

TOWARD THE DOMINANCE OF THE EXECUTIVE

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Summary This article examines the recent processes of globalization and (within this framework) Europeanization, with a focus on the changes in national political systems (particularly in post-communist EU member states) due to the pressures of these processes. The main thesis is that national executives have been gaining power in relation to the legislative due to international pressures. The international financial and economic crisis has added to this trend as countries become more financially dependent on international centers of power which demand efficient economic liberalization from national executives as a precondition for the required international loans. The case study of Slovenia is presented from a comparative perspective (in some aspects being a deviant case) so as to offer new theoretical insights into the mechanisms of strengthening the national executives.

Keywords globalization, Europeanization, post-communist states, executive, crisis

Introduction

The latest wave of globalization, which includes European integration processes, has brought about new challenges to the processes of democratization. Among the key problems is the evolving power of both governments and the supranational financial and economic power centers, including intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank, IMF and OECD. In this article, we will examine the trends in the relationships between the national executives and national legislatures

in relation to the globalization/Europeanization processes. Since a core of post-communist countries have recently undergone a transition to democracy, a consolidation of democracy, as well as European integration, and since all these processes have been very much embedded in the latest wave of globalization, they make for a good example in terms of analyzing the interference of the processes and their outcome.

Unlike the old EU member states, which originally initiated European integration processes for reasons of eco-

nomy and security, the post-communist states joined these processes in the 1990s based on expectations that the processes would also bring about a boost to democratization. Even though the post-2004 EU member states had been closely monitored during the accession stage and pressured to fulfill (among other things) the Copenhagen political criteria, this pressure dissipated once these countries had become full EU members. The exception being the recent members: Rumania, Bulgaria and Croatia. Additionally, concern has been growing that the EU as a regional political system is failing to meet its own criteria of democracy. Researchers highlight the processes that have led to increasing the role of the executive and the democratic deficit in the EU political system.

Our thesis in this article is that, in post-communist states that have joined the European integration processes, the national executive has been gaining power in relation to the legislative due to the combined effects of (1) the domestic consolidation of democracy in post-communist EU member states, (2) the pressures of international economic liberalization, and (3) Europeanization (understood as the adaptations made to the domestic political system in order to manage EU affairs). The current financial and economic crisis is strengthening this trend whilst simultaneously allowing more radical changes to take place in a relatively short time frame.

Our argument is based on: (1) research into the processes of consolidation of post-communist democracies since the democratic transition, in particular examining the changing relationship between the executive and the legislature (at the expense of legislature); (2) research into the impacts of the global

pressure for economic liberalization on the political power restructuring of the national political systems (strengthening the executive in financially-dependent countries); and (3) research into the national adaptations made in order to manage EU affairs (the strengthening of national executives at the expense of national parliaments), while also taking account of the intervention of the international financial and economic crisis. The thesis is tested in depth on the case of Slovenia. In line with Dogan and Pe'lassy's suggestions regarding the case study methodological strategy (Dogan and Pe'lassy, 1990: 107-110), this case is not selected as an illustration, but rather as a comparative case study, and in some aspects as a deviant case study that brings about new theoretical insights. The case of Slovenia closely resembles that of Sweden in that (1) it represents an example of a country joining the EU after the European Council had already become well institutionalized and the national executives empowered, while (2) the increase in empowerment of the national executive has taken place due to Europeanization pressures even when domestic political circumstances had become unfavorable for the empowerment of the chief executive (Johansson and Tallberg, 2010). Slovenia also makes a good case study because it has not experienced any major constitutional or electoral engineering. The article builds on the existing research published by international and Slovenian scholars.

The article is structured as follows. Firstly, we will present the research findings on (1) the domestic processes of consolidation of young post-communist democracies, (2) the impacts of the global pressures for economic liberalization and the related strengthening of the role

of national executives, (3) the impacts of globalization (particularly Europeanization) on the re-arrangement of national political systems, and (4) the impacts of the current global financial and economic crisis on the re-arrangement of the relationships between the national executive and legislative. In a separate section, we will study the case of Slovenia in detail. This will be followed by the chapter Conclusions.

The Domestic Processes of Consolidation of Young Democracies

The power relationship between the national executives in the parliaments in the new democracies has changed dramatically. In the first decade following the transition to democracy, parliaments were particularly assertive and even aggressive in their attempts to control the executive (Olson, 2004; Mansfeldova, Olson and Rakušanová, eds., 2004; Ilonszki and Olson, 2011). The weaknesses of the executives in new democracies stemmed from the dynamic party systems and the fact that governments tended to be unstable. While the first decade was characterized by parliaments frequently amending government bills (Olson and Norton, 2008: 174), the second decade was characterized by the increasing power of the executive in relation to the legislative (Kopecký, 2004). Since party systems institutionalized and consolidated during the second decade, parties have been able to control their MPs and the executives have not only gained in power in relation to the parliaments but have actually begun to control them (Kopecký, 2004; Olson and Norton, 2008; Fish and Kroenig, 2009). However, a destabilization of many post-socialist party systems has recently been observed. This has included the

phenomena of new parties both entering parliaments (see analyses by Allan Sikk, Tim Haughton and Kevin Deegan-Krause) and joining the executives (Fink-Hafner and Krašovec, in print). In such circumstances, the strengthening of the executive may be more attributable to the increasing importance of the interaction between the national-level and EU-level decision-making (Johansson and Tallberg, 2010) than to the destabilized national politics.

The Impacts of the Global Pressures for Economic Liberalization and the Related Strengthening of the Role of National Executives

Since the 1970s, privatization and liberalization have become global rules. The early neoliberal reform (known also as ‘Thatcherism’ and ‘Reagonomics’) brought about a new trend toward economic liberalism combined with a New Right understanding of the limited role of the state (characterized by a preference for a thin state, the perception that social problems were primarily the responsibility of private individuals and the family, and the rare intervention of the state in the field of social policy – only in extraordinary circumstances) as well as limited consultative politics – which in particular included the disintegration of partnership-like policy networks (such as policy communities in the United Kingdom and various neo-corporatist arrangements). The diffusion of the neoliberal doctrine from countries like the USA, the United Kingdom and Australia has affected organizations like the OECD, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund – IMF (Andrews, 2012: 103-104). It can be said that the diffusion of this idea has assumed the proportions of clear interna-

tional pressure on countries dependent on foreign financial support to follow the neoliberal paradigm. And the national executives of these countries have been held primarily responsible for fulfilling the conditions set by these international organizations in order to access the international loans. Under such conditions, the executives are pressured to perform efficiently in fulfilling the externally-imposed obligations, often at the expense of domestic democratic deliberation and decision-making, while legislatures have been losing their power to challenge the executives.

Indeed, many post-communist countries were already dependent on international financing at the time of their transition to democracy. In such circumstances, the responsibility of national executives in fulfilling the (pre)conditions of international financial organizations (IFO) has made them more externally-oriented in their actions, and this has had a detrimental effect on the involvement of other national actors. National parliaments in post-communist countries in particular have lost ground to the executives (also) due to the pressures for international liberalization and their country's subsequent dependence on IFOs.

Furthermore, recent research reveals that domestic economic problems motivate governments to seek examples of successful policies, while international organizations offer channels for policy learning, and when both domestic and international factors interact, the effects of each are magnified (Fink, 2013). As a rule, post-communist countries experiencing multiple transitions simultaneously (particularly during the 1990s) – referred to as 'rebuilding the ship at sea' (Elster, Offe, and Preuss with Boenker, Goetting and Rueb, 1998) – were in this

position and were involved in many voluntary international policy co-operation processes.

By voluntarily participating in EU integration processes, the post-communist countries in fact came under additional pressure from the EU, which followed the same line as the other international organizations. As a precondition of EU membership, the EU promoted economic rules which were well beyond the scope of the *acquis communautaire* proper, and thus created considerable pressure for a form of neoliberalism in the East (Grabbe, 2003; Andrews, 2012). The EU has also implanted into the domestic politics of the accession states the international and transnational dimension of a particular democratic *capitalist model* which is unfriendly to consultative politics, especially social partnerships (Bohle and Greskovits, 2007). In fact, Slovenia has been the only recent post-communist country in the EU in which a form of neo-corporatism managed to interfere with the linking of the national economy to the world economy; whereas in the other accession countries either a neoliberal type of capitalism (the Baltic states) or an embedded neoliberal type (in the Visegrád countries) prevailed (*ibid.*).

The *neoliberal shift* emerged in the EU in 2005 and emphasized the need for growth and for considering pragmatic (neoliberal) means of overcoming the EU's lagging behind the USA in terms of economic competitiveness (Ágh, 2010). The implementation of the Lisbon strategy (2000),¹ which was created as a blueprint for a more competitive EU,

¹ Presidency Conclusions. Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March 2000, http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm (17.8.2013).

gave a boost to the implementation of experimentalist modes of governance. One such mode was the Open Method of Coordination (OMC),² which in the first instance involves governmental actors and selected experts (Borrás and Greve, eds., 2004; Radaelli, 2003; Borrás and Radaelli, 2010). In fact, the OMC empowered core executives through centralizing and politicizing the co-ordination of EU matters at the national level (Borrás and Peters, 2011). The neoliberal orientation effectively led to questions being asked about the EU's democratic character, as well as to questions about the EU's impact on national-level democracy by the *de facto* increase in the involvement of the national executives in soft EU policymaking distanced from democratic (national and supranational) policy processes.

The Impacts of Globalization (Particularly Europeanization) on the Re-Arrangement of National Political Systems

Globalization has been closely linked to an increase in cooperation among governments in solving transnational, global problems (see e.g. Webb, 1991; Rosenau and Czempiel, eds., 1992; Drezner, 2001, 2007). Furthermore, global policy co-operation, policy co-ordination and dissemination have increasingly been taking place. In this context, European nations have been developing a unique regional political system, which includes sub-national, national, intergovernmental and supranational levels of authority and their mutual interactions.

² Open Method of Coordination, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/open_method_coordination_en.htm (17.8.2013).

General Trends within the Framework of the EU

The latest wave of globalization has induced the emergence of an increasingly politically-integrated EU. The EU's increasing economic integration has necessitated the creation of a regional political system which bears the hallmarks of a state. However, the EU has retained its double-tier functioning in the global context. Both individual member states as well as the EU as an entity play specific roles in the global policymaking.

Nevertheless, the federal (supranational EU) and confederate (intergovernmental) elements still persist within the EU political system. Besides the usual intergovernmental character of multi-level government (MLG) (Hooghe and Marks, 2001), additional intergovernmental policy coordination is increasingly common. MLG in the EU political system involves extensive policy coordination among bureaucrats and ministers in numerous working groups and committees linked to the European Commission and the Council (Bergström, 2005). Additionally, a domestic information deficit about the usual MGL policy coordination has evolved, which has disabled domestic legislatures attempting to effectively control their government on EU matters (Raunio, 2007). The increased use of the OMC and other forms of intergovernmental policy coordination in policy fields in which the EU is not allowed to make binding legislation further obscures the related policy processes. It is because the non-binding nature of 'soft law instruments' effectively involves the national executives that it also offers a possible way of expanding the role and power of the EU-level executive: the Commission (*ibid.*: 165-167). So far, national parliaments have failed

to effectively control the executive in MGL policy processes, and have done even less to control national executives within the framework of the OMC to such an extent that the OMC poses a serious threat to the actual decision-making role of national parliaments (*ibid.*: 169-170, 172). This is particularly the case for accession countries, which are not only expected to adopt the hard law (the *acquis*), but also the *soft law* (the Bologna reform of higher education being an indicative example).

Furthermore, the national political systems of EU member states have had to adapt to managing EU affairs 'at home'. Research into the experiences of the older EU member states has shown that national executives adapted first and most compared to other national institutions. National parliaments have not only been latecomers to the process of Europeanization, but also 'losers' or even 'victims' of Europeanization (see Norton, ed., 1996; Maurer and Wessels, eds., 2001; Raunio, 2008). While parliaments have – at least on a functional level – adapted to their role of giving legitimacy to the national executives, they have largely failed to build a connection between voters and EU-level policy processes (Auel and Raunio, eds., 2012). Since EU matters tend to be debated in parliamentary working bodies and are only seldom plenary, and since the specialized EU committees in many EU countries are closed to the public (Raunio, 2011), parliaments in fact add to the overall diminishing transparency of EU policy processes. Indeed, the EU rule transfer involving not only *acquis* conditionality but also democratic conditionality has not prevented the adaptation of national systems in new post-communist EU members (see more in

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004) at the expense of national parliaments and the overall transparency of (EU) policymaking.³

Post-communist New EU Member States

By the time the accession processes were under way, the executives had already begun to dominate the parliaments in the accession states. Moreover, these executives of the post-communist accession states had also represented the countries in the negotiations with the EU. As a rule, these processes had not been transparent enough to systematically involve national parliaments and the broader public. Furthermore, in order to insert the *acquis* into the legal framework of the accession states, the bills needed to be adopted prior to full EU membership; consequently, parliaments were pressured into rapidly adopting them in order to catch up with the planned accession dynamics. Taking into account the trend in the empowerment of national executives, both in the process of accession negotiations and the national political system adaptations to full EU membership, the thesis of the

³ For example, see *Second Biannual Report: Developments in European Union Procedures and Practices Relevant to Parliamentary Scrutiny*, prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and presented to the XXXII Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of the European Union (22-23 November, 2004, the Hague, the Netherlands) and *Third Biannual Report: Developments in European Union Procedures and Practices Relevant to Parliamentary Scrutiny*, prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and presented to the XXXIII Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of the European Union (17-18 May, 2005, Luxembourg).

'import of democratic deficit' (Grabbe, 2003) has proved to be correct at least to some extent.

The Undemocratic Alienation of the Executive as a Global and European Trend

For some time, researchers have observed the presidentialization of parliamentary democracies – that is to say, the shifting of national political power to favor the executive (Poguntke, 2000). Globalization and Europeanization have added to this phenomenon, especially when governments have negotiated intergovernmentally coordinated policies or particular EU policies behind closed doors. In such processes, national parliaments not only lose control; they also find it difficult not to ratify the policies imposed on the national political system. When Poguntke (*ibid.*) analyzes the presidentialization of European politics, he also emphasizes that these Europeanization processes do not benefit national governments in general, but in fact strengthen the party elites of the national governmental parties.

Overall, the main political trend is undemocratic in liberal-democratic terms. However, at least occasionally, information on the hidden segment of intergovernmental and supranational/EU-level decision-making is leaked to the public and receives democratic input – albeit a delayed one. A good example of such undemocratic alienation of the executive in the processes of globalization and particularly Europeanization is the case of the Anti-counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA).⁴ The controversial

case of ACTA has raised an unprecedented public concern in the EU and in its member states due to the lack of transparency in the negotiating process. Public concerns have focused especially on the undermining of fundamental rights and freedoms in the EU by ACTA provisions. Furthermore, the agreement is believed to conflict both with the *acquis communautaire* of the EU and with the WTO TRIPS Agreement (Matthews, 2012). In this particular case, the EU has learnt a lesson in the pan-European mobilization of civil society as well as in the increasing responsiveness of EU institutions to public pressures and the blocking of the policy process that led to the implementation of ACTA. In this context, the national actors of each country learned some lessons.

The Impacts of the Current Global Financial and Economic Crisis

The decision-making processes aimed at solving the financial and economic crisis in the EU have occurred in such a way as to further strengthen the trend toward the overall empowerment of the national executives. Although the crisis management primarily involved frequent but informal Council meetings, the decisions of these meetings have been imposed on the member states. Without changing legal rules and without ensuring democratic legitimization, the *de facto* power of both national executives and their intergovernmental meetings has increased. Furthermore, the additional subordination of national governments to macro-economic criteria within the Eurozone has been intro-

⁴ Anti-counterfeiting Trade Agreement, http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2011/may/tradoc_147937.pdf (22.8.2013). Anti-coun-

terfeiting Agreement, Electronic Frontier Foundation, <https://www EFF.org/issues/acta> (22.8.2013).

duced, which allows the supranational level to enforce the liberalization paradigm (Jabko, 2011). The international financial organizations (IFO) offering the loans have also been in a position to dictate the austerity strategy to the governments of countries with budgetary debts, while the European Commission has used this as an opportunity to achieve its goal of fiscal consolidation.⁵ In fact, the term 'troika' has even been coined to describe the European Union (EU)⁶ – in practice being represented by the EU's executive arm, the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); all three collaborate closely in supervising the progress of Eurozone countries requiring bailout loans. It was the European Council (in fact, the intergovernmental body of EU member states), which on 25 March 2011 adopted a decision which led to the amendment of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union by the insertion of a new paragraph into Article 136 of the Treaty, allowing for the use of the financial stability mechanism

(ESM) to extend EU-level control over a particular EU member state which could be said to have endangered the stability of the Eurozone (De Witte, 2011). Given that the number of critical Eurozone countries has been increasing, it would seem pertinent to question both the legitimacy and oversight of ever stronger European financial institutions, as well as the power relations between the EU member states with very different economic and political power (Lord, 2012).⁷ As already proven by the decision-making on the 2007-2013 Financial Perspective, the Council holds the *de facto* upper hand in EU budgetary matters, and national interests (as presented by national executives) tend to dominate (Rant and Mrak, 2010: 347-348, 365-366). National parliaments have been rather slow and differentiated in developing instruments to scrutinize the activity of their national executives regarding European Council meetings (Heftler *et al.*, 2013).

The post-communist EU member states have found themselves in a group of EU member states (together with the less-developed Mediterranean countries and Ireland) struggling for the status of net recipient from the EU budget. Recently, the already peripheral role of post-communist member states (Watt, 2012: 49-50) in the EU has been further worsened by the international financial and economic crisis. In fact, the crisis hit the peripheral countries of eastern and southern Europe and Ireland more than others (*ibid.*: 54-55). As the crisis in the Eurozone has been primarily interpreted as a consequence of governmental mismanagement, the national govern-

⁵ European Commission (2011) Annual Growth Survey: Advancing the EU's comprehensive response to the crisis. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, COM (2011) 11 final. Brussels.

⁶ More on each of the three groups can be found in Kabir Chibber, Who Are the Troika that Greece Depends On?, BBC News Business, 4 October 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-15149626> (18.8.2013). For other meaning of 'troika' in the EU context, see What Is the 'Troika?', http://www.eu-oplysningen.dk/euo_en/spsv/all/40/ (18.8.2013).

⁷ The largest economies (particularly Germany) tend to dictate the conditions of particular bailouts. See Kabir Chibber, *op. cit.*

ments in the countries running a deficit (which were in fact also peripheral countries) were not only blamed for the problems of their national budget deficits but also pressured into introducing austerity measures (*ibid.*: 67) even after it had become obvious that such a strategy contributes to the increase in socio-economic and political problems while failing to produce the expected results.

Ultimately, it can be said that the national executives have been gaining power in relation to the national legislatures, while at the same time the supranational executive in the case of EU and international intergovernmental organizations have been gaining power over national executives. As the case of Greece has shown (particularly the subordination of the Greek government to supranational policies during the ongoing fiscal crisis), (1) such a pattern of governance can undermine the very foundations of the Lisbon governance architecture (Andreou, 2012), and (2) these power relations may persist even when the citizens in the particular country vigorously protest the policies being imposed by such power constellations (Vradis and Dalakoglou, eds., 2011).

The Case Study of Slovenia from a Comparative Perspective

In terms of the political developments of the last two decades, Slovenia shares several characteristics with other Central European post-communist countries as well as certain unique particularities. Among the shared characteristics has been the increasing dominance of the executive in relation to the legislative in the domestic processes of the consolidation of democracy. Slovenia – like all post-communist new EU member states – has also clearly

strengthened the role and powers of the executive while adapting the national political system in order to manage EU matters. However, in opting for a model in which the national parliament plays a more prominent role in the national coordination of EU matters, Slovenia is unique. Also, Slovenia had (until very recently) proved to be an exception in terms of its socio-economic and financial situation. Since the start of its transitional phase, Slovenia experienced successful socio-economic developments and economic growth over the past two decades without dependence on international financial loans, as well as having experienced a rather successful neo-corporatist approach to solving macro-economic policy problems. However, the recent international financial and economic crisis has made Slovenia financially dependent on international loans and subordinated the national executive to the supranational centers of power. Meanwhile the national executive has begun to press on the legislative to adopt measures prepared by the national executive under the international and supranational (EU) pressures. Therefore, Slovenia's recent financial vulnerability threatens to question the country's exceptionalism.

The Shifting Positioning of the Executive in the Domestic Processes of Consolidation in the Young Democracy

The Slovenian parliament has not been exceptional in re-arranging power relations between the parliament and the executive in favor of the latter to aid the process of democratic consolidation. The beginning of democratic parliamentarism was characterized by the parliament's frequent blocking of government initiatives, which even resulted in the postponement of urgently need-

ed legislation – such as the laws relating to privatization (Zajc, 1994: 106). One of the main mechanisms by which the executive has subsequently gained the upper hand has been a tendency toward frequent (mis)use of the institution of urgent (effectively meaning shorter) legislative procedure and governmental pressure on the parliament to adopt issues on the parliamentary agenda, and more recently also the adoption of the rule that a bill may be sent back to the government for amending (Zajc, 2000: 211). During the first two decades, the dependence of the executive on the parliamentary majority was established in such a way that the traditional relationship between the government as the author and the parliament as the critic of bills did not exist (Rangus, 2012) – as with older democracies in recent history. However, Slovenia's executive-legislative relationship today is exceptional, even by the standards of Central European post-communist countries; the executive is able to set the agenda of parliament and parliament's policy outputs. According to Zubek (2011: 173), eighty-six per cent of all the bills have come from the government, and their success has been the highest (ninety-five per cent) compared to the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. As with the process of consolidation of political parties and the party system (Fink-Hafner, 2012), governments have increasingly held to inter-party coalition agreements; in fact, political parties have increasingly intruded in the legislative processes by shifting the key debate from the parliamentary arena to the party arena (Igličar, 2010). Consequently, the national parliament has shifted from its basic legislative role toward a predominantly monitoring, representative and legitimizing

role (Rangus, 2012: 243). This pattern of parliamentary-executive relations is not only similar to the second-decade pattern witnessed in other Central European post-communist countries (Ilonszki and Olson, 2011), but also to the second-decade pattern in Spain and Portugal (Leston-Bandeira, 2004). However, what is striking in Slovenia is that, in light of the mismanagement of the financial and economic crisis as well as the numerous scandals, the consolidated party system has been radically shaken up. New parties have not only gained a considerable share of the seats in the parliament, they have also dominated the executive (for details, see the European Journal of Political Science Political Data Yearbooks). From the domestic political point of view, the executive is regarded as particularly weak since the former leader of the Prime Minister's own party has been charged by the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption. The governing coalition is also regarded as fragile, and the level of trust in the government remains very low.⁸

*The Impacts of Global Pressures
for Economic Liberalization and the
Related Strengthening of the Role
of the National Executive*

Until very recently, Slovenia's exceptionalism was marked by a resistance to the pressures of international liberalization. This was primarily due to the fact that the country had not been dependent on international financial organizations. Also, Slovenia's neo-corporatist arrangements and its more consultative style of the executive compared to oth-

⁸ See the results of the Politbarometer longitudinal public opinion surveys, available at http://www.cjm.si/?q=PB_rezultati.

er post-communist executives produced a particular (neo-corporatist) variation of capitalism (Bohle and Greskovits, 2007), which allowed for the maintenance of a rather stable and prosperous welfare-state. Indeed, while Slovenia's 1991 constitution establishes Slovenia as 'a welfare state/*socialna država*' and subsequent policies effectively maintained the welfare state, the governments in the Baltic states have neither significantly protected the national economies nor maintained social welfare institutions. Meanwhile, although the Visegrád countries have to some extent been protective, Slovenia is not comparable on the same level. Unlike other countries, Slovenia was previously able to rely on its solid financial and economic basis (Mencinger, 1997), which enabled its various governments to opt for gradualism in economic transformation and for the development of neo-corporatist arrangements which enabled the compromises required in order to balance socially inclusive development (Bohle and Greskovits, 2007; Stanojević and Krašovec, 2011). Until very recently, Slovenian governments were relatively autonomous in their relationships with the external financial powers and (with the support of the parliament) opted for gradualist policy changes in all key policy fields, including privatization and the social functions of the state.

*The Impacts of Globalization
(Particularly Europeanization)
on the Re-arrangement
of the National Political System*

Even though the establishment of a newly independent state depended heavily on international and European supranational politics, Slovenia quickly received international recognition

without problem. Internally, the establishment of a new state necessitated the establishment of state structures/policy sectors, which had previously only functioned at the former Yugoslav federal level (including international relations, finances and defense institutions and policies). In the process of multiple transitions, the Slovenian government intensively sought opportunities for policy learning and started with a lively involvement in the various intergovernmental policy co-operations (see more in Fink-Hafner, ed., 2010). Upon joining the European integration processes, this phenomenon intensified.

In the process of accession to the EU, the Slovenian parliament (like other post-communist parliaments involved in the 2004 accession wave) was under considerable pressure to adopt hundreds of bills in a very short period of time in order to insert the *acquis* into the national law prior to becoming a full EU member state. Based on the agreement among parliamentary parties, the legislative procedure was simplified and political consensus was achieved so as not to politicize EU-related matters. Numerous laws were passed without significant deliberation to harmonize Slovenian law with the *acquis*.

Europeanization in terms of the overall adaptation of Slovenia's political system to the functioning of the multi-level EU system has resulted in both Slovenia joining the general trend and the persistence of some elements of Slovenia's democratic idiosyncrasies. However, the general trend of empowering the executive in adapting the national political system to cope with the domestic managing of EU affairs has been evident, not only in its formal re-arrangement, but especially in its func-

tioning. From the normative perspective, we can observe Slovenia's proximity to a small number of EU member states which have emphasized the role of the national parliament in managing EU affairs⁹ at the time of the country's accession as well as currently (Hefftlar *et al.*, 2013). In terms of the real-life functioning, the executive dominates the national parliament in the management of EU affairs (Košič, 2008; Fink-Hafner, 2008, 2011).

The first year of Slovenia's full membership of the European Union saw a significant reduction in the role of the parliament in managing European Union matters. When Slovenia took on the EU Presidency, the parliament primarily assumed a coordinating role and in so doing chose to set aside Slovenia's national interests. Certainly, following the accession stage, the National Assembly became less involved in EU-related matters. It can also be said that, in the phase of 'policy-taking' from the European Union, one of Slovenia's distinctive features had been its commitment to the principle of full transparency in integration with the European Union,¹⁰ while in the context of Slovenia's full EU membership (in fact, in circumstances where Slovenia can take part in EU po-

licymaking) the role of the parliament and the level of transparency in EU affairs decreased in normative rules (law) and even more so in practice. Additionally, there has been a major increase in the level of secrecy in managing European Union issues. The National Assembly has tended simply to approve the government's proposals prepared by the executive, and the ability of the parliament to control the government in its participation in decision-making processes at the EU level has declined. Since the National Assembly does not efficiently use the available mechanisms and methods of involvement in European policymaking – namely oversight of the national executive – Slovenia is contributing to the European Union's democratic deficit. It comes as no surprise that Slovenia's involvement in soft-law making is no less democratically problematic than in other EU member states (see more in Fink-Hafner, ed., 2010). The same can be said of Slovenia's involvement in the recent ACTA scandal. Only following international public revelation of the scandal was public debate opened in Slovenia and consequently Slovenia's ratification was 'frozen'.¹¹

The Impact of the Current Global Financial and Economic Crisis

Until the recent international financial and economic crisis, Slovenia had not been dependent on the financing of international financial organizations. Of

⁹ See The Law on Collaboration between the National Assembly and the Government on European Union Matters (*Zakon o sodelovanju med državnim zborom in vlado v zadevah evropske unije - ZSDZVZEU*), 25 March, 2004, National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia (*Državni zbor Republike Slovenije*), Number: 007-01/03-11/3.

¹⁰ For a detailed comparative analysis of the transparency of the accession and the post-accession stage of EU-related policy processes, see Fink-Hafner (2008).

¹¹ Tudi slovenska vlada se nagiba k zamrznitvi ratifikacije Acte, *Dnevnik*, 16.2.2012, <http://www.dnevnik.si/clanek/1042510249> (22.8.2013); Slovenija – Acta: tudi naša vlada razmišlja o zamrznitvi, *TIMES.si*, 16.2.2012, <http://www.times.si/slovenija/acta-tudi-nasa-vlada-razmislja-o-zamrznitvi--62f0158c-cf.html> (22.8.2013).

critical importance for understanding the recent major financial change in Slovenia is the fact that, in the period immediately after joining the EU (2005-2008), Slovenia's economic growth was based on easy access to foreign finance. When the international financial crisis hit Slovenia, the government decided to cover the increased social transfers, thus increasing the public debt whilst, crucially, Slovenian banks, citizens, the non-financial sector and the state relied on loans from abroad (Mencinger, 2012: 77). So, although Slovenia is among the least indebted EU member states and is the least indebted new EU member state (of the post-2004 accession rounds), Slovenia's economic activity has become stifled by the negative investments of the banks and the extraordinarily high share of enterprises in credit banks (*ibid.*, note 25). Many economists, including Mencinger, warn that in such circumstances rapid financial and monetary tightening would fail to eliminate the dependency on credit as well as make it difficult to tackle the problem of liquidity faced by enterprises or the need to decrease banks loans from abroad, while (in such conditions) only the state would be able to foster economic activity, and this would have to be achieved by obtaining more loans from abroad (*ibid.*: 78). Nevertheless, the various international pressures on Slovenia to adopt austerity measures in line with the neoliberal model have been increasing. An indicative case is the parliament's adoption of the government proposal to amend the constitution to limit state debt,¹² while three out

of four parties in government which had previously opposed such an amendment openly admitted that they had rethought their position due to external pressures¹³ (acting against the demands of the social protests).¹⁴ Furthermore, in the context of international pressure for reform, the

of the Republic of Slovenia on 24.5.2013, <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=201347&stevilka=1777> (30.8.2013).

¹³ See more in Je. G., Vlada začela postopek ratifikacije fiskalnega pakta, Delo.si, 29.3.2012, <http://www.delo.si/gospodarstvo/makromonitor/vlada-zacela-postopek-ratifikacije-fiskalnega-pakta.html> (30.8.2013); Predlog ustavnega zakona z obrazložitvijo ustavnega zakona za spremembo in dopolnitev 148. člena Ustave Republike Slovenije, http://ucilnica.fmf.uni-lj.si/pluginfile.php/10071/mod_forum/attachment/2462/8-predlog%20ustavnega%20zakona%20z%20obrazlo%20%BEitvijo.doc (30.9.2013); Poročilo k Predlogu za začetek postopka za spremembo 148. člena Ustave Republike Slovenije z osnutkom ustavnega zakona (UZ148), EPA 206-VI, Državni zbor RS, <http://imss.dz-rs.si/imis/ff018ae62a985aef1936.pdf> (30.9.2013); Bratuškova: Fiskalno pravilo je zmaga vseh, 24ur.com, 24.5.2013, <http://www.24ur.com/novice/slovenija/danes-dan-d-za-vnos-fiskalnega-pravila.html> (30.8.2013).

¹⁴ See e.g. Izjava za medije Gibanja za dostojno delo in socialno družbo o predvidenih spremembah ustave, ki se nanašajo na ureditev referendumov ter fiskalno pravilo, http://www.socialna-druzba.si/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=185:izjava-za-medijsko-gibanje-za-dostojno-delo-in-socialno-druzbo-o-predvidenih-spremembah-ustave-ki-se-nanašajo-na-ureditev-referendumov-ter-fiskalno-pravilo&catid=1:novice (30.8.2013); Erika Repovž, Je. G., Sindikati proti zapisu fiskalnega pravila v ustavo, GZS za, Delo.si, 10.04.2013, <http://www.delo.si/gospodarstvo/finance/sindikati-proti-zapisu-fiskalnega-pravila-v-ustavo-gzs-za.html> (30.8.2013).

¹² Constitutional Act amending Article 148 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, adopted by the National Assembly

rapid (and reduced) legislative procedure has prevailed, which has prevented any proper policy deliberation from taking place.

The fact is that Slovenia has joined the ranks of the problematic countries at a point in time when the logic of austerity measures as a way out of the crisis is being severely questioned. While the IMF has even admitted it may have been wrong¹⁵ and the EU also seems to be re-considering the austerity paradigm, Slovenia is once again assuming the role of a 'guinea pig' for the revised solution to the financial crisis.¹⁶

Ultimately, it can be said that the pattern of subordination of the national executive to external pressures and its relative strengthening in relation to the national legislative and social partners did not originate with the international financial and economic crisis; rather, the crisis accelerated the existing trends in the weakening of the parliament in relation to the executive, and in the weakening of trade unions. Similarly, the crisis took the form that it did in Slovenia pri-

marily due to the country-specific domestic management of the economy and politics, which had made Slovenia financially (and politically) vulnerable. However, by becoming dependent on international loans, Slovenia has become increasingly similar to other post-communist (*de facto* economically and politically peripheral) countries. The authority now resides with the international financial organizations and with the EU (the European Commission) to dictate the crisis and the post-crisis model of economic management in Slovenia. In such circumstances, the national executive behaves predominantly as the key national actor responsible for the execution of external dictates by using its parliamentary majority as a 'voting machine' to ensure the adoption of all imperative policy decisions.

Conclusions

In this article, we have discussed the general tendency of national executives to acquire power in relation to the legislatures as part of their countries' national and international adaptation to the processes of globalization and Europeanization. The political pressures to adapt the national political systems to fit the requirements of EU membership have empowered the national executives over the national parliaments, which has exacerbated the lack of transparency and has reduced the citizens' democratic involvement. This has been taking place in national contexts in which the current instability of the domestic parties and government would otherwise support a trend toward the weakening of the executive (Johansson and Tallberg, 2010) – including Slovenia. In undergoing this process, new EU member states have more or less followed the path of

¹⁵ See e.g. Howard Schneider, An Amazing Mea Culpa from the IMF's Chief Economist on Austerity, The Washington Post on-line, 3.1.2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/01/03/an-amazing-mea-culpa-from-the-imfs-chief-economist-on-austerity/> (30.8.2013); Larry Elliott, Phillip Inman and Helena Smith in Athens, IMF Admits: We Failed to Realize the Damage Austerity would do to Greece, *The Guardian*, Wednesday, 5.6.2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/jun/05/imf-underestimated-damage-austerity-would-do-to-greece> (30.8.2013).

¹⁶ Adrian Marius Dobre, What is the Price of a Troika Deal, 6.6.2013, <http://adrianmariusdobre.blogactiv.eu/2013/06/06/what-is-the-price-of-a-troika-deal/> (6.9.2013).

older EU member states. Even though the executive has gained power over the parliament in the course of consolidating democracy, this has neither been the only nor the most decisive factor in paving the way for the disproportional involvement of the executive in international and supra-national policymaking, which tends to a great extent to be inter-governmental.

In post-communist countries, intensive converging effects of both domestic and international (including European) pressures can be observed. In fact, they appear to be taking place more radically and rapidly than in older Western EU member states. The international financial and economic crisis has added to this trend. Additionally, the post-communist EU member states have been returning to the economic periphery; in relation to their economic power (requesting social/cohesion transfers within the framework of the EU), they are also politically 'peripherized'.

The case of Slovenia demonstrates that the key trigger for efficient international pressures to intervene decisively in domestic power relations between the executive and the parliament is the particular country's financial and economic dependence on external/international financing. It is due to the conditionality attached to the loans that the borrower is required to provide efficient economic liberalization. Recent-

ly, it has been shown that the countries which have most closely followed the advice of the international organizations have also been hit hardest by the crisis (Andrews, 2012: 123). Slovenia is not yet among those countries; however, it seems unlikely that Slovenia will be able to control either the strategy of managing its way out of its financial and economic crisis or the subordination of the national political elite/the key national political decision-making institutions. While the social response is a critical delegitimization of the national political elite (which has accentuated the existing political instability and provokes ever louder calls for an alternative political system and a more direct democracy), the external pressures in fact support the national executive's instrumentalization of the parliament and further alienate the political elite from the national voting public.

The changing relations between the executive and the legislature is a symptom of a deeper crisis of both the predominant mode of capitalism and the predominant paradigm of managing contemporary societies, countries and the world. The current crisis is therefore not only financial and economic, but also a crisis of political legitimacy in the context of the democratic deficit that is global, EU-wide and national. The case study of Slovenia reveals a mechanism of producing such a democratic deficit.

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Prema dominaciji izvršne vlasti

SAŽETAK Rad istražuje recentne procese globalizacije te (u tom kontekstu) proces europeizacije, s fokusom na promjenama nacionalnih političkih sustava (posebice u postkomunističkim zemljama članicama EU-a) koje su rezultat utjecaja tih procesa. Osnovna je teza rada da je nacionalna egzekutiva pod međunarodnim pritiscima i zahtjevima postigla dodatnu akumulaciju moći u odnosu na zakonodavnu vlast. Međunarodna financijska i ekonomska kriza doprinijela je tom trendu jer su države postale dodatno financijski ovisne o međunarodnim centrima moći koji od nacionalnih izvršnih vlasti zahtijevaju efikasniju ekonomsku liberalizaciju kao preduvjet traženih međunarodnih pozajmica. Studija slučaja Slovenije prikazana je u komparativnoj perspektivi (u pojedinim aspektima prikazana kao devijantni slučaj) tako da nudi nove teorijske uvide u mehanizme koji jačaju nacionalne egzekutive.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI globalizacija, europeizacija, postkomunističke države, egzekutiva, kriza