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EUROPE AND THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN SLOVENIA, DECEMBER 2011

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Key points:

- Two parties, Zoran Janković List-Positive Slovenia and the Civic List of Gregor Virant, both established two months prior to the elections, won 37% of the vote.
- Although Positive Slovenia led by Ljubljana's mayor Zoran Janković won the elections it was not able to form a coalition. In contrast, former prime minister Janez Janša managed to forge a five party coalition with his Slovene Democratic Party (SDS) at the helm.
- Both liberal democratic parliamentary parties - Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), which had been the dominant party of Slovenian politics for a more than a decade, and Zares, the party created by important former Liberal Democracy MPs - failed to cross the electoral threshold.
- The Slovene National Party lost its parliamentary representation for the first time since 1992.
- In contrast, for the first time a former parliamentary party (New Slovenia) which had not crossed the electoral threshold in the previous election managed to re-enter the parliament in 2011.
- As with previous national parliamentary elections in Slovenia, EU topics were largely absent in the electoral campaign.
- The electoral campaign was characterized mainly by economic and social questions, allegations of corruption and clientelism, as well as a battle for the post of prime minister between Mr Janković and Mr Janša.

Background

The Slovenian Parliament is formally bi-cameral, consisting of the National Assembly (the lower house) and the National Council (the upper house, with representatives of local and functional interests). The latter, however, has relatively limited powers; hence the National Assembly is commonly referred to as the parliament.

In December 2011, the seventh democratic national parliamentary elections were held, only the second early elections since 1990. The 2011 elections were conducted under the same proportional electoral system as previous ones, that is: with a 4% threshold, closed lists and 8 constituencies. 88 of the parliament's 90 MPs were elected in this way, while the two representatives of the Italian and Hungarian national minorities were elected under the Borda system. The only change to the electoral system concerned the gender quota. As the Law on Elections to the National Assembly required, a 25% gender quota operated in the 2008 elections and a 35% quota in the following elections.

The three years leading up to the 2011 elections was a period characterized by much turbulence in the economic, political and social spheres. Much of this turbulence, including a number of corruption scandals, was domestically generated, but some turmoil was imported or imposed from abroad.

Although the Social Democrats' (SD) election victory in 2008[1] came almost on the same day as the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the economic crisis provoked by the global credit crunch only began to have a serious impact on Slovenia in the first half of 2009. In 2009, for instance, GDP dropped 8.1%. Some large, well respected companies were forced to close in 2009 and 2010 causing thousands of workers to lose their jobs. The construction and textile sectors – and, in particular, the Prekmurje region (in the east of Slovenia) - were particularly badly hit. Unemployment rose during the parliamentary term from 5.6% in mid-2008 to 11.8% at the end of 2011. Borut Pahor's centre-left government (comprising the Social Democrats, Zares, the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia [(DeSUS] and Liberal Democracy of Slovenia) decided first to guarantee social protection through several measures - such as subsidies for shorter working time, raising the minimum wage and higher social transfers - but public debt and the budget deficit grew rapidly. Early in its term, the government was heavily criticised for being too slow in making decisions and for introducing in-appropriate measures to respond to the crisis; although some government measures to combat the economic crisis were received positively.

Tapping into a general consensus that some urgent reforms were necessary, in 2010 the government announced a new package of reforms. Nonetheless, it was criticised for the specific solutions that it offered (involving reforms of the pension system, the health service, student work and the labour market) and was confronted with opposition from student organizations, its natural allies in the trade unions and the parliamentary opposition, who all used a constitutional

[1] See: Alenka Krasovec and Damjan Lajh, 'Europe and the Parliamentary Elections in Slovenia, September 2008', *European Parties Elections and Referendums Network Election Briefing No 48* at http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/research/europeanpartieselectionsreferendumsnetwork/epernelectionbriefings.

right to call referendums on specific questions on which they disagreed with the government. In 2010 and 2011 no fewer than six referendums were held.

As during its last stint in opposition (2000-2004),[2] in the 2008–2011 period the Slovene Democratic Party attacked corruption and clientelism in the government as well as in society and the economy more widely. Mr Pahor's government offered several possibilities for the Slovenian Democrats to play the anti-corruption card. For example, his judgement was called into question following corruption scandals surrounding his chief of staff, another member of his cabinet, and a bribery scandal involving an MEP who had been selected by the prime minister to stand on the party's list.

None of the parties in parliament, however, was immune from the taint of corruption and scandal. A Slovene National Party MP, for example, was jailed for bribery and blackmail, whilst the leaders of Zares (Gregor Golobič) and Liberal Demoracy of Slovania (Katarina Kresal) were both associated with less than angelic behaviour. Prior to the 2009 elections to the European Parliament it became clear that Mr Golobič had been less than transparent with journalists about his wealth, especially his shares in the company Ultra. One of Zares' prominent ministers Matej Lahovnik resigned in 2010 due to the alleged clientelism and corruption of his party leader linked to public grants and procurement deals in favour of Ultra.[3]

For her part, Ms Kresal was implicated in two scandals. The first involved a wealthy doctor who used his connections with the Liberal Democracy leader and other prominent individuals to get repossession of his dogs who had seriously hurt one person in 2006 and had been recommended to be put down. The second concerned Ms Kresal's alleged clientelistic behaviour in using her position as interior minister to sign a contract with her good friend to rent a building for the National Bureau of Investigation.

Mr Janša's Slovene Democratic Party was also hit by accusations of wrong-doing. One Slovene Democratic Party MP, for instance, was accused of cheating in a German language examination. The most prominent scandal, however, which cast a shadow over Slovene politics since 2008, was the Patria affair involving alleged bribes paid by a Finnish defence contractor for the purchase of amoured personnel carriers. In August 2010 an indictment was filed against five persons including Mr Janša, with legal proceedings already underway by the time Slovenes went to the polls in December 2011. The Patria affair also cast a shadow over Karl Erjavec the leader of the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia. Although he was acquitted of charges in a case closely related to the Patria scandal, Mr Erjavec stepped down from his position as environment minister in January 2010 because of his involvement in a municipal waste scandal and after a demand made by the Court of Auditors to the prime minister to replace him.

All the scandals seemed to bear out the remarks of the new president of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Goran Klemenčič, who stated in January 2011, that Slovenia was a very corrupt state, bedeviled with systematic corruption where up to 47% of detected corruption was

[2] See: Alenka Krašovec and Simona Kustec-Lipicer, 'Europe and the Parliamentary Elections in Slovenia, October 2004', *European Parties Elections and Referendums Network Election Briefing No 18* at http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/research/europeanpartieselectionsreferendumsnetwork/epernelectionbriefings.
[3] See: Danica Fink-Hafner, 'Slovenia', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol 50 Nos 7-8, 2011, pp 1130-38.

connected with public tenders. More broadly, these scandals fed into a wider sense in Slovenia that there were two different rules of law: one for ordinary people and the other for the privileged.

Whilst scandals and the sense of widespread corruption fuelled support for the two new entrants in the December 2011 elections, these early elections were provoked by the distintegration of the governing coalition. Despite being the most ideologically homogeneous (centre-left) ideological coalition in post-communist Slovenia, tensions between the governing partners were already in evidence in the winter of 2008. Whilst the disputes over personnel appointments in the government and public (or partly publicly owned) companies rumbled on throughout the administration's life, two other disputes between the coalition partners are worthy of mention: the budget for 2011-2012, which was not supported by the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia because it included the idea of freezing pensions; and a dispute between Zares and the Social Democrats over whether to continue with investment (worth over a billion euros) on the Šoštanj 6 thermoelectric plant, which had been started during Mr Janša's government.

Tensions, however, were not just between the parties, but within them as well. Mr Pahor, for instance, struggled to persuade some of his (more social democratically oriented) MPs to agree with his policies and decisions mainly connected with the proposed reforms of the health care system and labour market, losing two MPs from the Social Democrats' parliamentary faction in the process. Moreover, the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia suffered an internal dispute on the distribution of power within the party, which resulted in a split between the party leader and the parliamentary party group leadership in 2009 over whether the latter should be consulted over the party's candidate for local government minister.

Although personality clashes played a part in stoking the tensions within the governing coalition, the roots of the disputes within the government stemmed from much deeper challenges. Slovenia was able to introduce a market economy in the 1990s whilst preserving already well-established welfare structures. Economic difficulties and demographic trends, however, provoked the need for structual reform. When the 2004-8 Janša government had tried to introduce radical neo-liberal policies they were blocked by trade unions, which easily managed to mobilize a significant slice of the population againgst the measures. Thanks to his well-known consensus-seeking style Social Democrat Mr Pahor was seen to be the right person for the task, but he soon found himself the butt of criticism for being too slow. As a consequence, the prime minister changed his leadership style significantly in 2010, but this only provoked discontent among several interest groups who lamented the new stance which appeared to show no desire for co-ordination.

The prime minister insisted that some of the reforms, such as those to the pension system and the introduction of greater flexibility in the labour market, were necessary and needed to be pursued regardless of the electoral consequences. The government managed to get parliament to pass several reform laws in 2010 and 2011, but these laws were later challenged in referendums (see Table 1). Students organizations, trade unions and the Slovene Democratic Party all took advantage of the ease of calling a referendum in Slovenia, successfully defeating the government on several occasions. The Mini Job Act limiting student work and introducing of a new form of occasional part-time work, for instance, was defeated by a student-led and trade union supported

referendum in April 2011. Three referendums were held on 5 June 2011, one of them on the thorny issue of pension reform. Mr Pahor had managed to muster a majority in parliament in December 2010 thanks to the support of the opposition Slovene People's Party when the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia naturally broke coalition ranks to oppose pension reforms. Defeat in all three referendums was expected thanks, in no small part, to the low popularity levels of the government and active opposition of the biggest opposition party: the Slovenian Democratic Party. As one sociologist quipped in June 2011, the government was faced with such un-popularity and distrust, that even if the question on a referendum held on Sunday were 'Do you agree that today is a Sunday?' Slovenes would still be likely to vote no!

Table 1: Slovenian referendums and their results, 2010-11

Referendum	**Demanded by**	**Turnout (%)**	**For government proposal**
Referendum on ratification of the arbitration agreement with Croatia 6 June 2010	Almost all MPs	42.7	51.5
Referendum on reform of Slovenian Radio and Television 12 December 2010	Opposition	14.8	27.7
Referendum on Mini Job act 10 April 2011	Student organization via 40,000 signatures of citizens	34.0	19.9
Referendum on pension reform 5 June 2011	Trade unions via 40,000 signatures of citizens	40.4	27.9
Referendum on archives and documents 5 June 2011	Opposition	40.4	29.1
Referendum on prevention of employment and work in the grey zone 5 June 2011	Oposition	40.4	24.6

Sources: http://www.dvk.gov.si/AS2010/dokumenti/porocilo.pdf;
http://www.dvk.gov.si/RTV2010/dokumenti/porocilo.pdf;
http://www.dvk.gov.si/MD2011/dokumenti/porocilo_o_izidu.pdf;
http://www.dvk.gov.si/Junij2011/index.html.

Defeat in the June referendums, however, proved to be the beginning of the end of Mr Pahor's government. In light of the defeats, Zares called for a re-organization of the government, but when these appeals were rebuffed by Mr Pahor (not least because they implied the need for a new prime minister), Zares leader Gregor Golobič informed him that his party was leaving the coalition.

Mr Pahor's government, however, was not just confronted with economic difficulties, but was also engaged in ideological battles with the opposition, and especially the Catholic Church, over questions of social values. Tensions had been raised between the government and the Catholic Church over the appointment of a liberal as the new head of the Office for Religious Communities, but it was the new draft Family Law prepared in 2009 which provoked the greatest dispute. In particular, the proposed law included two controversial provisions: one stating that marriage is a lifelong community of two persons of the same or opposite sex; and another that two same-sex partners may adopt a child. New Slovenia (NSi), which had been in parliament until the 2008 elections, together with civil society organisations closely connected with it led the opposition to the proposed law, promising they would demand a referendum if such measures were to be adopted. Given the heated debates, and in an attempt to avoid another referendum, the government modified the provisions so that marriage was declared a lifelong community of men and women, and that two same-sex partners may only adopt a child if one of the partners was the child's biological parent. Although the law was passed in parliament, opponents pushed for a referendum which was eventually held in March 2012 when the (by then former) government lost.

Whilst issues of social values mobilized opponents against Mr Pahor, there was also the saga of appointing individuals to some key positions, which divided the opposition and the government, but also caused rifts within the government itself. A new president of the Supreme Court was needed in 2010 because the mandate of the previous one had come to an end. Not only did it take nine months to appoint a successor, but that successor was heavily criticised by the opposition for his activities during the pre-1990 communist period. Mr Pahor also provoked criticism from Liberal Democracy, as well as Zares, because he insisted taht the Supreme State Prosecutor Barbara Brezigar stay on in her position until the end of her mandate. The left were keen to remove Ms Brezigar, who was close to Mr Janša, because she had been seen to act in Mr Janša's interests during investigations into the Patria affair. Subsequently, when a new Supreme State Prosecutor was nominated after Ms Brezigar's mandate came to an end, the opposition were again critical thanks to the nominee's activities during the communist period.

Given the cocktail of corruption scandals, low levels of trust in the government (by mid-2011 no fewer than 82% of voters did not support it) and the bickering between left and right, it is perhaps not surprising that citizens expressing dissatisfaction with democracy rose from 61% in early 2009 to 86% in mid-2011, the highest level for twenty years. Furthermore, trust in political parties, as well as in parliament, dropped significantly, reflected, in part, by the success of non-party candidates and lists which garnered 22% of the vote for mayors and members of municipal councils in the October 2010 local elections.[4] The ground was, therefore, fertile for new political parties.

The government's formal disintegration began in 2011 ahead of the June referendums when Zares party leader Mr Golobič called on all three governmental party leaders (the Social Democrats, Liberal Democracy and Zares) to resign from their posts in the government in order to faciliate its substantial reorganization. Neither Mr Pahor nor Mr Kresal were willing to bow to Zares's demand, while, by that point, the leader of the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of

[4] See: Simona Kukovič, and Miro Haček, 'Non-Partisan Candidates and Lists at Slovenian Local Elections, 1994-2010, *World Political Science Review*, Vol. 7 No. 1, 2011.

Slovenia had already been replaced. Indeed, complaining of being sidelined in discussions over the budget and pension reforms, the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia decided formally to leave the government in May, which made Mr Pahor's government *de jure* a minority one, although the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia continued to support several governmental measures in the parliament. Zares followed the pensioners party out of the coalition on 27 June proclaiming the need for a capable and trusted government, leaving Mr Pahor's administration with the support of just 34 out 90 deputies in parliament. In an attempt to breathe new life into the coalition, Mr Pahor proposed a number of new ministers in September 2011, but he lost the connected vote of confidence and his government fell.

Although the Slovenian party arena is, in a formal sense, relatively open, only a few new parties have entered parliament since 1990, and only two of these parties, the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia and the Slovene National Party, had managed to stay in the parliament for more than two terms consecutively. The most striking outcome of the 2011 elections, however, was the entry of two new parties: the Zoran Janković List-Positive Slovenia (LZJ-PS) and the Civic List of Gregor Virant (DLGV). Neither of the party leaders were complete political novices. Mr Janković had been a very successful manager of Slovenia's biggest retail chain Mercator, who had been forced out of office during the last Janša government, which led him into politics. He became mayor of the capital city Ljubljana in 2006 and was re-elected in 2010 with more than 60% of the votes. Mr Virant, a university law profesor, in contrast, had held national government office. Indeed, he had been the most popular minister in the 2004-8 Janša government, although he had never been a member of the Slovene Democratic Party.

Both Mr Virant and Mr Janković appeared capable and competent, able to tackle the problems facing the country, and, in the case of Mr Virant, well placed to battle against corruption. However, although both men were asked regularly about their possible involvement in the next elections, neither indicated they would enter the fray. Nonetheless, two months before elections, in a very public way and with the media in tow, a group of 26 people including well respected (former) politicians (such as former President Milan Kučan and the speaker of the first democratically elected parliament France Bučar), the leaders of two big and important civil society organisations (the Veterans of World War II and the Union of Associations of Pensioners) and several prominent managers and artists all went to Ljubljana's City Hall to implore Mr Janković to run. Although Mr Janković repeatedly said that he enjoyed his work as mayor very much, he nevertheless decided to contest the elections with a party which needed to be established. The only question was whether Mr Janković himself would be a candidate. As an elected MP could not be simultaneously hold the office of mayor, he was forced into a tough decision, stressing all the time that he would only like to become prime minister (not an MP). Mr Janković became a candidate at the top of the eponymously named list which blended together Ljubljana's local councillors and functionaries, several Social Democrat renegades, former journalists, athletes and mayors. The vast majority of these candidates lacked (important) political experience at the national level.

Simultanously, the Civic List of Gregor Virant was established. It appeared a complete surprise for the Slovene Democratic Party, since Virant had even helped the party prepare parts of its manifesto. The reaction inside the Slovene Democrats was predictable: Mr Virant was branded a

traitor. There was also a whiff of conspiracy in the air as Mr Virant was the cousin of Mr Janković's wife. The left, in contrast, speculated that the Civic List of Gregor Virant's creation was a plot hatched with Mr Janša to ensure disaffected Slovene Democratic Party voters did not stray too far, allowing a future coalition to be formed. Whatever the motives of Mr Janković and Mr Virant, their support owed much to two dynamics of Slovenian politics: a dislike among a sizeable portion of the electorate for Mr Janša's Slovene Democratic Party who did not want to cast their votes for any of the exisiting parties, and an increasingly strong focus in Slovenian politics on the personal characteristics of potential prime ministers.

Election campaign

The two brand new parties caused a stir. Early opinion polls during the campaign indicated that both could win sizeable slices of the vote. The campaign itself was notable for a number of reasons including the central role of TV debates and the questions of who would become prime minister and which parties would cross the electoral threshold?

TV debates became a more central element of the campaign than in previous elections thanks to the financial problems faced by all parties and the opportunity to present themselves directly to voters without incurring costs. Several debates were organized by both public and commercial stations. Although commercial stations had a free hand to choose which parties to invite and the distribution of time accorded to each party, public TV was constrained by the law obliging it to give all parties the possibility to participate, and the fact that TV debates for parliamentary and nonparliamentary parties had to be held separately, thereby precluding the possibility of Mr Janša, Mr Janković, Mr Virant and Mr Pahor debating together. Public TV sought to circumvent this law by organizing some debates in its regular rather than election broadcasts, but this provoked predictable protests from parties such as Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, Zares and the Slovene National Party, which were not invited. Although not represented in the national parliament, with its solitary representative in the European Parliament, New Slovenia was treated as a parliamentary party and so was included in certain TV debates.

The TV debates provided one of the most important events of the campaign, when it was revealed that Mr Virant received unemployment payments despite working as a lecturer and consultant after he left a ministerial position in Mr Janša's government. As a consequence, Mr Virant's star began to wane. Support for his party slipped from a level suggesting a starring role in the post-election parliament to just a supporting role, although the eventual vote for Mr Virant's list actually allowed it to play a decisive role in government formation. Nonetheless, these revelations and the drop in support for the Civic List of Gregor Virant not only made the election appear to be more of a clear choice between Mr Janša or Mr Janković as prime minister, but also highlighted the debate about who would cross the electoral threshold with major question marks hanging over Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, the Slovene National Party and Zares's chances of making it into parliament. Zares even changed its name from Zares-New Politics to Zares-Social Liberal in an attempt to win support from socially liberal oriented voters.

Although personalities mattered a great deal in the campaign, a large slice of the debate was focused on policy differences. By and large, centre-right parties (the Slovene Democratic Party, Slovene People's Party and New Slovenia) prepared much more detailed manifestos than their

centre-left counterparts (Social Democrats, Liberal Democracy of Slovenia and Zares).[5] Both newcomers, Zoran Janković List-Positive Slovenia and Civic List of Gregor Virant - scarcely had enough time to prepare their programmes, although the TV debates gave them an opportunity to elaborate in more detail their positions on a range of issues. Nonetheless, economic topics dominated in the campaign with parties trading conflicting views on the origins, consequences and possible solutions to the economic crisis. Whilst there was a commonly held view of the need for structural reforms (including pension reform), a clear left-right distinction was in evidence in terms of how to proceed. Whereas the Social Democrats, but also Zoran Janković List-Positive Slovenia and Zares, sought to emphasize the need to defend the welfare state in the future, the Slovene Democratic Party and especially the Civic List of Gregor Virant advocated a more market-driven vision of reforms. Mr Virant, for instance, advocated radical privatization, including the selling off of the biggest bank NLB, lower taxes and a small state. In contrast, Mr Janković, with his trademark smile and optimistic attitude, advocated less radical reforms, stressing the need to retain, for example, a good public health care system and state schools, but emphasizing the need for more efficiency and better organization in the public sector. In addition to these differences of approach, the parties were keen to emphasize the different qualities of their party leaders. Mr Janković, for example, tried to present himself as a person able to manage the economy effectively given his successful career in business.

The sharp divide between liberals and conservatives on social questions was also prominent, not least thanks to the proposed Family Law mentioned above. The Slovene Democratic Party, Slovene People's Party and particularly New Slovenia managed to galvanize voters on the topic before the elections, not least thanks to the direct support of the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, given the prominence of corruption scandals, it was no surpise that allegations and counter-allegations were thrown around in the campaign. Aware that his rival for the job of prime minister Mr Janković had been regulary under suspicion of less than angelic behaviour, and was probably the owner of more property than he had admitted, Mr Janša demanded in a TV debate that all candidates make a full disclosure of their financial situation, including real estate. Although this demand caused Mr Janković to acknowledge his ownership of an additional house and some land, the tactic backfired as Mr Janša proved unable to explain how he managed to buy a flat in Ljubljana.

Given Slovenia's proportional representation electoral system, a common theme in the TV debates was who was willing to form a coalition with whom. Whilst some options appeared unlikely or were ruled out - such as a coalition between Zoran Janković List-Positive Slovenia and Slovene Democratic Party as well as the Social Democrats and Slovenian Democrats - other parties appeared open to different coalition configurations; although there was a clear preference for a centre-left or a centre-right coalition. What was clear as election day approached was that the small parties were set to play a decisive role.

Results

Politicians, pundits and citizens expected a Slovene Democratic Party victory. Even three days before elections all public opinion polls pointed towards a certain victory for the party. Mr

[5] See: Tomaž Deželan, 'The early national elections in Slovenia, 2011'. *Baltic worlds*, at http://balticworlds.com/in-slovenia-2011.

Janša's party had prepared its post-election celebrations in Ljubljana even hiring a band with an appropriate name: Victory. So it was a major surprise when the first exit polls pointed towards a victory for Mr Janković. As Table 2 shows, the other results were not as un-expected. Thanks in no small part to the corruption scandals both Zares and Liberal Democracy of Slovenia fell below the electoral threshold. There was clear evidence that the supporters of these two parties had shifted towards Mr Janković and Mr Virant in the final weeks of the campaign. The tough economic times and Mr Pahor's inability to lead the government had taken their toll on the Social Democrats who lost two-thirds of their votes, but clung on to enough to secure parliamentary representation thanks, in no small part, to Mr Pahor's political talent and experience. The same could not be said of the Slovene National Party. Its nationalist and populist rhetoric had ensured seats in parliament since 1992, but in 2011 the party won a mere 1.8% of the vote. On economic questions in particular the party struggled to find an appropriate niche. Moreover, there was a general perception that party leader Zmago Jelinčič lacked both energy and interest in the elections.

Table 2: Results of the parliamentary election in Slovenia, 4 December 2011

Party	Votes (%)	Change (2008)	Seats	Change (2008)
Lista Zorana Jankovića – Pozitivna Slovenija (List of Zoran Janković–Positive Slovenia)	28.51	+28.51	28	+28
SDS (Slovene Democratic Party)	26.19	-3.07	26	-2
SD (Social Democrats)	10.52	-19.93	10	-19
Državljanska Lista Gregorja Viranta (Civic List of Gregor Virant)	8.37	+8.37	8	+8
DeSUS (Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia)	6.97	-0.48	6	-1
SLS (Slovene People's Party)	6.83	+1.62	6	+1
NSi (New Slovenia–Christian People's Party)	4.88	+1.48	4	+4
SNS (Slovene National Party)	1.80	-3.60	0	-5
(LDS) Liberal democracy	1.48	-3.73	0	-5
Zares	0.65	-8.72	0	-9
Others	3.79	-0.73	0	0

The turnout was 65.6 %.
Source: http://www.dvk.gov.si/DZ2011/dokumenti/porocilo.pdf.

The Civic List of Gregor Virant, Slovene People's Party and Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia all achieved results predicted by the public opinion polls. New Slovenia also fell into this camp, but its 4.88% of the vote ensured it became the only party in Slovenian democratic history which succedeed in re-entering the parliament without experiencing mergers or splits. Its success owed much to the successful mobilization of its voters in defence of traditional values most notably on the Family Law; its projection of itself as a more robust defender of these values than the Slovene Democratic Party and the mobilization of its organizational base in local and European elections after the disappointing result in the 2008.

Mr Janša's defeat owed much to his predicted victory (which helped mobilize his opponents and persuaded them to back Mr Janković), his inability to explain his purchase of a flat in Ljubljana, and a decision to snub the last major debate on public TV. There was also a clear regional split. Whilst it was to be expected that the mayor of Ljubljana would do well in the capital, Mr Janković also won the Western part of Slovenia (with more urban areas and more liberal oriented voters), whilst Mr Janša did better in the east.

The election results were also notable for the number of women elected. In every election since 1990 roughly the same percentage of women (13%) had been elected to parliament, but in 2011 this figure more than doubled to over 30%. The increase was thanks largely to the two new parties on whose lists 16 of the 29 elected women had run. Part of the explanation for the success of women in these two parties probably lay in the fact that they needed to find candidates quickly and, due to their novelty, had no idea in which sub-consituencies candidates were going to perform well; hence the placement of candidates owed more to random decisions than strategic calculations.

The election results, however, proved to be just the end of Act One of the drama. Act Two was arguably much more dramatic. Following his victory, Mr Janković invited all parliamentary parties for explorative coalition talks. But the attempts to meet with the Slovene Democratic Party descended into farce as he could not agree on a meeting place with Mr Janša. Whilst Mr Janković and Mr Janša debated the significance and symbolism of meeting in Ljubljana city hall, in the parliament or at a restaurant, most other parties seemed to keep their options open. Only New Slovenia stated clearly it would not go into coalition with Mr Janković, while the Slovene People's Party adopted the same stance soon after. Mr Janković's natural allies seemed to be the Social Democrats and the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia, but the Civic List of Gregor Virant also appeared willing to negotiate. Nonetheless, Mr Pahor was not enthusiastic about a coalition with the List of Zoran Janković–Positive Slovenia, expressing publicly his dislike of what he saw as Mr Janković's authoritarian leadership style.

The first indications that Mr Janković might be unable to form a government came in the opening session of the new parliament. Under the Slovene constitution, the prime minister is chosen by a vote of the newly-established parliament. To hold that vote, however, required an elected speaker of parliament. Mr Pahor, who had been in hospital, decided to throw his hat into the ring for speaker without reaching agreement with Mr Janković. List of Zoran Janković–Positive Slovenia's leader responded by proposing a young, politically inexperienced MP from his party. After two inconclusive rounds of voting Mr Pahor withdrew his candidacy, but an ad hoc coalition of the Slovenian Democratic Party, Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia, New Slovenia, Slovene People's Party and Civic List of Gregor Virant proposed Mr Virant who was duly elected speaker. Despite the defeat, Mr Janković continued negotiations with the Social Democrats and Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia as well as with the Civic List of Gregor Virant, but the aura of success associated with the mayor of Ljubljana had begun to fade.

The Civic List of Gregor Virant was now the clear pivotal actor. After several days of additional negotiations, the party initialed a coalition agreement with the List of Zoran Janković–Positive Slovenia, but the very next day Mr Virant's grouping decided not to support Mr Janković for the

prime ministership nor to enter his coalition, but rather to begin coalition talks with the Slovene Democratic Party, Slovene People's Party and New Slovenia. Such a development cast doubt over Mr Virant's true intentions from the beginning. The fact that Mr Janković announced he had actually accepted all of the Civic List of Gregor Virant's demands seemed only to confirm suspicions that Mr Virant never had any interest in joining the List of Zoran Janković–Positive Slovenia in a coalition. Mr Virant, however, was quick to contrast the difficulty of negotiating with Mr Janković, who did not have a clear and detailed programme, with Mr Janša whose demands and vision was clear.

Mr Janković tried anyway to win a prime ministerial vote, but he failed. In contrast, the Slovene Democratic Party, Civic List of Gregor Virant, the Slovene People's Party and New Slovenia reached an agreement on co-operation very quickly. All eyes then turned to the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia - which had been part of both left and right coalitions in the past - and was needed this time for a majority government to be formed. Although there were major internal disagreements, the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia decided to join Mr Janša's camp. Even then, however, one more formal hurdle existed on Mr Janša's path towards returning as prime minister: President Danilo Türk. The president stated that, given the on-going Patria trial, Mr Janša did not have the full legitimacy needed for a candidate for such an important position in the Slovene government; although it should be noted that the history of the Slovene Democratic Party presidential impeachment, and accusations spread by the party that Mr Türk had been informed about terrorist activities thirty years ago, added personal animosity into the decision-making mix. Nonetheless, Mr Janša won the vote in parliament and soon set about forming his government. Mr Janković resigned as an MP to run again as mayor of Ljubljana and in the March 2012 election he won in the first round with 60% of the vote.

European Issues

Despite Slovenia's membership of the euro single currency and the barrage of bad news about debt in the eurozone, 'Europe' was a marginal theme in the campaign. Occasionally 'Europe' was mentioned as a threat. Some politicians warned that if Slovenia did not sort out its fiscal problems itself then 'Europe' (in the form of EU technocrats) would lay down the necessary measures. Moreover, Mr Pahor stated several times that reforms were needed in order for the country to stay in the 'safe' German-French train, but the focus here was less on 'Europe' per se and more on the consequences of particular fiscal policies.

Conclusions/Future Prospects

Mr Janša's new government was the smallest cabinet in Slovenia's history with just twelve members. His Slovene Democratic Party got one third of the seats around the cabinet table with the remaining eight divided equally amongst the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia, the Civic List of Gregor Virant, New Slovenia and the Slovene's People's Party. Given the composition of the government and the personality and ideology of the prime minister, it came as no surprise that the new administration embarked on a series of radical cuts in the public sector and reform of the welfare state. These and other measures had the goal of re-designing Slovenian society. Just as the last time a Slovene Democrat Party-led government sought to introduce radical reforms, the government's agenda provoked a large strike in April 2012 when a

combined total of around 100,000 police officers, health workers, employees of state schools and other public employees joined together to protest against the new government's reforms, whilst also receiving the support of the trade unions of the private sector. By April, just a few months after the new Janša administration had taken power, a mere 25% of the population expressed support for the government. When such low levels of support in mid-2011 had been recorded by Mr Pahor's government, Mr Janša, as leader of the opposition, had demanded elections should be held since he claimed that the government had no legitimacy.

The ability of the government to push through its reforms and maintain the cohesion of the coalition in light of the tough economic times ahead looked set to be a key question for the new parliamentary term. The other salient question was how the left responded to defeat, both electoral (in the case of the Social Democrats) and the failure to form a governing coalition (in the case of Mr Janković). Mr Pahor expressed his support for some of the new government's measures, but was the subject of criticism from others within his parliamentary party group as well as rank-and-file Social Democrat members and was expected to be challenged for the leadership of his party. Mr Janković sought to foster common purpose amongst the parties on the liberal-left, but the Social Democrats did not show much interest. Thanks to his failure to convert electoral victory into a governing coalition, the mayor of Ljubljana's halo of success slipped, although he retained a powerful base in the capital and demonstrated the possibility of mobilizing a large section of the electorate behind him. If he decided to continue in national politics, the task confronting him was to build the party organization which would ensure that Positive Slovenia was not a one-election wonder.

The elections also provoke two broader observations. Firstly, despite the headlines of an earthquake election, a closer examination of the election results showed the balance between the two blocs (centre-left and centre-right) in the Slovenian parliament remained roughly the same. The phenomenon of underlying stability, combined with sometimes quite radical changes in the menu of parties, was also noticeable in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe including Slovakia.[6] Secondly, and perhaps most significantly of all, the elections demonstrated that winning a campaign was only half the battle. Victory lay in forming a government which tended to require a different set of skills, personal attributes and experiences to those acquired in local politics or business.

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[6] See: Tim Haughton and Kevin Deegan-Krause, 'The 2012 Parliamentary Elections in Slovakia: The Building Blocs of Success', at http://www.pozorblog.com/2012/03/2012-parliamentary-elections-in-slovakia-the-building-blocs-of-success/.

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