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Recent Developments in Democracy in Slovenia

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The article offers insight into the development of democracy in Slovenia, which is consistently placed among the countries that made the most progress toward consolidated democracy. Recently, however, Slovenian democracy has been challenged. The article shows that the balance between responsible and responsive policies tipped following the first decade, due to the demise of corporatism, distrust in political parties, and the personalization of politics.

INTRODUCTION

As judged by some prominent international institutions, the Slovenian transition to democracy that started in the early 1990s was both relatively quick and tremendously successful. Slovenia, considered a “good pupil” (Bugarcic and Kuhelj 2015, 273), was a frontrunner among the newly established democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE): it was already considered “free” by the mid-1990s, according to Freedom House’s annual survey, *Nations in Transit* (NIT), and it received a high ranking in the World Bank Governance Index. The Slovenian state was thus both democratic and able to meet the challenges of transition. Slovenia’s economy was back on track, and its political and economic integration into the European Union (EU), including the adoption of the common currency, was a success. Slovenia seemed destined to consolidate democracy.

This expectation is not tremendously surprising, considering the frequently debated and empirically tested determinants of successful transitions and democratic consolidation: socio-economic development, the level of development of civil society, institutional choices, and favorable external factors (Przeworski et al. 1996). Slovenia exhibited high levels of economic and human development, a tradition of involvement of social actors in addition to a mushrooming of new actors during the transition, the adoption of a parliamentary system, and benevolent support from the regional

behemoth—the EU. Moreover, except during the transformation depression in 1991–1993, Slovenia experienced rather favorable socio-economic development in the 1990s (Fink-Hafner and Hafner-Fink 2009) and stable growth without major macroeconomic imbalances (Šušteršič 2009).

In recent years, however, the democratic fairy tale has been sputtering. The ranking institutions have been downgrading the status of Slovenian democracy, a pattern also seen in other CEE countries (Rupnik and Zielonka 2013; Epstein and Jacoby 2014). NIT in particular has emphasized the corruption in the country, and Slovenia’s overall position on the Bertelsmann Transformation Index has worsened, dropping four places (from second to sixth). In political life, voter turnout in parliamentary elections dropped from 83 percent in the first multiparty and free elections in 1990 to a low of 51 percent in 2014, and, as demonstrated below, satisfaction with democracy and trust in institutions has declined steadily since the middle of the first decade of democracy in Slovenia (Politbarometer 2014). By 2014, fewer than one-in-ten Slovenes were satisfied with the state of democracy in the country. Slovenian democracy showed some weaknesses even before the advent of the global financial crisis and the ensuing European debt crisis; we argue that this crisis fueled dissatisfaction and anti-political attitudes as well as fatigue and apathy.

Diamond’s observation (2011, 17) that “hard economic times are supposed to mean hard times for democracy, particularly when it is new and fragile,” brings up the question of balance between the responsive and responsible traits of the state. Johannsen (2002) finds the responsive traits to be rooted in the argument by Przeworski (1995) that sustainable democracy requires that the political

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system should actually produce normatively desired policies. Diamond and Morlino (2004) have argued that responsiveness constitutes a separate dimension of the quality of democracy in terms of vertical accountability. The responsible trait is evident in Fukuyama's (2011, 431) observation that political liberty also requires a state "strong enough to act when action is required." The difficulty of striking this balance is clearly outlined in the works of Evans (1995), Leftwich (1995), and Weiss (1998), who all stress the benefits of responsiveness as well as the dangers of particularism associated with involving societal actors in the policy process. While responsiveness might be easier to define and describe than responsibility, Bardi, Bartolini, and Trechsel (2014, 237) present a useful definition, arguing that political parties and leaders must be able to consider the "long-term needs of their people ... [that] go beyond the short-term demands of those same people," and at the same time be able to adjust and react to policies of international organizations, such as the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, and others that impose constraints on domestic policies. We concur, arguing that responsiveness and responsibility cannot be a trade-off; instead, they constitute a balance that must be constantly iterated to consolidate democracy successfully.

The issue with the recent developments in democracy in Slovenia is the tipping of this balance: success in overcoming the current crisis, but with the political system in disarray. On the one hand, the political system has produced responsible policies, firmly securing the integration of Slovenia into the EU and overcoming the debt crisis, to the extent that Slovenia, in contrast to Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, and Spain, did not request a bailout. Even so, one stream within the electorate continues to demand "managerialism" and is solution-driven. On the other hand, responsiveness has declined. The corporatist model that was an integral part of Slovenia's exceptional transition model (Crowley and Stanojević 2011; Guardiancich 2012a; Feldmann 2014) was put on hold for six years between 2009 and 2015 (Johannsen and Krašovec 2015). Moreover, another stream within the electorate continues to demand accountability from the political elite, which is increasingly seen as particularistic and clientelistic, if not outright corrupt. To this bleak picture could be added the increased dissatisfaction with democracy; although that part of the discussion involves the usual chicken-and-egg causality, the result is that episodic bursts of movements and parties with populist tendencies have become normal. Clearly, iteration is called for.

In the following, we argue that the transition to democracy and market economy was managed through public consensus and the corporatist institutions specific to Slovenia. Citing several failings with this model, we continue with the argument that the 2004 election proved to be a critical juncture for the increasing polarization between left and right on a quid pro quo basis. Subsequently, we discuss how popular

dissatisfaction and disillusionment have increased and how Slovenia only narrowly saved itself from possible bankruptcy in the end. Finally, we discuss the decline of formal organizations such as trade unions and the rise of personalist political parties, asking if both phenomena lead not only to instability but also to alienation and widespread dissatisfaction. Furthermore, we expect that the conjunction between personalist and populist parties with an increasingly volatile party system prevents the development of long-term policies, as political parties and their leaders react to the short-term demands of the electorate, stressing responsiveness rather than responsibility. In the conclusion, we briefly discuss the possibility of realigning the political system to produce more responsibility, accountability, and responsiveness.

TIGHTROPE WALKER: TRANSITION BY CONSENSUS

At the beginning of the 1990s, the newly independent state and young democracy of Slovenia had to overcome the crisis of transition. As in other CEE countries, the economy contracted and industrial production declined while unemployment and inflation spiked (Mencinger 2012). Other CEE countries that adopted neo-liberal reforms at a forced pace assumed that political and social resistance to such a move would not materialize, as there was no time to organize opposition before the reforms became irreversible (Balcerowicz 1994). However, Slovenia gave credence to Katzenstein's (1985, 198) stance that "democratic corporatism was not an institutional solution to the problems of economic change, but a political mechanism for coping with change." Here, corporatism—following Woldendorp (1997, 49–50) and Pryor (1988, 317)—is understood as cooperation between the government and relevant socio-economic interest groups. Corporatism is a triadic exchange based on the recognition of each partner. Each organization earns a monopoly on representation, and, in return, political leaders receive not only information and valuable insights concerning substance but, more importantly, acceptance and support from the partner (Johannsen 2008). As Johannsen and Krašovec (2015, 3) observe, it is very difficult to criticize an agreement one has participated in making. In this sense, we argue that the corporatist model in Slovenia, through the adoption of social pacts, enabled—in line with the definition of Bardi, Bartolini and Trechsel (2014)—the political parties and leaders to provide stability (responsiveness) as well as credibility of long-term policies and goals, including structural change of the economy and accession to the EU (responsibility).

From its inception in 1990 through a commission under the auspices of the Ministry of Labor, corporatism reflected both the pre-socialist and socialist past of the nation (Zver 1992; Lukšič 1997; 2003). Slovenia was the most

liberalized republic within the former Yugoslavia, as gradual reforms were taking place in the 1980s (Šušteršič 2009). Continuing this “gradualist” path, corporatism was (re)established as a social partnership among trade unions, employers’ organizations, and the government; it found political expression in the composition of the upper parliamentary chamber, in which half of the representatives are chosen according to a corporatist formula. In addition to reflecting traditions, the latter, it was argued, consciously secured responsiveness, given that political parties, at the time the constitution was written, were only embryonic and few understood the interests they represented (Johannsen 2008).

Corporatism became an integral part of what Guardiancich (2012a) and Feldmann (2014) have called Slovenia’s exceptional transition model. Although it is debated how exceptional the model actually was (Adam and Tomšič 2012), Johannsen and Krašovec (2015) demonstrate that Slovenia was an exception among the CEE countries when corporatism is measured using the indicators developed by Siaroff (1999). Furthermore, it appeared to be a model with fewer losers, as Slovenia has remained one of the most egalitarian societies in the EU (Guardiancich 2012a). Bernik and Malnar (2005) found widespread popular support for economic equality and an active welfare state. The model and outcome were largely in accordance with popular values.

The political and economic organization of the corporatist arrangements later became institutionalized in the Social and Economic Council (SEC; *Ekonomsko-socialni svet*). Consisting of employer, employee, and government representatives, the council became the forum for responsive and responsible policies. Social pacts, negotiated regularly between 1994 and 2007, gradually expanded from a narrow focus on wage policy to include broader political issues such as social policies, housing policies, employment and health insurance policies, and equal opportunity policies (Stanojević and Krašovec 2006; 2011).

Within the corporatist framework, policies aimed at stabilizing the macroeconomic situation, liberalizing the economy, and mitigating the social consequences of the transition costs were developed. Furthermore, the political process leading toward EU integration was cleared and steered to some degree through the SEC. With respect to the former, wage and price policies were traded for a stake in privatization (Stanojević 2012), and an early retirement scheme was introduced to reduce unemployment. By 1993, growth resumed. With respect to the latter, the corporatist tradition appeared to provide a good fit with the EU partnerships requirement (Andreou and Bache 2010).

The cultural struggle, or *kulturkampf*, associated with the role of the Roman Catholic Church in society and politics was the main divider within parliament. This was a question of not merely modernity and tradition but also

the specific connotations of the interpretation of World War II history, of partisans versus collaborators, and, in continuation thereof, the interpretation of Yugoslav communism. The economic situation took priority, however, and the prevailing corporatist arrangements facilitated compromise (Bebler 2002), setting up a centripetal process of increased consensus. With the gradualist approach and with the population’s clear expectations of retaining the welfare state, all of the parliamentary parties advocated similar social-democratic and socio-economic policies until the 2004 election (Stanojević and Krašovec 2011; Fink-Hafner 2012). In addition, Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek consciously used Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS; *Liberalna demokracija Slovenije*), the main government-forming party from 1992 to 2004, to overcome ideological bi-polarization in government formation. Despite ideologically mixed coalitions, Slovenian governments fostered consensus and appeared among the most stable in the CEE countries (Blondel et al. 2007).

In conclusion, and as also follows from our analysis of the fragmentation and volatility of the party system below, Slovenia appeared exceptionably stable (Lewis ed. 2001; Haughton and Deegan-Krause 2015), and the corporatist model allowed the political parties, social organizations, and leaders to pursue more responsible long-term policies in the first decade of democracy than other CEE countries.

TILTING THE BALANCE: CRITICAL JUNCTURE AND POLARIZATION FROM THE 2004 ELECTION

The tranquillity did not last. Evidence of deeper social and political changes began to emerge in the 2004 election, and a centrifugal process was set in motion. The 2004 election appears to represent a critical juncture. The corporatist arrangement had produced its own seeds of destruction, which in combination with increased alienation, as evidenced by declining public trust and participation in democracy, would eventually tilt the balance in favor of the state, which was trying to preserve the capacity for autonomous action, but at the cost of increased fragmentation and polarization.

First, as part of the corporatist deal, the privatization process deviated from the general pattern seen in other CEE countries by supporting internal buy-offs, where workers and managers by preferential arrangement were included in the redistribution of previously socially owned property, while the state retained at least a 40 percent share (Bohinc and Bainbridge 2001; Stanojević 2012). For a decade, this consolidated the role of the state and insiders (managers, workers), but as workers sold their shares, it became evident that the managers—with a significant though not golden share—benefited the most from the privatization process (Mencinger 2012; Stanojević 2012).

This contributed to the empowerment of an elite network with cross-membership from and circulation across business, politics, and administration (Fink-Hafner 1998), leading to suspicions of increased political nepotism and patrimonialism (Krašovec et al. 2014). In 2011, the Anti-Corruption Agency (*Komisija za preprečevanje korupcije*) found evidence of systemic corruption on 12 of 13 indicators (Komisija za preprečevanje korupcije 2011). Finally, it has been argued that the gradualist reform process led vested interests to maintain the status quo, thus hampering competitiveness and leading to persistent inflation and the excessive growth of public spending (Šušteršič 2009). Corporatism proved to be less responsible in that these side-effects blocked further reforms (Adam and Tomšič 2012). Furthermore, although Slovenia had been labeled the “good pupil,” Bugaric and Kuhelj (2015, 273–79) argue that the speed made possible by corporatism and the uncritical clearance of EU legislation resulted in shallow Europeanization.

Second, although the preparation for EU membership was the big issue from 1996 onwards, in reality, only a limited number of social partners were included in the process. Securing membership took priority, and the ministries tended to keep coordination in-house, resulting in the gradual centralization (and Europeanization) of the government and administration (Andreou and Bache 2010, 41). Stanojević and Krašovec (2011) found that deinstitutionalization of the tripartite arrangement set in along with Slovenia’s membership in the EU.

Third, in retrospect, many people within the government and administration may have felt the need to regain autonomous capacity; that is, the corporatist arrangement was seen as a straitjacket, if not an outright state capture. The following example is evidence enough of this phenomenon. In 1994, the Slovenian parliament voiced criticism that the SEC had not been included in the budget preparations, and the resulting political “storm” was only resolved when Prime Minister Drnovšek issued a written apology to the social partners for the “procedural mistake” and promised to rectify the situation (Lukšič 1997; Stanojević and Krašovec 2006).

Fourth, politics became polarized. During the Drnovšek-led governments, the political climate sought to “bridge” the center, but the victory of Janez Janša’s Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS; *Slovenska demokratska stranka*) in 2004 led to a new phase of polarization that has dominated Slovenian politics ever since. Rather than governing with majorities from both sides of the spectrum, now, major reforms were carried through with small majorities from either the right or the left side of the parliament. Thus, Janša’s 2004 government initiated a package of neoliberal socio-economic reforms (Prunk 2012; Stanojević 2012; Haughton and Krašovec 2013) and, despite public discontent and trade union criticism, it did not budge from its

position or invite representatives of the aggrieved sectors for negotiations. When Borut Pahor and the Social Democrats (SD; *Socialni demokrati*) won the 2008 election, they returned the favor in kind by narrowly passing pension and labor-market reforms through parliament. In comparison, Drnovšek had managed to pass the earlier reforms by consensus in 2000. When Janša returned to power with another swing of the pendulum in 2012–2013, the pattern repeated itself (Prunk 2012, 54) with the institution of radical austerity measures, including significant downsizing of the welfare state, which many still considered worth fighting (Kolarič 2012, 295).

The “old institutions” through which the transition and European integration had been overseen through compromise and consensus were outplayed when the global financial crisis hit with full force in 2009. Thus, the neo-liberal reforms, austerity packages, and major social reforms concerning pensions and the labor market—fundamental reforms to the economy, society, and public sector—were based on narrow majorities. Many felt excluded.

DISSATISFACTION INCREASES, BUT THE ABYSS OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS IS AVOIDED

Apparently, Slovenes can be hard to satisfy. Ever since the successful securing of independence and the establishment of democracy, those who are satisfied with democracy have been outnumbered by those who are dissatisfied. As Figure 1 amply demonstrates, however, the relative distance between the satisfied and dissatisfied forms a “crocodile gap”; that is, the gap narrowed until 2005, after which point the dissatisfied outnumbered the satisfied. In 2013, fewer than 10 percent of the people reported being satisfied with democracy. This is not to say that the 90 percent of Slovenes who are dissatisfied with democracy no longer support the principles of democracy; this is manifestly untrue. Rather, as argued by Linde and Ekman (2003) when investigating the parallel question concerning “satisfaction with how democracy works” used in other surveys, it is a reflection on how the system works in practice.

We thus see the gloom as an attitudinal response to the political system. When no less than 55 percent in a survey from 2013 agreed to the need for a strong/powerful leader (Toš et al. 2013), it is worrying; but perhaps this is less an expression of support for an authoritarian solution than it is the gloom about economic development and clientelistic politics translated into a demand for managerialism and accountability.

The gloom is understandable, but it is important to underscore that satisfaction began declining before the advent of the financial crisis. It must also be recognized that the political system did produce policies enabling

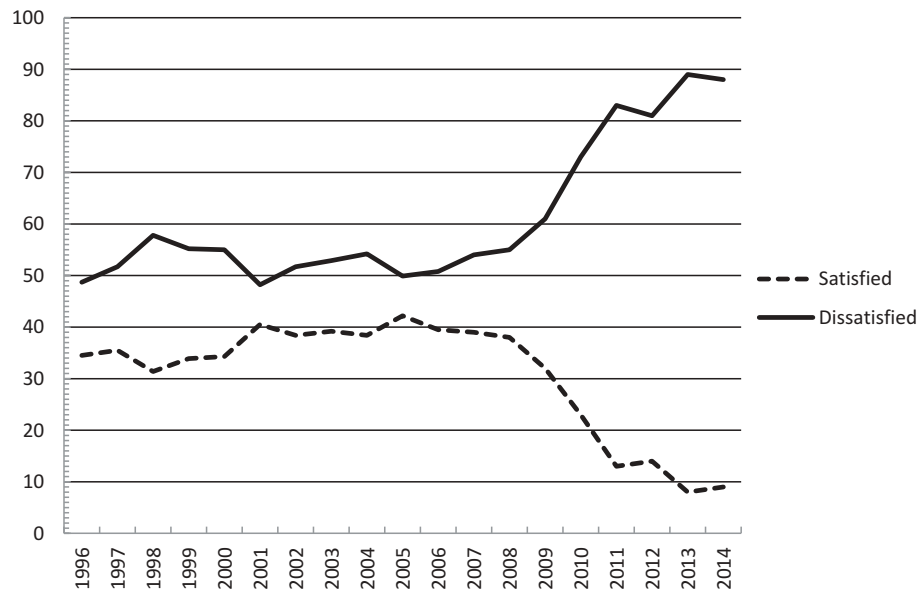


FIGURE 1 Satisfaction with democracy (1996–2014), in percent. Authors' calculation of averages by year from underlying surveys (Politbarometer 2014).

Slovenia to escape bailout conditions. Having said this, the task was neither easy nor popular.

Pahor's Social Democratic government was in power when the financial crisis triggered a dramatic economic contraction of 7.8 percent in 2009 (Table 1). Pahor sought to guarantee social protection through several measures, including subsidies for shorter working hours, raising the minimum wage, and increasing social transfers. It was a partial success: the economy stabilized thereafter, but the budget deficit remained high and debt soared—albeit from a low level.

In 2010, when the government of the day announced a package of reforms for the pension system and labor market, increased political polarization and the inability to “bridge” led to the collapse of the reforms already passed in the parliament. The opposition, backed by students and trade unions, exercised its constitutional right to call a referendum (until 2013, the 1991 Constitution required that a legislative referendum be backed by at least one-third of the deputies,

the National Council, or 40,000 voters). The government was defeated and already in disarray when prominent leaders of two of the government coalition parties—Gregor Golobič, leader of Zares (For Real), and Katarina Kresal, leader of LDS—came under suspicion for corruption and clientelism (Haughton and Krašovec 2013).

Before the 2011 election campaign, the financial crisis had become the European sovereign debt crisis, and Pahor's government was heavily criticized for being too slow to make decisions and for introducing inappropriate measures to respond to the crisis (Haughton and Krašovec 2013), even if this was partly due to the referendum.

With Janša's SDS returning to power in late 2011, the government proved unstable and largely incapable of implementing reforms. Janša chose to resume the *kulturkampf*. His downfall, however, came quickly, although it was brief. The report on parliamentary party leaders by the Anti-Corruption Agency cited numerous failures by Janša to declare his personal economic activities, and in February 2013 the government was felled by a constructive vote of no confidence. In June 2013, the Ljubljana District Court sentenced Janša to two years in prison for soliciting commissions from a Finnish firm during his first term. (In April 2015, the Constitutional Court overturned the conviction and ordered a retrial; but in September 2015, a new judge declared that the original charge had expired, so the case will not be retried.)

At the same time, Zoran Jankovič, leader of Positive Slovenia (LZJ-PS; *Lista Zorana Jankoviča-Pozitivna Slovenija*), had to suspend his leadership of the largest parliamentary party when his name was featured in the same report by the Anti-Corruption Agency. The political system

TABLE 1
Selected Economic Indicators, 2008–2014

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Growth of GDP (in %)	3.3	-7.8	1.2	0.6	-2.6	-1.0	2.6
Public debt (in % of GDP)	21.6	34.5	38.2	46.5	53.7	70.3	80.9
Budget deficit	1.9	-6.1	-5.7	-6.2	-3.7	-14.6*	-4.5

Note. * The increase was due to a one-time expenditure—the recapitalization of five banks.

Sources: Ministry of Finance of Slovenia 2013, 2014, 2015; Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2013, 2014; Statistical Office of Slovenia.

was in disarray. Alenka Bratušek, a relatively inexperienced LZJ–PS member of parliament (MP), faced the challenge of forming a government and forging ahead with a rocky coalition. When the three largest banks went bust in the autumn of 2013 and required recapitalization, Bratušek was confronted with a severe economic crisis. To avoid the harsh bailout terms seen in Greece and Cyprus, her government continued to privatize state holdings and implemented an austerity package that included public sector job cuts, reduced salaries, limitations on social transfers, and a higher value-added tax.

Despite the volatile political environment, successive Slovenian governments ultimately demonstrated that the financial crisis and European debt crisis could be handled. However, the associated difficulties and political costs essentially traded short-term responsiveness for long-term goals. The population was dissatisfied, the party system proved increasingly unstable, and the parties themselves came to resemble populist elements.

DANGERS BENEATH THE SURFACE: DEMOCRATIC WEAKNESSES

As noted, the victory of the Slovenian Democratic Party in the 2004 parliamentary election marked a visible shift in political leadership style; after 2004, neither the trade unions nor employer organizations found governments as cooperative as was formerly the case (Fink-Hafner et al. 1996; 2012). The fall of tripartism as such, however, was also a function of the declining influence that the social partners, the trade unions in particular, could bring to the table.

No reliable figures exist for trade-union membership. Stanojević (2003) reports a density of 69 percent in 1989, but survey results indicate that union membership has declined continuously since the transition. At the turn of the millennium, membership had dropped to less than 30 percent, and by 2013 little more than 13 percent of the respondents reported being trade-union members (Toš et al. 2013). In a parallel process, the Chamber of Commerce (*Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije*) and the Chamber of Craft and Small Business (*Obrtno-podjetniška zbornica Slovenije*) have seen a radical decline in membership, shrinking from universal coverage to about 50 percent of the employers in 2010 (Guardiancich 2012b; Stanojević and Klarič 2013).

Even if trade unions were more trusted than political parties, the corporatist channel for responsiveness narrowed as trade unions and business interests experienced increasing difficulty in claiming to represent employers and employees. Thus, the ability to funnel interest into the political system was weakened.

The political parties mushroomed. As in other CEE countries, the first parties sprang not only from the

reformed Communist Party into various social democratic-leaning parties but also from myriad civil society organizations. Some had their roots in the alternative youth culture prior to independence and regime change, and they turned political under the “protection” of the official socialist youth organization (ZSMS) (Mastnak 1990). Others sought to represent traditional cleavages. A second phase, which was slow in building, is gradual ideological crystallization. The Slovenian Democratic Party came to represent conservatism, for example, although it claimed to be a social-democratic party in the 1990s (Zver 2004). The Communist Party, which transformed into the Social Democratic party (SD—*Socialni demokrati*), developed a more distinct social-democratic profile as compared to the former young communists in the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia. The polarization that took place after the 2004 election is related to this development, as the parties increasingly sought distinct ideological profiles. The third phase grew out of increased voter dissatisfaction resulting from economic problems and the view that the political elite was corrupt. In response, new personalist parties emerged, in the form of the List of Zoran Jankovič—Positive Slovenia (PS) and the Civic List of Gregor Virant (DL), overcoming the mistrust in the established parties and the weak connection between established parties and society (Tomšič and Prijon 2015). The former party was built on the charisma of the mayor of Ljubljana, who had previously managed the largest grocery chain in Slovenia, while Gregor Virant gained his popularity through public service reforms as the minister of public administration in the 2004 SDS-led government.

It is relatively undemanding to establish new political parties and compete in elections. Doing so requires 200 signatures, and because the proportional system applies a threshold of 4 percent, new parties have sought representation in every election. Until the 2011 election, however, none of the new parliamentary parties received more than a 10 percent vote share (Fink-Hafner and Krašovec 2013).

There are many political parties in Slovenia—no less than 17 different lists competed in the 2014 election—but it is also important to note that the people do actually join them. According to data from Slovenian Public Opinion Polls (Toš et al. 1999; 2004; 2009; 2012; 2013) and the base estimation of the membership figures as reported by the parties themselves, the ratio of party members to eligible voters has been between 3.5 and 6 percent over the years (Krašovec 2015). There is no evidence of a clear decline in the membership numbers.

The Slovenian numbers are, thus, roughly similar to the Danish numbers, where 6.5 percent of the eligible voters were party members toward the end of the 1980s, but dwarfed by the Swedes, 21.2 percent of whom were members. On the other hand, the Slovenian numbers are double those of the Netherlands, where only 2.8 percent were

political party members (Katz et al. 1992). The ratio has continued to decline for most European countries. Thus, by 2009, Slovenia was reported to be slightly above the 4.7 percent European average and a champion among the CEE countries (van Biezen et al. 2012).

Hence, from the outset, there is little evidence to support the conclusion that the political parties did not function as a responsive channel. As Krašovec and Haughton (2011) discuss, however, Slovenian parties are highly interwoven with the state and benefit from the resources and influence it can provide. Furthermore, the ease with which political parties can be established prioritizes capital over membership. Why bother to establish and maintain a party organization when it is easy to collect the required signatures and run a blitz campaign in the media?

Thus, the elites governing the parties have found it less attractive to develop the party organization and its ties to society (Krašovec 2000) because of the easy access to state resources. Bardi, Bartolini, and Trechsel (2014) found that these characteristics lower the capacity of political parties to be both responsive and responsible. Moreover, if this balance fails, a window of opportunity for populist or anti-establishment parties is opened. Should this be the case, then we should not only expect an increasingly volatile and unstable party system, but also the appearance of populist parties epitomized by their short-term responsiveness to the electorate.

With respect to volatility, Powell and Tucker (2014) distinguished between “normal” volatility, where voters shift between established parties, and the volatility owing to the entry and exit of new parties. However, disentangling the two requires strong assumptions about established parties, particularly in the post-communist context. This is why Table 2 instead lists the total volatility in accordance with the 1983 Pedersen index and the calculation of the share of “new parties” used by Pedersen and Johannsen (2011). In both cases, seats are used instead of the percentages of votes won in the elections to tally parliamentary instability more closely.

Table 2 demonstrates that, until and including the 2004 election, the party system appeared to be consolidating. The waning turnout paralleled similar processes in other European countries but remained high, particularly in comparison to CEE countries such as Poland and Lithuania. Slovenia was best described as a moderately fragmented, multiparty system that was gradually consolidating. In the first decade, the effective number of political parties was higher than in Bulgaria (Pedersen and Johannsen 2011) and lower than in Poland, but it was comparable to the numbers for the Czech Republic, Estonia and Latvia. In addition, the number of MPs who left their respective groups to become independent or join another party was comparable to the incidence in other emerging CEE democracies (Zajc 1997). When Tavits (2005) and Powell and Tucker (2014) found that the mean volatility declined in successive elections only to increase toward the end of the first two decades, Slovenia fit the bill. It is also evident, as reported in Table 2, that the 2004 election marked a low point in terms of volatility but—as the previous discussion has demonstrated—also a critical juncture. Thus, volatility again increased in 2008 and the share of new parties grew dramatically, surpassing 50 percent in the 2014 election.

Slovenia appears to be a poor fit for the explanation offered by Powell and Tucker (2014). When they find the best predictor for “unhealthy” volatility to be economic performance relative to the start of the transition, it should be noted that the Slovenian economy first began to contract in 2009. However, the assertion that the 2008 financial crisis contributed to the volatility and instability is not incompatible with the warning issued by Bardi, Bartolini, and Trechsel (2014). The calculations, however, underestimate real instability, as the newcomers (the List of Zoran Janković—Positive Slovenia and the Civic List of Gregor Virant in 2011, and the Party of Miro Cerar and the Alliance of Alenka Bratušek in 2014) more resemble movements formed around a personality than structured political parties in the traditional sense. Moreover, if Kriesi’s (2014)

TABLE 2
Turnout, Effective Number of Parties, Volatility, and the Share of New Parties in Parliament, 1990–2014

	1990	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2011	2014
Turnout	83.3	85.9	73.7	70.4	60.7	63.1	65.6	51.7
Effective number of parties: $N(s)$	8.2	6.6	5.5	4.9	4.9	4.4	4.7	4.1
Volatility (V) in %		25.7	32.3	25.5	20.0	34.4	40.0	56.7
Share of seats for “new parties,” %		13.3	5.6	13.3	0.0	10.0	44.4	51.1

Note: Authors’ calculation for the effective number of parties, volatility, and share of new parties. Seats for minorities (2 seats) are included in the calculations and treated as a party. The specific effect of this procedure increases $N(s)$ with a constant and underestimate volatility and the share of seats for new parties. The effective number of parties: $N(s) = \frac{1}{\sum (p_i^2)}$ where p is the share of seats in the parliament. Volatility (Pedersen Index): $v = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{|p_{it} - p_{i(t+1)}|}{2}$

where n is the number of parties and p represents the share of seats received by that party in time periods t and $t+1$.

Sources: Turnout: IDEA for 1992–2014; and Official Gazette 17/1990 for 1990.

definition of populism is applied, several of these newcomers to the political scene share core features of populist parties—parties that are characterized by short-term responsiveness and escape from responsibility. Aside from the dominance of charismatic leaders, the parties lack detailed or concrete programs and advance an anti-elitist critique, alluding to how the leaders of the established parties are prone to corruption.

It is not that Slovenes do not join political parties; part of the explanation is probably that the parties themselves invest more in public campaigns through various media outlets rather than investing in organization-building (Krašovec and Haughton 2011; Fink-Hafner 2012; Fink-Hafner and Krašovec 2013)—an organization that would be difficult to mobilize, control, and dominate by the “party owners.”

CONCLUSION

The Slovenian transition to democracy, market economy, and integration into the EU was largely a managed affair in which corporatist institutions and a consensual policy style provided stability and relatively smaller welfare losses than other CEE countries experienced. This offers evidence of the responsible dimension of democracy. Long-term goals were set and met. The tranquillity could not last, however, as corporatist institutions declined in importance and trade unions lost members—becoming less responsive in the process—and the economic solutions proffered had come to produce a clientelistic network, bordering on systemic corruption, among the managers of the former socialist companies and the political elite. Where corporatism was initially a stepping-stone, it had now become a stumbling-block (Adam and Tomšič 2012). With the 2004 election as a catalyst, Slovenian politics became increasingly polarized. Rather than seeking broad political solutions, each camp sought narrow majorities to defeat the other, and when unsuccessful, used popular mobilization to block policy reform through referendum. Short-term political gains were favored over long-term political solutions. With this in mind, it is hardly surprising that it took the removal of two prominent political leaders on corruption charges to foster a consensus that clawed Slovenia back from the abyss of bankruptcy and bailout.

The last decade has witnessed increasing political turmoil and instability, not only with frequent indictments of political leaders on charges of abuse and corruption, but also with new parties emerging while others collapse. It is not that Slovenes do not join political parties, but that the parties themselves are investing less in developing their organizations and prefer to appeal to the electorate through the media. The result is a dissatisfied electorate that is easier to swing based on the current mood. If such

developments continue, Slovenia will face the appearance of full-blown populist parties. While this means responsiveness in the short-term, organizational underdevelopment implies that long-term policymaking is going to be more difficult.

It is difficult to advance suggestions for iteration or even, perhaps, resetting. Reform of the electoral system has been suggested—namely, a majoritarian system with single-seat constituencies that would strengthen direct relationships between the elected and the electorate. Improved direct accountability is a likely consequence, but given the discussion and lifetime work of Lijphart (1999), it is also likely to come at the expense of compromise and consensus. Contrary to public belief, there is no silver bullet.

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