Intergroup hostility, perceived democratic legitimacy, and satisfaction with democracy in multi-ethnic societies

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Abstract

Ongoing conflicts in the world serve as a reminder of the tensions between democratic institutions and unresolved ethnic grievances. While much is known about institutional factors tying ethnopolitics with democratic performance, much less attention has been given to the role of interpersonal interaction in determining the strength of democratic legitimacy. This paper contributes to the existing literature by establishing the link between intergroup hostility and satisfaction with democracy (SWD). We argue that interethnic hostility aimed at undermining one's dignity triggers a psychological response that, in the end, erodes support for a democratic regime expected to ensure equal treatment of all groups. We test our theory in the Western Balkans, using data from the Montenegrin National Election Study (2023). Our findings show that (1) there is a significant negative effect of intergroup hostility on SWD; (2) the effect of intergroup hostility is amplified by the frequency of contact between the victim and members of the alleged perpetrator's ethnic group; (3) intergroup hostility lowers the victim's level of SWD both directly and indirectly, through diminishing assessment of system's input and output legitimacy.

Keywords: satisfaction with democracy, democratic legitimacy, ethnic relations, intergroup contact, democratic performance, ethnopolitics

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Introduction

The ongoing ethnic conflicts in Israel-Palestine, India, and Turkey, highlight the enduring tensions between national identity, statehood, and democratic governance. These conflicts demonstrate that formal democratic institutions on their own may not be sufficient to manage unresolved ethnic grievances. The supposed juxtaposition between the two is perhaps best summarized in Horwitz's remark that democracy has progressed furthest in countries with the fewest serious ethnic cleavages, while it has advanced more slowly, or not at all, in divided societies.[1] His assertion reflects a sense of inevitability, rooted in the belief that ethnic divisions foster ingroup favouritism, weaken solidarity, and hinder the formation of cohesive democratic public. As social trust in ethnically fragmented societies is less likely to extend across ethnic boundaries, it becomes probable that conflict between groups will eventually emerge.[2]

Despite the intense media focus that ethnic conflicts frequently attract, most ethnically divided societies manage to develop functional polities where various groups coexist peacefully.[3] For this reason, it is equally important for social scientists to focus on studying the relationship between ethnic relations and democracy in contexts that precede open conflict. A comprehensive understanding of the sources of democratic resilience to intergroup conflicts requires further exploration into the mechanisms through which ethnicity gains salience and translates into social polarization. While much is known about institutional factors affecting politicization of ethnicity and its relation to democratic performance,[4] significantly less attention has been given to the role of interpersonal interaction in determining the robustness of democracy. Yet, revealing the complex dynamics of intergroup relations on a micro-level provides a potentially crucial step for understanding the emergence of collective grievances, prevention of conflict escalation, and preserving legitimacy of democratic regime in multi-ethnic societies.

This paper examines one of such mechanisms. It examines the effect of *intergroup hostility* on satisfaction with democracy (SWD). Here, we define intergroup hostility as negative interaction between members of different ethnic groups aimed not at physically hurting or killing, but at humiliating and "damaging dignity".[5] The humiliating feelings arising from experiencing insults, discrimination, exploitation, or verbal threats from an ethnic "rival" are important emotions that dominate early stages of intergroup conflict.[6] While such hostilities are typically overlooked as politically inconsequential, they, nonetheless, can exhibit subtler and long-term effect on evaluation of a democratic regime, designed for safeguarding the equal treatment of all. Our argumentation departs from well-established proposition in social

psychology asserting that positive interpersonal contact can bridge existing divides and reduce prejudice,[7] while negative contact exacerbates divisions and stereotypes.[8]

In particular, we argue that personally experienced hostility from an ethnic outgroup in the context of everyday life (workplace, school, street/neighbourhood) enhances group awareness and the sense of group deprivation.[9] In turn, this leads to perception of politics as a zero-sum game between competing ethnic groups, in which hostility is interpreted not as a personal act, but as an unfair treatment of a group as a whole[10] perpetrated by ethnic rivals' desire to dominate social and political sphere. We posit that such psychological response affects SWD through biased estimation of alleged perpetrator's group control over political system, system's economic performance and equal treatment for different groups.

We test our argument in the Western Balkans region, utilizing a recently obtained post-election sample from Montenegrin National Election Study (MNES). We combine regression modelling with path analysis, to accurately model position of variables in proposed mechanism. Our results point to a number of important findings: (1) there is statistically significant negative effect of intergroup hostility on SWD; (2) the effect of intergroup hostility is amplified by frequency of intergroup contact between victim and alleged perpetrator's group; (3) victim's psychological reaction to intergroup hostility lower SWD both directly and indirectly. Around two-thirds of the total effect (65%) come from a direct pathway, while remaining effect (35%) is exerted indirectly, through diminishing assessment of input (equal treatment of all groups) and output legitimacy (economic performance).

The paper proceeds with a theoretical chapter, split into three parts: first, it elaborates on the relationship between the perceived performance of a democratic regime and SWD; second, it describes the relationship between interethnic relations and democracy; and third, it explains the proposed mechanism through which intergroup hostility lowers satisfaction with democracy. In methodology section, we then describe our empirical approach, case selection and analyses used. Lastly, results are presented starting from descriptive statistics and then moving to multivariate analysis using two different frameworks (OLS and SEM). We conclude with a discussion of results and limitations.

Intergroup contact, democratic legitimacy and satisfaction with democracy

Democratic legitimacy and satisfaction with democracy

Evaluating the quality of a democratic regime is not an easy task for citizens, since they are likely to base their decision on a multiple, often competing, considerations.[11] Performance theories of democracy suggest that the political legitimacy of a democratic regime in the eyes of citizens largely depends on their belief that the system can deliver "good outcomes" (output legitimacy) and provide a satisfactory level of participation and equal treatment of groups (input legitimacy).[12] In empirical terms, the legitimacy of a political system is usually measured through SWD,[13] which captures support that is more specific than adherence to a political community or regime principles, yet broader than support for specific institutions or parties.[14]

When it comes to the system's output, "good outcomes" are defined primarily in economic terms, where better economic performance, or perception of it, leads to improved democratic performance and higher levels of SWD.[15] Lipset argued that economic affluence positively influences various social factors - widespread literacy, increased information flow, the promotion of democratic values and legitimacy – that are essential to the foundation of any functioning democratic system.[16] The idea that increasing economic benefits for the masses intensifies demands for the political benefits of democracy proved to be a common denominator in the literature that followed in his footsteps.[17] Christmann's longitudinal analysis showed that economic performance has significant effect on evaluation of democracy, with effect on SWD increasing over time.[18] In essence, it is considered rational for citizens to evaluate democratic regime more favourably when perceptions of the current state of the economy compares favourably to the past.[19] While a number of studies argued that too much focus on performance can actually hurt democracy, because it makes it more likely to justify the stifling of critical voices and erosion of checks and balances,[20] a recent experimental study by Frederiksen shows that competent managers of the economy are still being sanctioned for violating democratic principles and norms.[21]

A different system-oriented perspective emphasizes the fact that citizens care for more than just the economy and they also compare political systems based on the quality of policy-making process (input legitimacy). The shaping of public attitudes toward the democratic

regime, under this view, is closely tied to perceptions of the political process and adherence to values such as — freedom, inclusiveness, and responsiveness,[22] especially in more affluent societies.[23] Aarts and Thomasen[24] find that people's level of SWD depends on their perception of the representation function and, to a lesser degree, on the accountability function. Following the argumentation of Warren[25], a number of studies[26] argued that trust in the institution of representative democracy is based on the expectation of rights being respected and that collective decisions ought to be made in accordance with accepted norms of responsiveness and political equality. Arguing for the importance of the quality of input in determining the level of SWD, Papp et al. find respondents recognize that institutions designed to foster consensus (proportionality and fragmentation) magnify their voice and create a more representative political culture. [27]

Namely, in modern representative democracies, where citizens cannot reasonably expect to have their voices heard individually, they are, nonetheless, interested in their point of view being taken seriously and represented in a meaningful manner.[28] Given that one's ability to effectively influence policies depends on their ability to voice an opinion in an authoritative manner, it is rational for citizens to be intensely concerned with fairness, representativeness and accountability when evaluating the quality of democratic governance.[29] The effect of the perceived failure of a regime to provide a satisfactory level of democratic input is reflected in survey responses, which find that respondents who feel their voices are taken into account during decision-making report higher levels of SWD.[30] Such findings point to a conclusion that the evaluation of democratic regime is much less tied to satisfaction with a particular set of policies and more with a deeper belief that regime upholds certain normative democratic standards, such as equal treatment of different groups.[31]

Ethnopolitics and democratic legitimacy

In the classical political science literature, ethnic divisions are one of the most widely cited obstacles to democratic consolidation.[32] The reason why consolidated democratic order is less likely in an ethnically fractionalized polity supposedly lies in a diminished level of social trust and lack of cohesive public opinion, which undermine the idea of political compromise.[33] Solidarity that extends only to the ethnic ingroup increases social distance, weakens interethnic social ties,[34] and hurts democratic performance in at least two ways that are relevant for the previously discussed democratic performance. First, the inability to agree on common public goods and public policies undermines the democratic system's ability to provide desirable economic outcomes by lowering public good provision and inhibiting economic growth.[35]

Second, the decrease of generalized social trust and "inherent" ingroup favouritism fosters perception of unequal treatment between groups that lead to higher propensity for open violent conflict.[36]

Still, many influential scholars have argued that the effect of ethnic divisions on conflict and democracy is overstated, since the majority of ethnically diverse polities has yielded rather stable polities and successfully consolidated their democratic regimes.[37] Some scholars went even further, claiming not only that negative effect of ethnic politics is exaggerated, but that ethnic politics play central role in strengthening democracy. For example, Rovny argues that politically organized ethnic minorities, by providing socially rooted electorates with an existential need for political rights and civil liberties, makes democratic institutions and practices more resilient.[38] At the very least, what we can say with confidence is that the evidence tying ethnopolitics with democratic performance varies across levels of analysis, geographic regions, or demographic compositions.[39] Large literature review conducted by van der Meer and Tolsma[40] concludes that ethnic fragmentation is not in itself associated with less social cohesion. This notion perfectly aligns with the classical literature in social psychology, suggesting that interethnic conflict is not inherent to ethnic diversification as such.[41] Instead, it is the quality of intergroup contact that either dispels or deepens group prejudice which.[42]

The political consequences of intergroup contact have been, broadly speaking, approached from the viewpoint of two competing theories of group prejudice – *the group contact theory*[43] and *the group threat theory*.[44] Proponents of the first argue that extended interpersonal contact fosters mutual recognition of resemblance between members of ethnically distinct groups, offers possibility to learn about other groups and reduces group prejudice.[45] In contrast, advocates for the second, suggest that competition for scarce resources together with existing prejudices and stereotypes, enhances the sense of group awareness ("us" vs. "them") and favour intergroup conflict.[46] Seeing political reality through the lenses of a zero-sum game between the rent-seeking ethnic groups is detrimental for democratic legitimacy because the system itself is perceived as the "service" of particular ethnic group(s).[47]

Since the distribution of policies' costs and benefits in a universal manner is considered a unique characteristic of democratic regimes,[48] perceiving social conflict in terms of a "zero-sum" game between competing ethnic groups can be especially corrosive for one's SWD. Simply, those who agree that conflicts may be resolved for the benefit of all conflicting parties, without winners and losers, do not tend to reject democracy, even if they see serious social conflicts around them.[49] In contrast, when conflict is being resolved to the benefit of particular group(s) at the expense of other(s), only supporters of the winning side maintain belief in the

system, while voters of the losing side tend to express comparatively diminished levels of SWD.[50] Given the emotional and psychological involvement ethnic attachments bring, when the division between winners and losers correspond to lines separating the ethnic ingroup and outgroup, things can only get worse for the legitimacy of the democratic system.

From intergroup hostility to group identity

Despite the stark disagreement among leading theories of intergroup relations with respect to the outcome of intergroup contact, they are not as incompatible as usually implied. Specifically, Allport[51] himself explicitly argued that mere cross-ethnic contact is not enough to dispel prejudice or stereotypes. Instead, he hedged the expectation of a positive effect of contact on a number of conditions that effectively determine the nature of the interaction: (1) Quantitative aspect – how frequent and durable is the contact? (2) Status aspect – are groups of equal status? (3) Role aspect – is the relationship a competitive or cooperative activity? (4) Social atmosphere – is contact perceived in terms of intergroup relations or not? (5) Personal aspect – is initial prejudice at low, medium or high level. Therefore, in Allport's view too, prolonged and frequent contact between competitive groups of unequal status, especially in the context of pre-existing prejudice, fails to produce interaction that follows a "peaceful progression".

This is a highly important point from the perspective of multi-ethnic societies with a pre-existing history of interethnic competition or conflict. In such polities, personally experienced hostility from "ethnic rivals" can serve as a "trigger" that transforms long-term collective sentiments into a politically actionable grievance.[52] An unjustified hostile act against individuals – discrimination, insult, exploitation or verbal threat - enhances identification with the ethnic ingroup, through which they start becoming concerned with inflicted humiliation not on a personal level, but on behalf of the group as a whole.[53] Once collective considerations are strong enough to override personal concerns, the need to compare one's own position with the outgroup fosters a feeling of relative group deprivation, i.e. a subjective belief that the group is unfairly deprived of desirable goods compared to other groups.[54] The victim of hostility harbours simultaneously strong positive identification with the ingroup and strong negative feelings toward the alleged perpetrator's group. This creates a "perfect" psychological make-up that ties personal hostility with attitudes toward the democratic system. Namely, the combined willingness to discriminate positively in favour of ingroup and negatively against an

outgroup is directly associated with the perception of politics as a zero-sum game, in which gains for the ethnic rival can be only achieved at the expense of the ingroup.[55]

The second part of the psychological response to intergroup hostility has to do with the psychological need to correct the group's position.[56] Namely, as posited by Social Identity Theory,[57] people derive positive psychological benefits from seeing their group do well relative to others.[58] This motivates them to process information in a selective manner with the purpose of maintaining a positive view of the ingroup relative to outgroup(s).[59] Research has shown that motivated information processing leads people to expose themselves selectively to information congruent with their most salient cultural identity[60] and to the negative news about ethnic outgroup.[61] Intense group awareness, therefore, systematically biases in favour of the ingroup members, justifying their actions and behaviours, while reserving judgment on the ingroup's deprived position for the outgroup.[62]

It is their system, it is a bad system

Needless to say, the combination of ingroup favouritism and selective exposure to information is a poor method for judging what is fair in a social context. Yet, none of this would necessarily have any effect on the legitimacy of the political system, if the blame for the ingroup's position is solely attributed to an outgroup. However, since the spirit of democracy requires people to treat each other as socially equal,[63] intergroup hostility primes individuals to apply "motivated reasoning"[64] and attribute blame not only to the perpetrator, but to the democratic regime too. Maintaining a positive image of one's own group reflects onto the evaluation of the system because the act of hostility is seen as unfair and it is interpreted as a part of a dialectical struggle for power between dominant and subordinate groups.[65] Interpersonal hostility, therefore, becomes a manifestation of a larger political game in which perpetrators' groups use the system to subordinate and dominate other groups.

Attributing blame to the political system provides the ultimate justification for the perceived subordinated position of an ingroup. Seeing the democratic regime as a mechanism of maintaining political power of the dominant outgroup against the subordinate ingroup[66] legitimizes the sense of relative deprivation and de-legitimizes the regime.[67] Developing belief that the outgroup has obtained unjustified political influence over the political arena could directly undermine belief in the democratic regime. However, we argue a significant portion of the effect should actually go through diminished perception of democratic legitimacy. Evaluating the system from an ingroup-centric perspective aids in disregarding any potentially

positive representation of the system that would delegitimize the feeling of group deprivation and unjust treatment.[68] Victims of hostility protect positive view of their group by avoiding cognitive dissonance and by discounting or outright dismissing arguments potentially countering their own negative view of the system.[69] In other words, believing this is "their system" may require the victim of hostility to also believe that it is "a bad system" – a system that does not treat all groups equally and fairly (*input legitimacy*) and does not provide satisfactory economic conditions (*output legitimacy*).

How does a hostility-driven diminished view of the two dimensions of democratic legitimacy reduce satisfaction with democracy? For one, the perceived unfair exclusion of certain groups is detrimental to SWD because the equal treatment and representation of various groups is the main feedback loop through which democracy ought to address people's grievances. Research has shown that the exclusion of certain groups undermines the belief in the group's ability to collectively address grievances, or to ever obtain the bargaining position needed to generate policies beneficial to their members in a peaceful manner. This leads them to withdraw any support for democracy as such.[70] Similarly, an ingroup-centred perception of the economy leads people to maintain willingness to vote for a co-ethnic incumbent even when he implements a policy decision that does not benefit them, while still remaining less likely to vote for a non-ethnic candidate even if it benefits them.[71] Furthermore, research has shown that when economic inequalities between ethnic groups increase, followed by increased salience of ethnicity, a country is more likely to experience a decline in democracy since authoritarians find fertile ground to erode democratic checks and balances.[72]

In summary, the suggested theoretical model proposes the following mechanism (Figure 1): (1) Intergroup hostility enhances awareness and identification with the ethnic ingroup; (2) The salience of ethnic categories fosters group comparisons that lead to feelings of relative group deprivation; (3) The blame for the unfairly subordinated position of the ingroup is elevated to the level of system, since the perpetrator group is perceived to dominate it; (4) Perceived political dominance of an outgroup prompts victims of hostility to develop a diminished view of the system's legitimacy (equality and performance); (5) The decrease in perceived legitimacy reduces SWD.

Figure 1. Hypothesized relationship between intergroup hostility and SWD
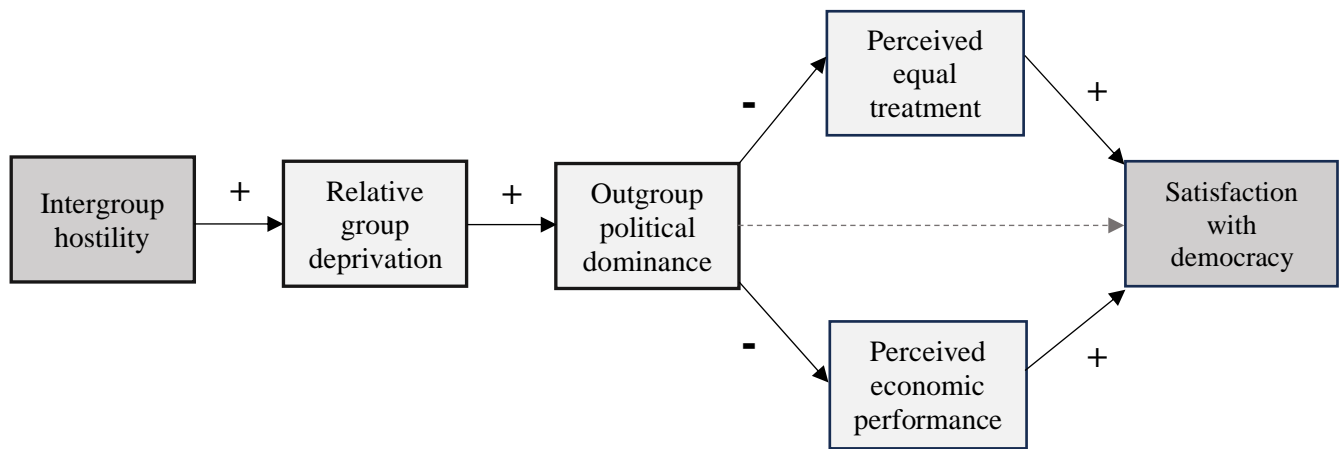
Analysis

Case selection

We test our hypotheses in Montenegro, which provides all the necessary conditions stipulated by the theory. First, with more than five politically relevant ethno-national groups, Montenegro is one of the most ethnically heterogeneous societies in the region. Second, ethnicity is very politically salient, with a large body of literature identifying ethno-national cleavage around the statehood issue as the main determinant of "halted" democratization,[73] government formation and coalition-building,[74] voting preferences,[75] as well as structuring of the party system.[76] Third, despite its turbulent political history in a region burdened with a history of hostile group relations, Montenegro remained stable and consolidated its democracy enough to open negotiations for EU membership in 2010 and join NATO in 2017. Based on the most recent V-Dem Index, Montenegro is classified as an electoral democracy, with the Liberal Democracy Index of 0.47. Together with Kosovo (0.49), this ranks Montenegro significantly higher compared to Albania (0.40), Bosnia and Herzegovina (0.36), and Serbia (0.25), which are either in a category between democracies and autocracies or outright electoral autocracies.[77] Fourth, the Montenegrin political system does not include formal power-sharing institutions that could alleviate potentially negative effects of hostility on SWD.

While politicization of ethnicity in Montenegro occurs across different dimensions, it is not a hard task to identify each group's main "ethnic rival" – the ethnic outgroup with whom there is a long record of hostility. In the interest of space, we will briefly refer to three main

groups and their dyadic relationships: Montenegrins, Serbs and members of ethnic minorities (Bosniaks, Muslims, Albanians).[78]

When it comes to Montenegrins and Serbs, the most contentious relationship is experienced with each other. Even without open violent conflict in recent decades, the electoral mobilization of the two groups is predominantly focused on competing identity claims and unresolved disputes around the nationhood-statehood issue. The politicization of group grievances between the two groups occurs on the issue of whether Montenegrins constitute a separate nation which should have a state of its own, or they are merely a part of the Serbian nation ought to be living in a common state with their co-ethnics.[79] The conflict most directly dates back to the Serbian occupation of Montenegro and the Podgorica Assembly (1918), when Montenegro turned into a political and military battlefield between proponents of unconditional unification with Serbia and proponents of a union of equal sovereign members. In the end, the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was carried out in a way that abolished the Montenegrin state, removed its dynasty, annexed its territory, and outright called for national assimilation.[80]

As a result of such a prolonged contestation of national identity, coalition-building from the Montenegrin perspective typically included members of national minorities who shared the desire to live in an independent state.[81] This meant that during the three-decade long rule of the pro-Montenegrin DPS, pro-Serbian parties failed to obtain access to the government at the national level. [82] Similarly, since pro-Serbian parties won in the 2020 breakthrough elections, no government was formed with the participation of parties that ran strongly on an agenda supporting Montenegrin identity.

The relationship between ethnic minorities, most notably Bosniaks and Albanians, with Serbs in the Western Balkans has been discussed in the literature at great length. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995 resulted in approximately 100,000 deaths, with leaders of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, being convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity in reference to the Srebrenica genocide in July of 1995.[83] In Montenegro, Srebrenica have been frequently discussed topic since the negation of genocide and the celebration of war criminals resurged in recent years. Similarly, the relationship between Albanians and Serbs was marked by extremely hostile episodes since the dissolution of the Yugoslav state. The Kosovo war (1998), which ended with a NATO intervention aimed at preventing yet another genocide, remains a point of contestation. Furthermore, Kosovo Albanians proclaimed their independence in February of 2008, after which the majority of region's countries recognized its independence, including Montenegro.

Data and methods

Survey data on a large nationally representative sample were collected as part of the Montenegrin National Election Study (MNES) after the Montenegrin parliamentary election (June 11, 2023).[84] The MNES study represents a complementary, country-specific battery of questions, attached to a cross-national Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). Together, two studies obtained all necessary data for the operationalization of the nature of intergroup contact on one hand, and politically-relevant variables on the other.

The dependent variable, satisfaction with democracy, is operationalized using the survey item: "Generally speaking, how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the way democracy functions in Montenegro"? It is measured on a five-point scale (from very dissatisfied to very satisfied) and it is normally distributed.

With respect to independent variables, we are primarily concerned with the effect of factors related to the nature of intergroup contact. More precisely, following Allport's[85] expectation of the interaction between the frequency of contact and its quality, we use two indicators to operationalize distinct dimensions. The survey item measuring the frequency of contact asked: "How often you have contact with members of [outgroup name] in various social context (job, school, street/neighbourhood)?" When it comes to hostility of intergroup contact, the survey question reads: "With respect to the nature of your interaction with members of other ethnic groups, did you ever experience the following from [outgroup name]: discrimination, insult, exploitation, and verbal threat".

Since the measure of quality includes four different hostile interactions, this battery of questions is used to create a single dichotomous indicator measuring whether the respondent has personally experienced any of the hostile behaviour from a member of an ethnic outgroup. Since most of the listed activities are illegal in nature and, therefore, less frequently observed, the original variables are not normally distributed. Each respondent was asked about frequency and hostility twice: one for each ethnic outgroup he/she could potentially interact with. For example, if the respondent indicated him/her is Montenegrin by nationality, first questions would ask them to specify frequency and quality of interaction with Serbs, while second question would be directed at ethnic minorities. Following our theory, in the analysis, we introduce measures referring to hostility conducted by, historically speaking, the main ethnic rivals.

Two more group-related variables are extremely important in our proposed mechanism: the sense of group deprivation and the perceived level of political dominance exercised by the perpetrator's ethnic group. The subjective feeling of the ingroup being unfairly subordinated is asked:"[Outgroup name] wants to put their rights above the rights of other ethnic groups, including ethnic group I belong to." Perceived perpetrator's influence in the political system is measured via following item: "[Outgroup name] dominates Montenegrin politics more than they should". Both variables are measured on a five-point scale ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree".

Besides the group-related ones, the list of theoretically relevant explanatory variables includes the evaluation of democratic system. Among them, the analysis pays special attention to two distinct factors. The perception of input legitimacy (equal treatment of groups) is measured using the survey item: "According to you, how well does Montenegrin political system secure equal treatment of all groups in society?", ranging from "very bad" to "very good". In order to obtain a measure of the perceived ability of the system to perform economically, the survey question asked: "Would you say that economic situation in the Montenegro in last 12 months", ranging from "significantly worsened" to "significantly better".

Furthermore, the model includes a number of control variables. Since the literature suggests that access government may systematically vary across ethnic groups, and that those groups may have lower levels of SWD in general, we control for national membership. Also, since SWD and one's ability to evaluate the system's performance can be systematically affected by the amount of information or attention dedicated to political issues, we also control for the level of political interest.[86] Lastly, statistical models include a number of demographic controls, such as household income, education, gender and age.

Results

Descriptive statistics

We start our analysis by presenting the descriptive statistics related to the measure of SWD and intergroup hostility. This provides the first empirical evidence justifying operationalization of our key variables. Our theory suggests that relevant contacts will be those experienced with ethnic "rivals" and a high level of group prejudice. The data presented in Figure 2A show that the lowest share of contacts is between Serbs and Bosniaks/Albanians,

while the highest share is between Bosniaks/Albanians and Montenegrins. With respect to the nature of contact with members of the outgroup (Figure 2B), the data supports our expectations with respect to "ethnic rivals" for each group. Most Montenegrins experience hostility in interaction with ethnic Serbs (20%), and vice versa (28%).[87] Finally, more than half (55%) of surveyed minority respondents reported experiencing hostility from Serbs, the same share for Montenegrins is 26%.

**Figure 2A.** Frequency of intergroup contact between ethnic groups

		Outgroup Ethnicity		
		Montenegrin	Serb	Minority
Respondent's Ethnicity	Montenegrin		86%	75%
	Serb	82%		63%
	Minority	91%	73%	

Figure 2B. Hostility of contact between ethnic groups

|		Perpetrator's Ethnicity		
		Montenegrin	Serb	Minority
Respondent's Ethnicity	Montenegrin		20%	8%
	Serb	28%		21%
	Minority	26%	55%	

When it comes to the role of ethnicity in SWD, Figure 3 show the average SWD across ethnic groups. Results reveal striking differences between ethnic groups when it comes to evaluating democracy: Montenegrins (3.03), Bosniaks/Albanians (3.19), and Serbs (3.30). This is the first piece of evidence showing that ethnicity plays an important role in how people evaluate the functioning of the democratic regime. Moreover, the order of groups perfectly reflects access to government at the time the survey was conducted. In three short-lived governments from 2020 to 2023, each was dominated by parties predominantly supported by the ethnic Serbs, with open invitation to minority parties to take part in a government, and no access at all for parties who ran on a pro-Montenegrin platform.

Figure 3. Satisfaction with democracy across ethnic groups
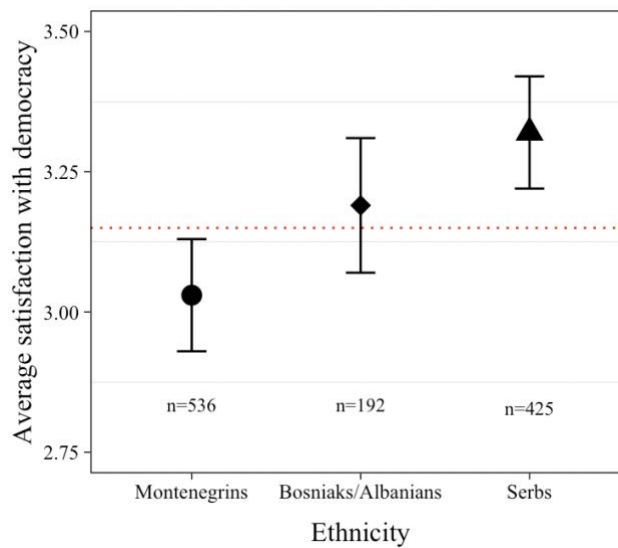
Lastly, with respect to the proposed relationship between hostility, group grievance and perception of political dominance by the ethnic rivals, Figure 4 reveals two important things. First, there is a striking difference in the perception of intergroup relations between those who reported personally experiencing the outgroup hostility and those who did not. There is approximately a 1.5-point difference in the reported level of agreement with the statement that the perpetrator's group wants to dominate the victim's group and dominate the political system. Second, within both subsamples there is a strong correlation between the belief that the outgroup wishes to subordinate one's ingroup and the perception of the outgroup's political dominance. Thus, in the minds of people, ingroups relative position in society is directly tied to the amount of outgroups' influence over the politics in a multi-ethnic country.

Figure 4. Sense of relative deprivation and outgroup political dominance
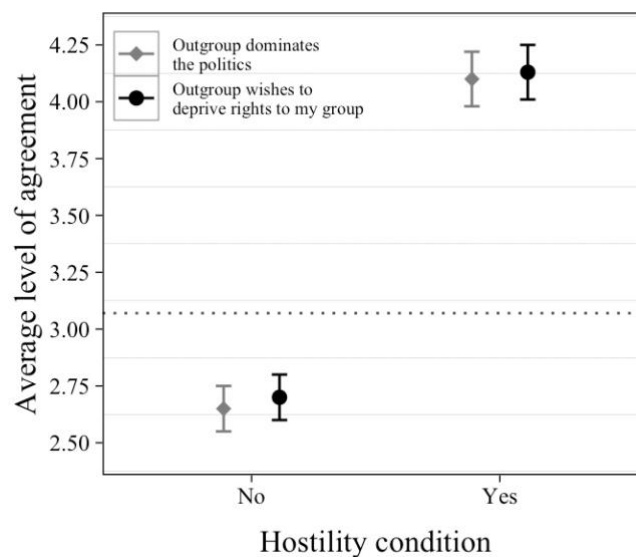
Multivariate analysis

Our empirical strategy for multivariate analysis consists of two parts. First, the multivariate ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is conducted. This allows us to test the relationship between the nature of intergroup contact and SWD under robust controls, as well as to evaluate strength of the effect relative to other predictors. However, OLS regression effectively tests the simultaneous effect of all predictors on the dependent variable, without allowing us to properly test our expectation regarding the position of variables in the model. For this reason, in the second analysis, we turn to structural equation modelling (SEM) framework which allows us to model the sequence of effects that corresponds to our theoretical argument.[88]

Regression analysis

Table 1 shows results of four regression models, each holding an additional set of parameters compared to the previous one. Model 1 consists of essential independent variables related to the system's performance and intergroup contact. Model 2 adds theorized interaction between frequency and hostility of intergroup contact. Model 3 tests whether effect of hostility remains relevant after we introduce indicators of relative group deprivation and perceived political dominance of the outgroup. Finally, Model 4 adds a set of six theoretically relevant controls. Model fit is at satisfactory level and increases consistently moving from Model 1 to Model 4. The final model suggests that 35% of the variance in SWD can be explained using the variables included in the model.[89]

The results show a high level of statistical significance (99.99%) for the perceived system's performance (political and economic). Each of the variables significantly increases individual's SWD, with perceived equality of the system having comparatively strongest effect. For each unit increase in the belief that the system allows by various groups to express themselves, the level of SWD on average increases by 0.52 points. Other things being equal, t effect is three times stronger than the effect of perceived state of the economy. When it comes to the effect of intergroup contact, results across all three models show that the mere frequency intergroup contact, on its own, does not affect satisfaction with democracy. This is consistent with the theoretical argument suggesting that the potential effect of intergroup contact is conditioned on the quality of that contact. Indeed, Models 1 shows significant effect of hostile

contact on SWD, in an expected direction. Individuals who personally experienced hostile contact with an ethnic outgroup have, on average, 0.15 points lower satisfaction with democracy (p < 0.01).

Table 1. OLS regression estimates for satisfaction with democracy

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Perceived system performance				
Input legitimacy				
Equal treatment of groups	0.54***(0.04)	0.54***(0.04)	0.52***(0.04)	0.52***(0.04)
Output legitimacy				
Economic performance	0.21***(0.02)	0.21***(0.02)	0.20***(0.02)	0.18***(0.03)
Intergroup relations				
Frequency of contact	0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Experienced hostility	-0.15* (0.06)	0.41* (0.20)	0.39 (0.20)	0.32 (0.20)
Frequency x Hostility	-	-0.15**(0.05)	-0.13*(0.05)	-0.11* (0.05)
Relative ingroup deprivation	-	-	-0.13***(0.04)	-0.13***(0.04)
Political outgroup dominance	-	-	0.08*(0.04)	0.07 (0.04)
Covariates				
Political interest	-	-	-	0.20***(0.05)
Nationality	-	-	-	-0.12*(0.06)
Household income	-	-	-	0.02 (0.24)
Education	-	-	-	-0.07***(0.02)
Gender	-	-	-	0.15**(0.05)
Age	-	-	-	-0.01*(0.00)
Adjusted R^2	0.30	0.31	0.32	0.35
n	1035	1035	1035	1035

Figure 5. Interaction effect of contact frequency and
hostility on satisfaction with democracy
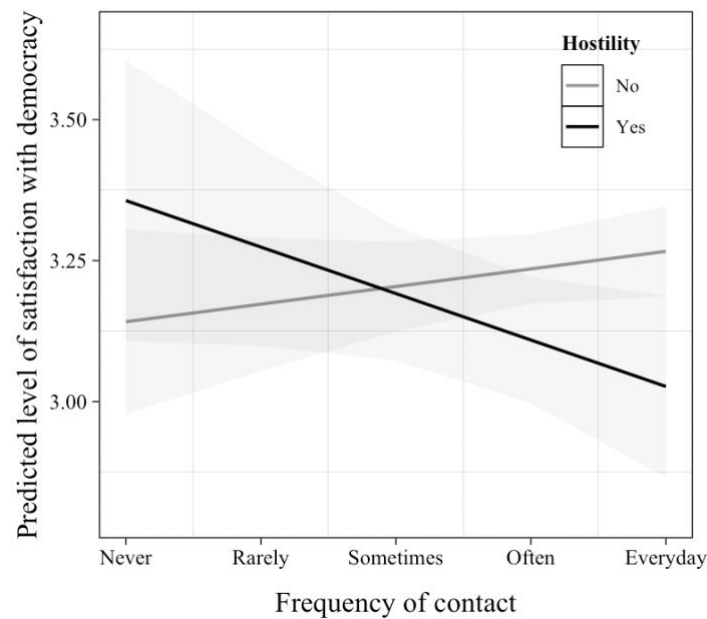
Models 2 and 3, add interaction between frequency and hostility of intergroup contact. The estimate for the interaction term shows that effect hostile contact with an ethnic outgroup on SWS is amplified by frequency of the contact. In other words, the impact of frequency of contact is different depending on the hostility of the contact. The estimate for the interactive term from our final Model 4 is presented in Figure 5 and shows a negative effect for the subsample of respondents who personally experienced hostility, while the effect of contact with outgroup is positive for those who have never experienced hostility. Based on visual examination, we can conclude that the major difference occurs among those who reported frequent or daily contact with an ethnic rival. Importantly, the interactive effect of intergroup hostility remains significant after measures of the sense of relative deprivation and outgroup political dominance are included. This suggests that the personal hostile experience contributes to the level of SWD even after we control for overall sense of deprivation, as well as that not all sense of relative deprivation comes from the hostile experience. In terms of strength, with each unit increase in frequency of contact with ethnic outgroup, the difference between two groups is increased by additional 0.11 points. At the same time, with each unit increase of the sense of relative deprivation, the level of SWD is reduced by 0.13 points. However, once we control for it, the perception of outgroup political dominance shows lack of significance.

The presented results offer evidence in support of the hypothesized relationship between intergroup hostility and SWD. Now we move to path analysis, which allows us to model complex relationship between variables previously identified as valuable in contributing to SWD.

Path analysis

Table 2 lists the model fit for three variations of the final model in OLS analysis, with focus on proposed psychological reaction tying intergroup hostility with SWD. Under our argument, intergroup hostility is unidirectionally tied to the sense of relative group deprivation and the perception of outgroup political dominance. From there, our theory allows for multiple possibilities: direct negative effect on satisfaction of democracy, indirect effect through diminished perception of system's performance, and third model combining direct and indirect model. While we remain agnostic as to which model fits data the best, our theoretical argument is compatible with the indirect model, or the combined model with a significant share of indirect effect compared to direct.

As a point of reference, a rule of thumb suggests that values of Standardized Root Mean Square Residuals (SRMR) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) below 0.10 would indicate a satisfactory model fit, while values below 0.05 indicate that the model fits the data extremely well.[90] At the same time, satisfactory model fit according to Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is reached at the level of 0.90, while very good model fit is reached at 0.95. Last column in Table 2. refers to p-values attached to ANOVA test. Null hypothesis states that a more complex model does not fit the data better than the previous, simpler model. Given the suboptimal model fit of the direct effect, where TLI and RMSEA are below the acceptable level, we eliminate it from consideration and move to a comparison between the indirect and the combined model. We can see that the null hypothesis is rejected and we can conclude that, statistically speaking, the combined model fits our data the best, and it is chosen as our desired model.

Table 2. Comparison of path analysis models

Model	SRMR	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	AIC	BIC	Ch.Diff	Sig.
Direct Effect	0.06	0.10	0.93	0.89	8340	8406	-37.11	-
Indirect Effect	0.05	0.06	0.95	0.93	13742	13831	10.08	0.000
Combined Effect	0.05	0.06	0.95	0.93	13734	13828	-	-

Path estimates in Figure 5 show significant effects in all relevant pathways. Based on the graph we can see that the interactive term between frequency and hostility of intergroup contact significantly increases the feeling that the ethnic group to which the perpetrator of hostility belongs desires to get ahead and deprive other groups of the same status. This is clear evidence of personal experience being interpreted as a collective concern. Collective grievance stemming from feeling deprived in comparison to the perpetrator's group establishes an increased sense of outgroup political dominance. As expected, the perception of the political system being overly influenced by the perpetrator group has a negative effect on SWD. It reduces the level of SWD both directly and indirectly, through reducing perceived performance. Each path is significant at 99.99% level of confidence. Comparatively, the belief that the outgroup is manipulating the system for their own benefit seems to affect the perceived state of the economy more strongly than perception of equal treatment of all groups in the country. Together, these estimates support our claim regarding the mechanism through which intergroup hostility affects SWD. Still, for our argument to be fully corroborated, we should evaluate the relative share of the effect coming from these paths.

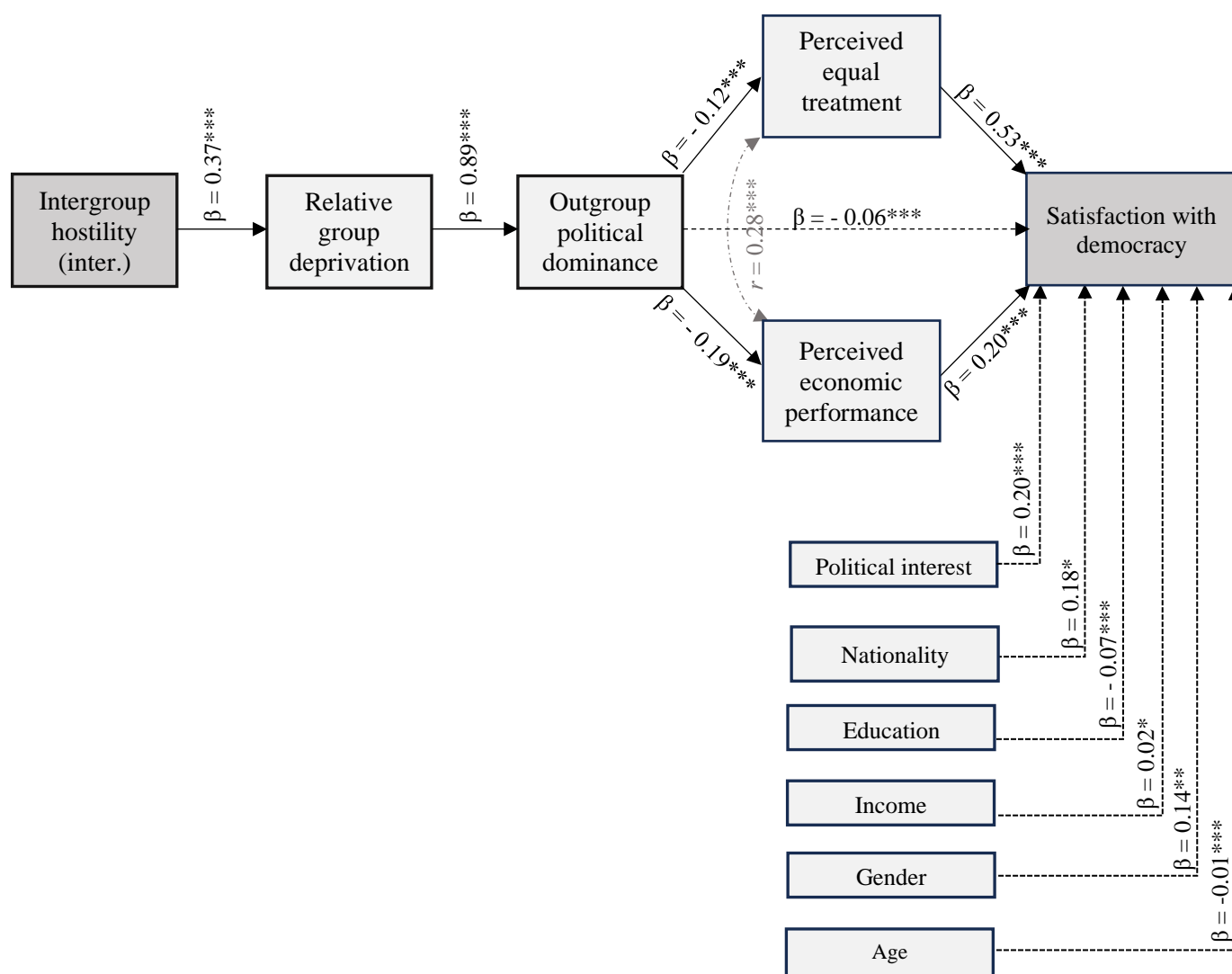**Figure 6**. Path analysis – full model specification

Table 3. Breakdown of total effect of intergroup hostility on SWD

	Indirect effect through system's legitimacy		
Direct effect	Perceived equal treatment of groups	Perceived economic performance	**Total Effect**
	0.37 x 0.89 x -0.12 x 0.53 = -0.021	0.37 x 0.89 x -0.19 x 0.20 = -0.012	
-0.06	-0.032		-0.092
65%	35%		100%

Since the model combining direct and indirect effects has shown the best fit, the total effect (TE) of intergroup hostility on SWD is composed of the direct effect (DE) and the total indirect effect (TIE), with the former path going directly from the political dominance of the outgroup to SWD, without affecting the perceived system's performance in the process. Table 3 shows the breakdown of two types of effects, based on which we can conclude two things. First, the direct pathway is responsible for almost two-thirds (65%) of the effect, while the system's performance is responsible for the rest (35%). Second, within the indirect paths, a slightly higher share of the effect intergroup hostility has on SWD tends to come from the diminished view of input legitimacy (equal treatment), compared to economic performance. Given such an overall distribution of effects across pathways, we can confirm that the data supports the theoretically proposed mechanism.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper has explored the complex relationship between ethnicity, intergroup contact, and satisfaction with democracy. Our study emphasizes the significant, but often overlooked, impact of interpersonal hostility on the legitimacy of the democratic system. The topic is particularly relevant from the perspective of understanding mechanisms through which non-violent forms of hostility can act as precursors to a deeper ethnic divide and undermine the political legitimacy of the system.

Our results demonstrate that intergroup hostility has a profound negative effect on SWD. The effect intensifies with increased frequency of contact between ethnic groups. This finding reveals a paradox of democratic governance. On the one hand, frequent interaction between different groups is essential for democracy; and on the other, if interaction is hostile even without being violent, it can actually weaken democratic legitimacy. It highlights the need for nuanced policy approaches aimed at designing strategies that not only reduce opportunities for negative contact but foster positive, cooperative interactions that reinforce democratic stability in multiethnic societies. Our findings regarding the diminished view of the system's performance are also highly important. Namely, it is often assumed, especially in non-consolidated democracies, that if only people lived better economically any resistance to and dissatisfaction with democracy would vanish. Results, however, suggest that political legitimacy can only partially be enhanced by improving the performance of the democratic

regime. Psychological biases arising from hostile interaction can significantly skew citizens' perceptions of both the system's input legitimacy and its output production.

These insights align very well with political psychology literature, emphasizing that the nature of intergroup contact, rather than mere demographic composition, drives political consequences of ethnopolitics. While higher levels of ethnic diversity and polarization can simply offer more chances for negative contact, it remains fully within the realm of careful policymaking to break the predisposition towards hostility by designing policies that minimize opportunities for negative intergroup contact. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature on democratic resilience and backsliding in multi-ethnic societies, as well as vast literature studying success of right-wing (nativist) populist parties. It does so by taking a step back and focusing on the role of low-level interpersonal interactions. While often overlooked, these provide an important piece of the puzzle in understanding how individual dissatisfactions become part of collective grievance and, in turn, produce electoral and system-level effects. It can provide at least part of the explanation behind the success of authoritarian and anti-system parties in increasingly diverse established democracy. We tested our argument in the context of a multi-ethnic stable democratic regime in which there are no explicit institutions guaranteeing power-sharing. There, some may rightfully take these results as a support for negative effect of ethnic mobilization on democracy. However, others may use them to prove exactly the opposite point – ethnic groups care deeply about equality and rights. So, for as long as institutions are designed specifically to prevent the political dominance of one group over the other, effects of hostility can be mitigated.

While we remain confident in our findings and the valuable insights they provide into the relationship between intergroup contact and SWD, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The first one concerns the measurements of intergroup hostility. The data used in this study is cross-sectional, and as a result, "forcing" us to use a self-reported measure of hostility and therefore to trust the respondent with the ability to determine the ethno-national belonging of the perpetrator. Furthermore, although studying the effect of hostility in the context where most everyday life interactions occur (workplace, schools, and neighbourhoods) is of utmost importance, these do not cover all potentially relevant socio-political context in which hostility can be encountered, especially in the media or on social media. Second, our study emphasizes the negative aspects of intergroup contact and does not tackle the role of positive interaction. Our analysis does explore the difference in effect between frequent hostile contact and frequent contact without hostility. However, the lack of hostility does not imply that interaction is positive. It can simply be that the interaction is meaningless, lacks substance, or signals indifference. Since hostility does not occur in isolation from the other complexities interethnic relations bring, it is quite possible that experiencing positive interaction with members of an ethnic outgroup in addition to hostility could

have mitigating effects on SWD. Finally, we should take note of the fact that Montenegro, while being more democratic than most of its neighbours, is still classified as an electoral democracy. Therefore, any potential generalization to full-fledged liberal democracy should be done with a great caution.

These limitations highlight crucial areas for future research. While widespread satisfaction with democracy is vital for the resilience of democratic systems, it is equally important to understand how hostility-based dissatisfaction influences political behavior. Key questions may include whether dissatisfaction born out of hostility leads to protest voting, more ethnic voting, or not voting at all. In the context of multiethnic polities, are victims of hostility who are dissatisfied with democracy more susceptible to ethnic outbidding, which could further exacerbate ethnic divisions and polarize the political atmosphere? Addressing these issues and recognizing the role of interpersonal contact is crucial for maintaining the stability and legitimacy of democratic institutions in multi-ethnic societies.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix

Table 4. Final (Model 4) with extended list of controls

	Model 5
Perceived system performance	
Input legitimacy:	
Equal treatment of groups	0.52***(0.04)
Output legitimacy:	
Economic performance	0.18***(0.03)
Intergroup relations	
Frequency of contact	0.03 (0.03)
Experienced hostility	0.34 (0.20)
Frequency x Hostility	-0.12* (0.05)
Relative ingroup deprivation	-0.13***(0.04)
Political outgroup dominance	0.08* (0.04)
Covariates	
Political interest	0.19***(0.05)
Voted opposition	0.01 (0.06)
Electoral integrity	0.02 (0.02)
Religiousness	0.02 (0.02)
Nationality	-0.10 (0.06)
Household income	0.02 (0.24)
Education	-0.06***(0.02)
Gender	0.15*(0.05)
Age	-0.01*(0.00)
Adjusted R^2	0.35
n	1023

Notes

[1] Horowitz, "The challenge of ethnic conflict".

[2] Rabushka and Shepsle, *Politics in plural societies*.

[3] Birnir, *Ethnicity and electoral politics*.

[4] See Bochsler and Juon, "Power-sharing and democracy"; Ruiz-Rufino, "Satisfaction with democracy multi-ethnic countries".

[5] Linder, *Humiliation and international conflict*.

[6] Bar-Tal and Halperin, "The psychology of intractable".

[7] Allport, *The nature of prejudice*.

[8] Stephan and Stephan, "Integrated threat theory".

[9] Runciman, "Relative deprivation".

[10] Brewer, "The psychology of prejudice".

[11] Merkley et al., "Authority, satisfaction with democracy"; Wu and Yu-Tzung, "Inequality, unfairness, and support for democracy".

[12] Rogowski, *Rational legitimacy*.; Munck, "What is democracy"

[13] Linde and Ekman, "Satisfaction with democracy".

[14] Norris, *The critical citizens*.

[15] Magalhaes, "Economic evaluations, procedural fairness".

[16] Lipset, "Economic development and political legitimacy".

[17] Burkhart and Lewis-Beck, "The economic development thesis"; Tirado, "Democratic resilience".

[18] Christmann, "Economic performance and satisfaction".

[19] Waldron and Moore, "satisfaction with democratic government".

[20] Singer, "Fiddling while democracy burns"; Mazepus and Toshkov, "Standing up for democracy?".

[21] Frederiksen, "Competence undemocratic behavior".

[22] Huang, Chang and Chu, "Identifying sources democratic legitimacy".

[23] Daoust and Nadeau, "Economics, politics and satisfaction".

[24] Aarts and Thomasen, "Do institutions matter".

[25] Warren, *Democracy and Trust*.

[26] Hillebrecht, Courtney, Dona-Gene Mitchell, and Sergio C. Wals, "Perceived human rights "; Grönlund and Setälä, "Political trust, satisfaction, turnout".

[27] Papp et al., "Patterns of democracy"

[28] Merkley et al., "Authority, satisfaction with democracy".

[29] Norris, "*Democratic deficit*".

[30] Aarts and Thomasen, "Do institutions matter"; Christmann, "Economic performance and satisfaction".

[31] Fung and Wright, "Deepening democracy"; Merkley et al., "Authority, satisfaction with democracy".

[32] Diamond, *Toward democratic consolidation*; Rothschild, "*Ethnopolitics: A conceptual framework*"; Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and opposition*.

[33] Merkel and Weiffen," Does heterogeneity hinder democracy"; Reilly, *Democracy in divided societies*; Fish and Brooks, "Does diversity hurt democracy"; Horowitz, "The challenge of ethnic conflict".

[34] See Nannestad, "Learned about generalized trust".

[35] Alesina and La Ferrara, "Participation in heterogeneous communities"; Easterly and Levine, "Africa's growth tragedy".

[36] Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, "Ethnic polarization, potential conflict"; Alesina and La Ferrara, "Participation in heterogeneous communities"; Alesina and La Ferrara, "Who trusts others"; Shoup, "Ethnic polarization democratic practices".

[37] Fearon and Laitin, " Ethnicity, insurgency, civil war"; Collier, "Implications of ethnic diversity"; Beissinger,"Look at ethnicity".

[38] Rovny, "Antidote to backsliding".

[39] Basedau, "Ethnicity and party preference".

[40] van der Meer and Tolsma, "Ethnic diversity social cohesion".

[41] Steven Fish, M., and Matthew Kroenig , "Diversity, conflict and democracy".

[42] Allport, *The nature of prejudice*; Sherif, *Intergroup conflict and cooperation*.

[43] Allport, *ibid*.; Pettigrew, "Intergroup contact theory")

[44] Stephan and Stephan, "Integrated threat theory of prejudice".

[45] Verkuyten, Thijs and Bekhuis, "Intergroup contact ingroup reappraisal".

[46] See Meuleman et al., "Economic conditions, relative deprivation".

[47] Posner, *Institutions and ethnic politics*; Brewer, "The psychology of prejudice".

[48] Chandra, "Counting heads".

[49] Zagórski, "Perception of social conflict".

[50] Singh, Karakoç, and Blais,"Differentiating winners"; Wahman, "Democratization and electoral turnovers"; Kim,"Democracy and ideological congruence"..

[51] Allport, *The nature of prejudice*, 262.

[52] Bar-Tal and Halperin, "The psychology of intractable".

[53] Huddy et al., "Threat, anxiety, antiterrorism policies"; Mackie, "Intergroup Emotions Offensive Actions".

[54] Hogg and Reid, "Social identity, self-categorization"; Runicman, "Relative deprivation and social justice".

[55] Brewer, "Intergroup discrimination"

[56] See Brewer, "Identity and Conflict".

[57] Tajfel, *Human groups social categories*.

[58] Tajfel and Turner, *Integrative theory*.

[59] Kunda, "The case for motivated".

[60] Takahashi, *White identity selective exposure*; Sui, "Ethnic selective exposure".

[61] Wojcieszak and Garret, "Social identity, selective exposure"; Appiah, Knobloch-Westerwick, and Alter, "Ingroup favoritism outgroup derogation".

[62] Brewer, "Intergroup discrimination.

[63] Huddy, Sears and Levy, *Handbook of political psychology*.

[64] Lodge and Taber, "The automaticity of affect"; Redlawsk, "Hot cognition cool consideration"

[65] Leach, "Ethnicity and identity politics"

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] Since this is more a matter of perception than objective control over the system, this "coping" mechanism should occur regardless of whether particular outgroup actually holds political power or not, although intensity may vary accordingly.

[68] Justwam et al., "Echo chambers"

[69] Taber and Lodge, "Motivated skepticism"; Huddy, Sears, and Levy, *Handbook of political psychology*, 546.

[70] Nijs, Stark, and Verkuyten, "Negative intergroup contact"; Ruiz-Rufino, "Satisfaction in multi-ethnic countries".

[71] Nemčok et al., "Ethnicity pork barrel"; Craig and Richeson, "More diverse less tolerant".

[72] Panzano, "Do reinforcing cleavages?"

[73] Milačić, "Stateness and democratic backsliding".

[74] Krašovec and Batrićević, "Cleavages and Government".

[75] Kapidžic and Komar, "Segmental volatility"; Stankov, "Voting, clientelism, and identity".

[76] Vuković, "One-party show".

[77] V-Dem [2024/Montenegro] Dataset v14, Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/mcwt-fr58

[78] In Montenegro, ethnic group is treated as minority if its share in population is below 15%.

[79] Pavlović, "Who are Montenegrins?"

[80] Batrićević, "Tribal politics".

[81] Vuković and Batrićević, "Shadow of Statehood".

[82] With the sole exception of People's Party (*Narodna stranka*) joining a short-lived DPS-led coalition in 1998.

[83] Suljagić, "Genocide by plebiscite".

[84] The Montenegrin National Election Study, 2023 (mnes.defacto.me)

[85] Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice.*

[86] Zymová, "Democracy is hot"

[87] These results require further elaboration regarding the relationship between ethnic distance and ethnic hostility, as it is often reported that ethnic distance between Montenegrins and Serbs is very low. Two points are important to note here. First, ethnic distance is typically measured by the willingness to have members of an ethnic outgroup as neighbors or family members. This measure completely disregards the dimension of political competition in favor of the cultural dimension. For instance, Montenegrins and Serbs are culturally more similar compared to, for example, Albanians. They are both religiously and linguistically similar. Yet, in political terms, they are directly contesting each other on the issue of statehood/nationhood, which is a zero-sum issue. At the same time, Montenegrins and Albanians are more politically aligned despite being culturally more distant. Second, low ethnic distance (measured in this way) can potentially even enhance hostility. Two groups who frequently meet and interact in everyday life, but also have an 'unsolvable' political dispute, have ample opportunities to engage in hostile interactions. In contrast, culturally more distant groups that are politically aligned have both less opportunity and less desire to engage in hostility. In short, in a country characterized by a statehood/nationhood cleavage, the data shows that distance on political dimensions is significantly more consequential for intergroup relations than the cultural dimension.

[88] Seawright, "Statistical analysis for democratization".

[89] Alternative model was also tested, with additional control variables that could potentially affect relationship between intergroup contact and SWD: perceived integrity of electoral process, voting opposition vs. government support, religiousness. None of the variables is found to have significant effect, nor to contribute to amount of variance explained, while producing additional loss to the sample size. Therefore, both for statistical and theoretical reasons, we lean towards proceeding with a simpler model as our final model.

[90] West, Taylor, and Wu, "Model fit and selection".