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AFTER FOUR YEARS OF DEMOCRACY: FRAGILITY AND STABILITY

Lessons from an Accelerated Evolution of the Political System

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Abstract The author proceeds from the (hypo)thesis that it is easier to reach a stable political system as a framework of accelerated societal self-regulation within an inclusive and consensual model rather than through majoritarian-competitive policy making. In order to discern the capabilities of Slovenian politics and society in general, to generate a consensual basis for decision-making, he devotes special attention to those tendencies and trends which are directed towards (semi)consociative democracy and the neocorporatist arrangement considered as a part of political crisis management. The analysis reveals ambivalent and fluid configurations, and therefore it is not altogether clear whether these tendencies and trends are short-time experiments or more lasting structures.

(semi)consociative democracy, political system, societal (self)regulation, neocorporatism

1. Preliminaries: State (politics) and/or (civil) society: Political regulations and societal self-regulation

The political subsystem plays an important role in the post-socialist transition. On the one hand, the circumstances of its operation are irregular and shifting, marked by processes of relatively rapid, large-scale and multi-level change, followed by anomie and contingencies which force it (as the best organised subsystem) to solve the consequential problems and crises. On the other hand, it has to create a framework for future "normal" circumstances. The crucial consideration for determining the destiny of post-socialist societies is the ability of this subsystem to create the foundations for stability. The alternative is stagnation in a state of fragile (or what may be called low-intensity) democracy, inducing further chaos in the society and laying the grounds for excessive politicisation or etatisation. Only a stable political subsystem can produce the framework needed for the functional and interest differentiation of society and thus contribute to its "(self)unloading".

All of this means the question of whether it is more important to concentrate on reconstruction of the state or of the civil society and its self-organising potential (or on the spontaneity of market self-regulation) does not stand - the dilemma is false. This view has recently been expressed in the *British Journal of Sociology*, where one of the writers said, "It underlines the point that the central problems in both East and West relate not to the institutions of civil society, but to the institutions of the state and the reconstruction of a functioning political society" (Kumar, 1993: 391). Indeed, as will be argued later, politics (still) plays the leading role in modernising and regulating social relations in the present stage of post-socialist transition. However, the increase of the political system's problem-solving capacity does not only serve its own purposes. It is merely the means or the catalyst of an accelerated functional and interest differentiation of society and an aid to its own re-integration. In other words - **political regulation is a means of setting up a framework for societal self-regulation**. The issue is not only an active state (politics), but also an active society (Etzioni, 1968; Ekiert, 1991: 311).

I consider the following thought instructive in this connection:

"The state, thus, is neither the source of all societal evil - as much of Western tradition has viewed it - nor the great hope of universalist citizenship and justice. It is, rather, the great option for fundamental societal change. Hence, the transition to an active society does not involve abolishing the state, but rather making it more flexible, and above all more responsive. Societies that absorb the state by almost eliminating its autonomy (a situation approximated at the height of feudalism) and societies which have never evolved more than a weak state (and often weak society-wide links and bonds in general) - i.e. politically underdeveloped countries - tend to drift. States that absorb the society are totalitarian. **A separate, but mutually responsive existence for both the state and the society constitutes the basis for the most active combination**" (Etzioni, 1968: 516, underlined by F.A.).

The presence of a solely active state leads to authoritarian solutions, while an exclusive stress on the active (civil) society means disorder and anarchy or its devolution into a "rent seeking society" (Weede, 1989). It should be noted here that an active society presupposes a consensus-building capacity, and the state as a "tool of societal mobilisation and action" (Etzioni, 1968: 473) is an important factor.

According to C. Offe, democracy in post-socialist societies is an appropriate framework for economic reform, but only if these societies are capable of forming a "strong democratic legitimacy", which is doubtful. He claims,

"A market economy is set in motion only under predemocratic conditions. In order to promote it, democratic rights must be held back in order to allow for a healthy dose of original accumulation. Only a developed market produces the societal structural conditions for stable democracy, and makes it possible to form compromises within a framework of what is perceived to be a positive-sum game. But the introduction of a market economy in the post-socialist societies is a political project, which has prospects of success only if it rests on a strong democratic legitimation. And it is possible that the majority of the population finds neither democracy nor a market economy a desirable perspective. If all of those propositions hold true at the same time, then we are faced with

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a Pandora's box full of paradoxes, in the face of which every 'theory' - or, for that matter, rational strategy - of the transition must fail" (Offe, 1991: 881).

A well-known Hungarian economist is of the same opinion, seeing the state (based on the rule of law) and above all its capacity to build political consensus as possibly having a decisive influence on the success of economic reforms, both in terms of the macro-economic policy of stabilisation and the privatisation and restructuring of the economy (Kornai, 1992: 3).

My aim is to show the experience and potential gained by Slovenian politics and society at large in the formation of a stable political system. At the same time this could be an answer to the questions - or the paradoxes - to which Offe refers. **It is my (hypo)thesis that it is easier to reach a stable political system as a relatively non-contingent parameter of the implementation of dynamic societal reforms and as a framework of accelerated societal self-regulation within an inclusive and consensual model rather than through a majoritarian-competitive type of policy making** (Lijphart, 1991: 483; comp. also O'Donnell, Scmitter, 1986: 60; Bruszt, 1993: 62-73). I therefore devote special attention to those tendencies and trends which are directed towards a (semi-) consociational democracy and a neocorporatist arrangement. I have established that those are fragile attempts, and that alternative development scenarios are available (cf. Adam, 1994).

2. Political stability in the context of "transition to democracy"

I see political stability as a dynamic balance or a dynamic stability, related to the capacity of a political system to be selective (selective in the purpose of preserving its identity and self-referentiality) when including in its modus operandi relevant actors and topics (inclusiveness), and the capability of developing the problem-solving capacities in order to fulfil the functions entrusted to it (efficiency). Stability seen in this way enables the political system to accommodate to the relevant environment (other subsystems and the international arena), not only in the sense of passive adaptation, but in terms of actively defining that environment. Obviously, such stability can only occur - at least in normal circumstances - through a process of maturity or longer evolution. This is especially important when discussing the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic constitution. The ideal type succession proceeds: the crisis of the authoritative system - liberalisation - instauration of elementary democratic institutions and rules (with a threshold at the founding elections) - consolidation as strengthening and growth of those institutions and rules - mature or stable democracy. It would be wrong to see this evolution of the political system as a unilinear process or unproblematic modernisation. Lapses to preceding stages are possible, and individual phases may not be completed or wholly absorbed. Therefore, some political systems either oscillate between the authoritarian and democratic stages (the democrature) or are unable to consolidate (unconsolidated democracies) and achieve stable conditions. On the other hand, it must be taken into consideration that during the instauration stage, and above all during consolidation, frameworks are created which influence the style of political decision-making (inclusiveness) and efficiency. These are constitutional decisions

or rules involving the implementation of the parliamentary or presidential system, the voting system, etc. (Lijphart, 1992).

As a result, the time-span of the evolution becomes an important issue. Post-socialist societies have only a few critical years to carry out the otherwise long historical process of stabilisation, (Linz, 1990: 143), making their evolution¹ very accelerated or punctuary (Poznanski, 1993: 59). If they fail, if there is stagnation or regression - at least in the international context - they are faced with acquiring a peripheral and marginal status.

According to what has been said above, political stability in the analytical-heuristic sense can be defined as including two components, besides consolidation, at the starting point (*sine qua non*): inclusiveness in the sense of a formed policy community and effectiveness. Additionally, this means that we should **draw a distinction between consolidation and stability - a consolidated political system is not yet a stable system.**²

2.1 Consolidation

It is apparent from analyses of the transition to democracy conducted by researchers in the field that consolidation involves the formation of political rules which must be internalised by all the main social groups. Linz, for instance, stresses that the primary indicator of consolidation (which he equals with stability) is that there are no influential social groups to propagate non-democratic methods of assuming authority or to veto decisions made by democratically elected authorities (Linz, 1990: 158). According to Schmitter, consolidation depends on the transformation of the previous, improvised structure into a stable legal framework providing competition and cooperation; a democracy is unconsolidated, if a certain procedural minimum has been set up, but no agreement has been reached on rules that would limit uncertainty and provide a "contingent consent" (Schmitter, 1992: 492). Przeworski expressed a similar opinion in his view of consolidation as the capability to resolve conflicts through democratic institutions (Przeworski, 1991). In this context, there exists an interesting thesis that European societies in transition are "condemned to democracy" (Schmitter, 1992: 492), as: "There is no place in Europe today for non-democratic politics; democratic institutions are a *sine qua non* for any country that seeks to become a member of this community" (Przeworski, 1991: 190). The central question is not whether the societies which have been authoritarian until now will become democratic, but rather **what type of democracy** they will develop, and whether they remain stranded at the stage of unconsolidated democracy or begin accelerated reform towards consolidated and stable democratic systems.

We could resume in the following manner: consolidation can be characterised as an evolutionary break-through that creates a number of critical conditions (institutions, rules, political culture) necessary, but not sufficient, for the establishment of political stability. This consolidation is indicated by: 1) the capability of the political system to resolve conflicts through legal institutions - an indicator of this capability is the absence or marginality of

both political violence and influential groups favouring the return to an authoritative regime; 2) the capability of "elementary reproduction", reflected in the double exchange of authority, i.e. in the exchange of power from one group (party, coalition) to another, the latter previously being in opposition; 3) the adoption of a new constitution as the fundamental document of the state based on the rule of law, providing the basic rules of democracy and state administration.

2.2 Inclusion or formed policy community

The term inclusion refers to the openness (responsiveness) of a political system to potential actors and issues, and to the manner in which they are included in political processes. Of course, this is closely related to the issues of legitimacy and consensus. Although democratic systems are inclusive by definition, we could say that they differ in the level and form of this responsiveness, in political participation and the selectiveness of inclusion in (and exclusion from) decision-making processes. The manner of inclusion affects the structure of policy community, that is the structure of the network of actors participating in the conceptualisation and implementation of policies. A specific style or pattern of political decision-making is crystallised on these foundations (Waarden, 1993), determining the forms of political regulation to a great extent.

A policy community is said to be fully formed only if profiled actors, such as parties, interest associations, lobbies, governmental bodies and procedures, exert their influence on the decision-making processes. In other words, a formed (but not fixed) policy community presupposes a structured civil or political society with differentiated interests.

In my view, there are three main forms of political regulation (intervention) worth mentioning in this context that are closely related, as said before, with the manner of inclusion or the structure of the policy community. The first can be defined as **technocratic-decisionistic**. The decisions are authoritative, and they seek both directly and through hierarchy (*per octroi*) to direct or model certain processes and areas in the political and societal arena. This pattern of regulation presupposes a strong and competent government which holds a majority in parliament and possesses the appropriate organisational infrastructure. In the absence of these postulates, the state or political regulation is extensive, but inefficient (Bobbio, 1987:117). Superficially, the nature of this pattern of regulation appears exclusive, but it is possible on the basis of wide-scale consensus and discretionary powers received by the government from parties and influential social groups. In principle, however, stressing this type of regulation implies the existence of a powerful state and a civil society with weak organisation (Waarden, 1993: 197). Under the conditions governing highly complex democratic societies, this type of regulation is too "robust" and it is effective only in certain sectors (i.e. monetary policy) or in circumstances of crisis (crisis management).

The next pattern of regulation is **negotiatinal**, in which the political system attempts to realise some sort of initiative in cooperation with interested or affected actors, or the initiative is in the hands of representatives of subsystems or interest groups, and they wish to carry it out aided by

the government or political system. This pattern of regulation is based on the sensitive instrumentation of the concerting and collective negotiation mechanisms, which grant not only greater legitimacy to political interventions, but guarantee their success during the implementation stage. It is a discrete, contextual approach (Willke, 1989, 1992) which takes into account the (relative) autonomy and self-reference of other subsystems and parties. It could be said that here a high level of inclusiveness can be attained, although - it must be noted - only within the framework of predefined actors or interests with the capacity to organise and gain some sort of "licence". This type of inclusiveness is usually associated with the terms consociational democracy and neocorporatism - originally occurring at the macro level, while there are other negotiation mechanisms at the meso and micro levels.

In both patterns, the process is one of "concerted action". The consociational or consensus model of democracy, which in some respects represents the alternative to the majoritarian-competitive model³ - it is based on the non-competitive regulation of conflicts - is an example of institutionalised cooperation between parties in the form of the "grand coalition". The best-known example of (macro-)neocorporatism is the tripartite conjunction of representatives of employers, the government and trade unions, usually institutionalised in the form of a social-economic council (Lembruch, 1986; Steiner, 1991). If this type of regulation is to the fore, it is reflected in a strong civil society on the one hand, i.e. in the existence of intermediary interest organisations, and in a strong state on the other.

The third pattern of regulation could be described as **reactive regulation**. The political system reacts *post festum* to initiatives and attempts at self-regulation by social groups and subsystems, either providing support and legality, or merely tolerating and sanctioning them in a negative way. Two principles underlie this pattern of regulation - the principle of subsidiarity, and the principle of deregulation. Under reactive regulation, the existence of a weak state (which does not imply that it is inefficient) and a strong civil society is likely, or, in the case of deregulation, guidance and coordination are left to market mechanisms.

The question for post-socialist societies is how to set up mechanisms for a synergic combination of all three patterns of regulation, which inevitably leads to the issue of a political system's efficiency.

2.3 Efficiency

Efficiency is a concept embracing many factors, and is difficult to measure, but can be roughly defined by two components. The first relates to the capacity to make timely and appropriate decisions, while the second is connected to the implementation of these decisions with a view to achieving regulative intentions or goals. The former component can be described as efficacy, and the latter effectiveness (Linz, 1980; quote: Parri, 1986: 88). These two components enable the political system to develop an appropriate problem solving capacity, and thus "governability". As seen before, however, increased efficiency in the political system is also a means of increasing the efficiency of other subsystems (e.g. economic), and should be evaluated in this respect.

There are at least three factors worth mentioning which contribute to greater efficiency, i.e. efficacy and effectiveness of the political system. Firstly, there are human resources in the sense of competence, professionalism, and response to training, and also specific qualities of the political profession, such as the capacity to form coalitions and devise acceptable compromises (Black, 1970: 865). The issue is therefore "high quality man-power", without which the reasonably rational functioning of political life is inconceivable. The selection of the political-administrative elite is therefore of the utmost importance, whether it be decided on criteria of quality and commitment to developmental goals, or clientistic loyalty and partisanship. The second factor is related to organisational infrastructure: rational organisation and the division of labour, information networks and data processing, the deployment of external experts, etc. The third factor involves the design of the government programme or global development strategy to best enable clarity and consistency in political interventions and measures.

These factors are by no means balanced within all segments of the political system. It can be seen from the start that the executive (government and state administration) and the judiciary have greater organisational complexity and dependence on intellectual and "technocratic" potentials. On the other hand, the parliament is more open to the political community (the public and parties), with a major role played by values and ideologies in confrontation. This openness of the parliament is at expense of its capacity to process problems and information (Habermas, 1992: 430). It follows from the above that the politics is a sphere that can have built-in elements of rationality, efficiency and organisation. However, equally important elements exist, such as the struggle for power, dissent, and the defamation of opponents - a "demagogy" with no respect for consequences. Finally, Max Weber (Weber, 1980: 505-560) has introduced a distinction between the "ethics of belief" (*Gesinnungsethik*) and the "ethics of responsibility" (*Verantwortungsethik*).

3. Political stability in Slovenia

3.1 Stage of elementary consolidation accomplished

Based on the criteria (indicators) of consolidation - the marginalisation of political violence and groups backing the return to an authoritarian regime, the adoption of a new constitution and creation of fundamental institutions for resolving conflicts, the "double exchange of power", the fostering of a political culture embracing the fundamental principles of democracy - it may be considered that the Slovene political system has reached the elementary stage of consolidation, meaning that the conditions for stabilisation are fulfilled. I repeat, however, that the distinction between these two terms is of an analytical nature.

As far as political viewpoints, values, or (essentially) the political culture of the populace are concerned, certain ambivalence can be observed. Indisputably - as demonstrated in annual opinion polls and a relatively high voter turn-out - Slovene citizens are making a positive evaluation of the multi-party system, freedom of speech, and the existence of parliament and other democratic

institutions, at least in principle. At the same time, there is a relatively high level of mistrust in democratic institutions, especially the political parties, but also in the unions and, to some extent, the parliament. Furthermore, findings show that Slovenes are less proud of their democratic institutions than Austrians, for instance. (This is the result of a recent Slovene-Austrian survey of value-orientation.) It is additionally noticeable that numerous people value the opinions and decisions of experts and prominent personalities more than controversial parliamentary debates (Adam, 1993; Toš, 1994).

These surveys of public opinion create an impression of party "partitophobia", a wide-ranging occurrence that even mature Western democracies are not immune from. It is therefore of no surprise that the level of identification with the parties is notably modest, and the behaviour of voters unstable. A well-known American political analyst explains expressions of mistrust and intense criticism towards democratic institutions as a result of the exaggerated expectations and illusions which accompanied the process of democratisation in former socialist societies. Disillusion is a precondition for consolidation; people must realise that democracy cannot provide definite answers to all questions, as it merely grants a means of learning and the gradual solution of problems (Huntington, 1991). This is only one possible explanation, but the fact remains that increasing mistrust and loss of credibility could lead to apathy, which from the point of view of the development of young democracies would certainly be harmful.

3.2 Inclusiveness or policy community: experiments in semi-consociational democracy and neocorporatism

Although the formation of a policy community in the sense of structuring a network of actors which participate in the conceptualisation and implementation of policies has not yet been achieved, foundations can be observed. This lack of formation means that actors (parties, interest groups, the state administration) have not yet been profiled and crystallised to a degree where they as reliable partners could collaborate in the political process. Procedural rules defining their relations and competences are characterised by a similar situation, and the pattern of decision-making is still largely indistinct. Despite all this, certain tendencies may be recognised, although it is not altogether clear whether they are short-term experiments or more lasting structures. Here I refer to the establishment of a grand coalition after the second election, and the founding of a tripartite social-economic council.

Let us first observe the characteristics of the (semi-)consociational model. According to Lijphart (1991: 487), the possibility of development towards this model is greater if the following conditions have been fulfilled: 1) the cabinet contains members of several parties; 2) the ratio of power between the government and the parliament is balanced; 3) the parliament has two houses (bicameral legislature); 4) the structure is federal or decentralised; 5) the constitution can only be altered by a qualified majority of votes; 6) a "judicial review" institution exists which enables the constitutional court to test laws that are in disagreement with the

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constitution; 7) the system is multi-party, rather than two-party; 8) there are several cleavages in the society - not only those of social economic nature - surrounded by "multidimensional" parties; 9) the voting system is proportional. As far as the Slovene political system is concerned, we could establish that it meets all these conditions with the partial exception of condition number four, which is due to the incomplete reformation of local self-government. (Slovenia was characterised by polycentric development from the very birth of industrialisation to the late 19th century.) Items three and eight require additional clarification. With regard to bicameral legislature, it should be noted that the new constitution envisages a special body resembling a senate (the National Council), which, however, is not the second (equal) house of the parliament (the National Assembly), but has been designed to be a corrective body for the parliament, in a sense playing the role of "judicial review" - i.e. a law to which it does not consent must be re-deliberated by the parliament. Even more interesting is its structure, since it is a corporative institution (similar to the senates of Bavaria and the Republic of Ireland), based on the functional representation of organised interest groups (such as unions, the university or professional associations) and regional interests. This body has not yet asserted itself in its operation as a functional part in political decision-making and the policy community, so it is unclear whether its future form and role will remain the same.

The second question is related to cleavages and parties. It is known that the consociational democracy model was introduced to societies with different ethnic, lingual and religious groups. At least superficially, Slovenia is a homogeneous society (almost 90% of the population are ethnic Slovenes, 70% are in principle declared Catholics, while others are atheists or members of different religions), but a more detailed analysis reveals some partly overlapping, shallower cleavages which are either symbolic-cultural or interest generated. Firstly, there is a distinction between the "modern" urban-secular and the "traditional" rural-Catholic camps or millieus. Secondly, a division between the "old" and the "new" elite exists, or between the old and the new parties (and parts of the populace identified with them). The third distinction is made between those gaining from the process of transition, especially within the framework of privatisation and re-distribution of political power and public wealth, and those losing, that is between the "winners" and the "losers". (This distinction does not overlap entirely with the classic division by social class.) The grand coalition consists of parties (the Liberal Democrats as the strongest party, Social Democrats i.e. former Communists, and Christian Democrats) representing all three cleavages. These cleavages are not firm enough to be described as "pillars", so I use the term semi-consociational democracy. Analysts of second elections (held at the end of 1992) have, curiously, found that only the first cleavage was manifested at the time (Vehovar, 1993). Nevertheless, those parties that have remained outside the coalition have recently been articulating the other two cleavages, accusing the old parties (those with their roots in the old regime) of reascending to authority and usurping the levers of economic power. This assumption is probably exaggerated, but it is a fact that the government coalition - especially the Liberal Democrats, a party assembled from old as well as new structures - is not making enough efforts for better clarity and control of "wild capitalism".

In spite of these criticisms, the semi-consociative model appears the most functional, and it is hard to imagine as successful a government based on exclusivism or a majoritarian principle with representatives of a single camp.

Observing the pros and cons of introducing this model, leaning on domestic as well as foreign experience, the following arguments are proposed in favour of the model:

- 1) the grand coalition provides consensual foundations for unpopular and far-reaching decisions, consequently decreasing the scope of unproductive conflicts and resistance;
- 2) the grand coalition is improving the legitimacy of political institutions by including in political decision-making representatives of the principal ideological or cultural groups of the society;
- 3) the grand coalition is not necessarily an "uneven" conglomeration, since party conditioned differences are not playing a major role in political administration. All parties in post-socialism - from the rational point of view - are condemned to taking similar measures once in the government.
- 4) Participation/cooperation at the party level provides a more lenient form of social deliberation and partnership between the government, unions and employers;
- 5) linked with a neo-corporative arrangement, the grand coalition stands a better chance of combining the three types of regulation productively;
- 6) representatives of a wider range of parties or political elites have the opportunity to gain political-administrative competence which is of special importance for smaller systems that have difficulties reaching the "critical volume" in this area;
- 7) the advantage of a small system is not in a high level and wide spread of differentiation, but in its capacity to integrate and create consensus (Geser, 1992).

The deficiencies of this model can be stated as follows:

- 1) parties or elites become too important, which could lead to "partitocracy" together with corruption and uncontrolled distribution of political influence; (for example, the new regime in Italy strongly opposes elements of "consociativism", and is leaning towards the majoritarian model)
- 2) because the opposition is weak, the political arena is less clearly defined;
- 3) due to time-consuming discussions between the coalition partners, some immobility of decision-making may occur, decreasing the government's efficiency;
- 4) parties have less opportunities for profiling its programmes and the formation of political identity.

It should be noted here that certain dysfunctions attached to the consociational model occur in majoritarian systems as well. However, the following statement must be stressed: the success of this (consociational) model depends on the programme and developmental orientation of the grand coalition. If it transforms into a distributive coalition involved in backscratching and the distribution of political positions and resources (if proportionality is exaggerated), positive effects - apart from a temporary appeasement of conflicts between segments of the society - cannot be expected. **If, on the other hand, the grand coalition is**

devoted to developmental goals and it offers a convincing reform programme, it may be more efficient than the majoritarian system government (Scharpf, 1993: 34).

As far as the Slovene experience is concerned, we could say that the consensual basis provided by the grand coalition has not been sufficiently exploited for a better efficiency. One of the main reasons is in its distributive orientation and - the other side of the same story - in an incomplete global reform strategy, unconvincing to the public. It should be mentioned that there have been a few positive effects, primarily in the procedural decision-making capacity (legislation) and temporary appeasement of political tensions (these would have been far stronger without the grand coalition).

Neocorporatism is still in an embryonic form in Slovenia. It has been mentioned that a social-economic council has recently been founded after long negotiations between the government, the unions and employers on income policy and collective agreements, but it has not yet begun to perform its designated activities. I must point out some of the **atypical** circumstances fostering the creation of this arrangement:⁴

- 1) The union scene is pluralistic and fragmented. A division between old and new unions is still present, which increases their mutual competitiveness and struggle for members. They have much difficulty in formulating common positions when negotiating with the other two partners.
- 2) Strictly speaking, the employers' delegation is unformed. The Chamber of Commerce acts as its functional equivalent, in conjunction with the recently founded Employers' Association, but the two institutions represent managers, rather than owners. (The privatisation process is far from complete.)
- 3) The privatisation model applied in Slovenia will create a proprietary structure containing essential elements of "folk" and worker's capitalism, where workers will become co-owners or shareholders in their companies. (Individual cases already exist.) The question arises of how this will affect the unions' operating strategies and social partnership.
- 4) The flowering of neocorporatism is usually correlated with times of conjuncture and prosperity and a strong welfare state, while Slovenia is facing a period of crisis and recession, although this year's forecast shows more promise. A neocorporative arrangement in this context is only realistic if the unions exchange their unique "economist" strategy (advocating higher salaries and social benefits), which in the conditions of crisis identifies with revindicative actions, for that of participative strategy. To do so, the government must provide them with certain guarantees (e.g. active employment policy; that they will be treated as partners in political decision-making; that they will play an active role in the privatisation process).
- 5) Neocorporatism, as a rule, plays a more important role when social democratic parties hold the majority, but other combinations are possible. In the case of the Czech Republic, it appears to be "neoconservative corporatism" (Bruszt, 1993: 73), and similarly in Slovenia.

Although macro-neocorporatism is no longer the most important factor in political decision-making in the West (Schmitter, 1992), it is useful in post-socialist societies, especially true of Slovenia as a small social system. Assuming that the main justification of the neocorporative arrangement is the dependence of small countries' national economies on their presence in the

international market and on their export-led development (Steiner, 1991: 259), the conclusion can be drawn that this arrangement has a future in Slovenia. In addition, its implementation would facilitate the structuring of a policy community and the "unloading" of the government, as more use could be made of the negotiation pattern of regulation, which in turn would aid crisis management (Marin, 1987: 48).

4. Efficiency: "survival" management or crisis management

On the basis of what has been said, especially of the description of a partly structured policy community and the assumption of a distributive character within the grand coalition, it becomes evident that the efficiency of the political system is not at the optimum. As far as the process of decision-making (efficacy) is concerned, time-wasting and delays of some important decisions and laws can be observed. (e.g. the Law on Privatisation, the Law on Local Administration, laws and activities that would represent a more systemised prevention of "wild privatisation" and corruption; in practice, no area is governed consistently, although the parliament passed 132 laws and 100 other acts in 1993 alone.) The most apparent fact is that there are no clear priorities. Regarding the implementation of decisions and the choice of regulation, it appears that the government is often puzzled with what regulation (intervention) pattern (of the above three) would be the most appropriate for the solution of certain problems. The government's liberal position often inappropriately predisposes it to deregulation. It also implements the technocratic-decisionist pattern of regulation, primarily in the form of intervention laws, (accelerated procedure) but avoids this if possible, owing to resistance and lack of organisational resources. Negotiation has had priority in discussions with the unions regarding income policy - a technocratic manner of dealing with this issue had not shown good results. Extenuating circumstances to be considered are the overburdened system of political decision-making, and the fact that Slovenia is a young state still in the process of setting up the infrastructure required for the operation of state institutions and the entire political decision-making system. Qualitative elements affecting efficiency - human resources, the organisational infrastructure and programme of the government - also reflect substantial deficits.

The crucial problem in my mind is the third element, that is the absence or at least incompleteness of an global strategic framework in which to implement reforms and policies. This influences the style of the government's political decisions, which are extremely pragmatic and improvised, while its measures are often inconsistent and ill-balanced. (The most recent example of this is the fiasco of the attempt to reform local government) The government operates under "survival" management, rather than that of crisis and strategic management, which the circumstances definitely require. It is true that many events and decisions cannot be programmed in politics, but it is helpful for a society to have a reasonably consensual strategic plan, a frame of reference to reassure its members that they are not in a leaking boat.

Political crisis management presupposes a strong and competent government, likely to arise in one of three possible frameworks. The first is represented by the majoritarian-competitive model where the winning party takes over the responsibility to solve the crisis with the party frontperson or the prime minister acting as the "emergency leader" - Margaret Thatcher was an example (Ranney, 1990). The second variant occurs within the framework of an authoritarian, but developmentally successful, regime (e.g. the four Asian Tigers during certain periods) that is able to implement the technocratic-decisionist pattern of regulation without scruples. The third option is the consociational-corporatist model with the formation of a **strong and competent government on large-scale consensus**. This formula is of vital importance for Slovenia.

5. Discussion

From the subject matter above, a few principal accents and indicated links can be drawn that may be relevant for further analyses of the role of state and political system in the modernisation of post-socialist societies. At the same time, certain questions arise.

The fundamental conclusion is that Slovenia has reached the elementary stage in consolidating democracy, but not developed yet the "critical mass" of mechanism and resources for **political stability**. The question whether it will be capable of doing this remains unanswered. I am rather attempting to discern tendencies and trends concentrating on capacity of society and the political system to generate a consensual basis for strategic political decisions. The (hypo)thesis that the simplest way for Slovenia to reach political stability through the consociational-neocorporatist model has not been unambiguously confirmed, despite strong evidence in favour. In any case, the claim that "new hybrid institutional configurations" are emerging in post-socialist transitional societies (Pickel, 1993: 8) appears plausible, and the principle of equifunctionality (there are different ways of achieving a similar goal) should be given some consideration. I am mentioning this to point out the diversity of examples, and include here the formula which I consider appropriate for political crisis management: a strong and competent government based on consensus. Theoreticians of consociational democracy will have no difficulty in discovering an element which - at least in some views - corresponds more to the majoritarian system, i.e. a strong government.

The possibility of achieving stability and creating the conditions for societal self-regulation and **self-limitation of politics** is only realistic if the political system is not only an initiator, but also the **subject of modernisation** (Vobruba, 1992), wherein it can develop a learning and reflection capacity. In this respect, an interesting assumption is that a political subsystem is not only based on power, but also on mechanisms of (social) learning (Luhmann, 1986: 91). This is one of the factors that can support the assumption of political development and evolution; the other factor is connected with the integration of post-socialist societies into West European institutions, and it denotes the forced accelerated learning of politics. Accelerated evolution in this way is nothing else but accelerated social learning.

NOTES

1. It should be pointed out that the evolution or modernisation of post-socialist societies has many specific features, of which I here mention two. Firstly, there is a large number of concurrent modernisation tasks and goals. These societies are therefore not only dealing with a single transition (from an authoritarian regime to democracy), but also a transition to a market economy, and in the case of Slovenia, the formation of a new state (triple transition). Another feature is the fact that democracy is the basis for the introduction of market economy and not vice versa. Bearing this in mind, it is easy to understand the assumption of overloading of the political system.
2. In the literature of political science and political sociology, the notion of stability is dealt with in a rather unsystematic way, while there is almost no record of the efficiency of the political system. Lipset (1963: 68), in a nutshell, defines stability as a composition of legitimacy and effectiveness. Lijphart (1977: 4), on the other hand, does enumerate elements of stability: the preservation of the system, civil order, legitimacy and efficiency.
3. As pointed out by Sartori, these two patterns should be taken as ideal types, as they are in reality non-existent in their pure form. Empirical political systems are ordered on a continuum where stronger tendencies in one or another direction can be observed. (Sartori, 1987: 238-241). In empirical analysis, Lijphart found the same results (1991).
4. I base my discussion of tendencies towards social partnership on a series of interviews with representatives of the government, the trade unions and the Chamber of Commerce conducted by my group within the Ljubljana Institute of Social Sciences.

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