9, and as such was seen as ‘very essential’ by citizens.

**Table 8:** Essential Characteristics of Democracy, Citizens

	WVS 2005		WVS 2012	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor.	6.22**	2.7	5.70**	2.8
People choose their leaders in free elections.	8.69	2.0	8.73	2.1
People receive state aid for unemployment.	7.33**	2.6	6.99**	2.7
Civil rights protect people's liberty against oppression.	8.48	2.0	8.42	2.2
The economy is prospering.	8.22	2.2		
Criminals are severely punished.	7.73	2.8		
People can change the laws in referendums.	8.40	2.1		
Women have the same rights as men.	9.03	1.8	8.85	2.1
The state makes people's incomes equal.			5.34	3.0
People obey their rulers.			4.19	2.8

Source: World Value Survey 2005&2012. Weighted data. Differences of means (M1-M2) significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*\*, significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*.

Comparisons between the responses of MPs and citizens reveals that citizens emphasize the economic-redistributive elements of democracy to a greater extent than do MPs. The positions of MPs and citizens have converged to some extent in the post-crisis study: we observe an increase in the salience of economic elements as essential characteristics of democracy for MPs, but a decrease as far as citizens are concerned (Table 9). However, the difference between elites and citizens has remained significant. Only five characteristics of a normative vision of democracy have been monitored in all surveys we use in this study (WVS 5, WVS 6, CMP 1 and CMP 2), as follows: 'Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor'; 'People choose leaders in free elections'; 'People receive state aid for unemployment'; 'Civil rights protect people's liberty against oppression'; and 'Women have the same rights as men'. This limits the extent to which we can compare the attitudes of MPs and citizens.

We use this set of items to compare differences in normative visions of democracy and their change over time across the four main political parties represented in the Sejm during the two waves of our surveys: PO, PiS, SLD and PSL. Due to the low number of respondents in some cases, most of these comparisons will be restricted to the two main parties: PiS and PO.

**Table 9:** Essential Characteristics of Democracy by Parliamentary Club and Citizens

		Gov't tax the rich	Free elections	Unemploy- ment aid	Civil rights	Women's rights
MPs						
PiS	M <sub>1</sub>	5.05 *	9.61	5.82*	9.32	9.83**
	M <sub>2</sub>	6.47 *	9.81	7.24*	9.16	9.05**
PO	M <sub>1</sub>	3.08*	9.48	4.22**	9.18	9.46
	M <sub>2</sub>	4.37*	9.73	5.76**	9.71	9.82
LiD/ SLD	M <sub>1</sub>	4.85	9.13	7.08	9.14	9.07
	M <sub>2</sub>	7.38	9.63	8.00	9.63	9.88
PSL	M <sub>1</sub>	2.70 **	10.00	7.11	8.78	9.10
	M <sub>2</sub>	6.44 **	9.67	7.22	8.89	8.56
Voters						
PiS	M <sub>1</sub>	6.40*	8.73	7.57	8.56	8.91
	M <sub>2</sub>	5.74*	8.55	7.04	8.21	8.68
PO	M <sub>1</sub>	6.01	9.11	7.28	8.85	9.35**
	M <sub>2</sub>	5.49	8.98	7.24	8.58	8.86**
LiD/ SLD	M <sub>1</sub>	6.43	8.71	6.75	8.48	9.08
	M <sub>2</sub>	6.51	9.09	7.19	8.72	9.14
PSL	M <sub>1</sub>	7.28	8.93	7.86*	8.76*	9.34
	M <sub>2</sub>	6.03	8.14	6.50*	7.67*	8.94

Source: World Value Survey 2005&2012, Comparative Members of Parliament 2007&2013. Weighted data. Differences of means (M1-M2) significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*\*, significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*.

As previously mentioned, the largest increase in salience between the two waves of the study relates – at the levels of parliamentary elites and voters – to the economic-redistributive aspects of democracy. There is a striking difference between the pre-crisis and post-crisis positions of elites regarding the importance of progressive taxation and unemployment benefits. The average positions of the two main parties – PiS and PO – have risen by about 1.5 points on the 1-10 scale (taxes: PiS: 5.1 to 6.5; PO: 3.1 to 4.4; unemployment aid: 5.8 to 7.2; PO: 4.2 to 5.8), but the distance between parties remains constant. At the same time, the electorates of these parties have lowered their redistributive expectations regarding democracy, with this shift more clearly in evidence among PiS voters.

In the first wave, PiS MPs were, on average, closer to their party's voters regarding economic issues than PO MPs were to their electorate. Their mean position on progressive taxation was 1.35 points lower on a scale of 1-10, and their mean position on unemployment aid was 1.75 points lower. The distances of the mean positions of PO elites and voters were much higher: PO deputies diverged from their electorate by an average of 2.93 in case of progressive taxation and by 3.06 points regarding unemployment aid. The convergence of the attitudes of MPs and voters was stronger in the case of PiS than in the case of PO prior to the post-crisis wave of the study. While PO MPs reduced the

distance to their own voters by more than half (from 2.93 to 1.12 points regarding progressive taxation and from 3.06 to 1.48 regarding unemployment benefits), PiS MPs shifted their average position by such a remarkable amount that they occupied the central ideological position for their supporters and for voters in general. The distance between PiS MPs and voters in the post-crisis wave has fallen to 0.73 and 0.2 points respectively, and these differences are statistically insignificant. During the crisis, the attitudes of both main parliamentary parties have changed. PiS has more strongly emphasized redistributive elements in its normative vision of democracy, meeting the expectations of voters.

#### 4.2 Different Visions of Democracy and Support for Democracy

The relationship between normative visions of democracy held by MPs and their support for democracy as a political system is mostly limited to citizen rights: those who support democracy as a political system tend to assume to a greater extent that its essential characteristics are the protection of minority rights (Pearson'  $r=0.383$ ,  $p=.000$  in the first wave;  $r=0.323$ ,  $p=.000$  in the second wave), civil rights as the protection of people against oppression ( $r=0.209$ ,  $p=.011$ ), second wave) and guaranteeing the individual human right to dignity (0.230 ( $p=.042$ )). Respect for minority rights is the only variable significantly linked to support of democracy in both waves of the study.

The biggest changes concern support for democracy in the respondent's own country. In the pre-crisis wave of surveys, support for the Polish democratic regime is not related to any element of the normative visions of democracy. After the crisis, all elements related to the redistributive characteristics of democracy show a significant and negative correlation with support for the Polish democratic regime. As Table 10 shows, satisfaction with the performance of the democratic regime is mostly associated with redistributive aspects of democracy. In fact, all four issues indicative of social justice (high taxes to subsidize the poor, jobs for everyone, state provision of basic necessities like shelter, food and water for everyone, and state aid for the unemployed) have changed in line with our expectation of growing support for an output-related democracy. Yet the more MPs recognize economic issues as essential characteristics of democracy, the more they are dissatisfied with the overall performance of the Polish democratic regime, as government policies regarding economic inclusion fail to deliver. In contrast, viewing the inclusion of minority groups or an emphasis on women's rights as essential elements of democracy correlates with a support for democracy in general and the positive evaluation of the democratic regime in Poland.

**Table 10:** Correlations between MPs' Ideological Positions and Support for the Polish Democratic Regime 2007-2013

	2007	2013
Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor	0.070	<b>-.165*</b>
The individual human right to dignity (e.g. respect of others) is upheld	0.196	0.062
People choose their leaders in free elections	0.198	-0.036
People receive state aid for unemployment	-0.003	<b>-.186*</b>
Civil rights protect peoples liberty against oppression	0.054	0.111
The economy is prospering	-0.058	-0.007
Women have the same rights as men	0.104	0.130
Complete freedom for anyone to criticize the government	-0.183	0.007
Equality of the vote in elections	0.134	0.067
Basic necessities like shelter, food and water for everyone	-0.004	<b>-.178*</b>
Jobs for everyone	0.009	<b>-.188*</b>
Equal opportunity in education	0.067	-0.030
Minority rights	-0.026	<b>.263*</b>

Source: Comparative Members of Parliament 2007&t2013, Poland. Weighted data. Correlations significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*\*, significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) are flagged as \*.

## 5. Summary

In the absence of a real economic crisis in Poland, no decrease in support for democracy was observed. If anything, pro-democratic attitudes increased, both among members of the Parliament and among citizens. MPs perceived the impact of the crisis on the country to be quite severe, with the most affected areas the economy and living standards, and, to a lesser extent, the banking system. At the same time, they viewed the crisis as having only a moderate impact on the quality of democracy.

In general, MPs express more pro-democratic attitudes than citizens. Although democratic attitudes prevail (at the level of values), both MPs and citizens are highly dissatisfied with the actual functioning of democracy (especially at the process level). However, cross-country comparisons of the attitudes of citizens and political elites indicate that support for democracy in Poland is relatively low, and support for a strong leader is relatively high, to an extent comparable with Chile and South Korea. Attitudes towards army rule in Poland are close to the cross-national average. Support for democracy depends heavily on the political affiliations of MPs and citizens. In both cases, support for democracy as a political system (at the level of values) reflects the long-term difference between the two main political parties: liberal Civic Platform (PO) and the more nationalistic Law and Justice party (PiS). Differences with respect

to support for the Polish democratic regime (the level of structure) and confidence in political parties (the level of process) are primarily a function of the party's role as a party of government or opposition. We may therefore conclude that support for democracy as a system of government is strong. This is in line with Easton's (1975) concept of diffuse support.

As far as support for the Polish democratic regime and its performance is concerned, this appears to be the product of specific rather than diffuse support. This is a cause for concern, as it indicates that even members of the political elite do not seem to have an abstract vision of democratic institutions; instead, their attitudes towards the current parliament or government inform their support for democratic institutions in general. The lack of any common vision of democracy at the level of political elites and citizens alike hinders the ability of both sides to objectively evaluate the performance of democracy and to appreciate the importance of democratic rules of the game, regardless of who is currently in power.

Of course, there is also a disparity of views between citizens and MPs over what democracy should be and which components it should contain and guarantee. In the surveys we draw on in this study, citizens espouse a much broader vision of democracy which includes the economic-redistributive dimension to a great extent. By contrast, political elites put more emphasis on the procedural aspects of democracy. In the post-crisis wave, we have observed a partial convergence of the positions of MPs and citizens regarding the economic dimension, with economic-redistributive issues increasing in salience among MPs and decreasing among citizens. Nevertheless, the differences between MPs and citizens on this question remain significant.

Normative visions of democracy are poorly correlated with support for democracy as a political system. Satisfaction with the democratic political regime of the country and its performance depends primarily on the economic characteristics of democracy. All four redistribution-related aspects of normative visions of democracy (high taxes to subsidize the poor, jobs for everyone, state provision of basic necessities for citizens and state aid for unemployed) changed after the crisis, becoming clearly associated with levels of satisfaction with democracy. This is in accordance with our expectation of a growing acceptance of an output-related democracy. Broader visions of democracy, inclusive of the economic-redistributive dimension, lead to lower levels of support for democracy, in particular when government policies do not meet normative expectations.

The range of differences between MPs and citizens in their normative visions of democracy and the divergence observed in the post-crisis wave of the study were moderated by political affiliation. While both main political forces were generally distant from their electorates as well as from the average voter in general, in the post-crisis study, PiS deputies were much more clearly attuned to citizens' ideals of redistributive democracy than were their PO coun-

terparts. This facilitated PiS's use of economic issues as a bargaining chip in the subsequent 2015 parliamentary election, a move which radically changed the Polish political scene. In this way, the impact of the economic crisis on democracy in Poland was delayed and indirect. The emphasis on generous redistribution policies meant that voters were relatively less interested and more apathetic in protesting against the new radical policies of the new ruling party, including the significant changes to democratic procedures, some of them clearly violating constitutional provisions. To be sure: this does not mean that the more output-related visions of democracy directly influence current democratic backsliding in Poland, it does however "contextually explain" the relative ease in dismantling the foundations of democratic rule of law after the 2015 elections.

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