THE COMMITMENT OF SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS TO DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS AND EQUALITY

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Abstract

In modern democracies, senior civil servants have outgrown their classic role of mere implementers of orders given by politicians. Both senior civil servants and politicians serve the same democratic state, and both are heirs to the democratic evolution. Our hypothesis is based mainly on the historically developed division of labor between bureaucracy and politics. Senior civil servants have never been tasked with creating the conditions for more democracy in the state, but instead with creating the conditions for a more effective and successful state. Given that political bodies in which politicians operate have been established as the institutionalized personification of democracy, the task of politicians is above all the promotion of democracy, its values and norms. We have tested that hypothesis on the case of Slovenian senior civil servants and politicians and found out, that both elites are favorable to political freedoms and political equality.

Keywords: Slovenia, senior civil servants, politicians, political freedoms and political equality.

1. Introduction and theoretical base

How can a complex contemporary state be governed in a democratic manner? This question has long been of vital concern to political science researchers. Elitist theorists have argued: "every system of leadership is in fact incompatible with the most essential postulates of democracy" (Michels, 1962, p. 364). More expatiating reformers have conceived a long list of institutional devices made to ensure Government responsiveness towards the general public. But the still more rapid expansion of the bureaucracy and its apparently increasing insulation from popular control seem to render the underlying dilemma ever more difficult (Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman, 1981, p. 170). Many researchers have come to the conclusion that the central piece of the puzzle involves the norms and values that guide decision makers. For instance Ronald Pennock (1979, p. 244) has argued "a commitment of the elite to democratic principles and procedures and a willingness to do all in their power to support the democratic regime is virtually a necessary condition for a stable democracy". In contemporary democracies, senior civil servants have outgrown their classic role of mere implementers of orders given to them by politicians as their nominal masters. Civil service has outgrown its instrumental role as a personnel system, and is now playing an increasingly important role in the exercising of authority – a role that heavily depends on politicians. Heady (1991, p. 448) defined the relationship between civil servants and politicians using six configurations, later combined by Hojnacki (1996, p. 144) into two basic configurations: in one, politicians, in the pursuance of their political aims, dominate civil servants who have lost much of their independence and are only a tool in their hands. In the other, civil servants have maintained a high degree of their independence and power, which they use in the pursuance of their own aims as opposed to those of politicians.

Throughout the processes of democratic transition and consolidation, civil service systems in Central European countries have been above all marked by the need for rapid depolarization of public administration, lack of legal instruments to safeguard civil servants against political abuse, significant dependence upon legalism, and application of employment legislation without regard for the specifics of civil service (Verheijen, 1999, pp. 2-3). We will base our analysis on the classic hypothesis put forward by Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981, p. 171) that "the level of democracy (also) depends on the commitment of senior civil servants and politicians to democratic principles". The idea that democratic ideals and values affect the development of democratic tradition and democratic institutions is manifested in the history of Western constitutional democracy. Each important institutional development was preceded by philosophical exploration of the underlying social and moral principles. Such ideals and values then gradually spread to the general public and were finally embodied in institutional form. The democratic institutions themselves have made a powerful independent contribution to Government responsiveness, and democratic practice has influenced the theory, as well as other way around (Kwang-Hoon and Raadschelders, 2008, p. 422). We can note that much of the discussion about democracy in theory

and practice can be cast in terms of two fundamental themes. From the philosophical perspective, we can point out that Pennock (1979, p. 16) stresses out that "liberty" and "equality" comprise the basic elements of the democratic believes.

Both liberty and equality are often used as symbols of democracy, as standards of judging the policies of Government. But our concern here is with standards for judging the process of Government – political liberty and political equality. In this sense liberty refers to those freedoms of political thought and action that have been broadly proclaimed in the West in the 19th century, though not universally implemented. Political equality refers to the distribution of access to these political freedoms, the sharing of political influences among all of the citizens (Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman, 1981, p. 172). Dahl has drawn a distinction between two somewhat theoretical dimensions of democratization from a more institutional perspective. The first (contestation) refers to the extent to which at least some members of society are guaranteed those political rights that enable them to contest the conduct of Government. The second dimension (participation) refers to the proportion of the general public entitled to participate on a more or less equal level in controlling and contesting the conduct of Government (Dahl, 1971, p. 5).

In our research of commitment of Slovenian political and bureaucratic elites to democratic principles, we will focus above all on two key dimensions of democracy, *i.e.* political freedoms (or contestation) and political equality (or participation). Given that all countries included in the study[1] are representative democracies, we can assume that their (political) leaders generally support these two basic democratic values[2]. Both senior civil servants and politicians serve the same democratic state, and both are heirs to the democratic evolution. Our hypothesis is based mainly on the historically developed division of labor between bureaucracy and politics. As several studies have pointed out (Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman, 1981; Page, 1988; Stillman, 1996), the growth of electoral democracy and the growth of professional bureaucracy are more or less coeval processes.

On the other hand, several indicators lead us to raise the hypothesis according to which we expect politicians to be more enthusiastic supporters of democratic values than the senior civil servants. Firstly, senior civil servants have never been tasked with creating the conditions for more democracy in the state, but instead with creating the conditions for a more effective and successful state. Given that political bodies in which politicians operate have been established as the institutionalized

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1 For the comparative aspects we have also included some data on elites in several Western European countries and the USA according to the empirical research conducted by Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981).

2 However, we must point out that the length of democratic tradition significantly differs among Western countries with long democratic traditions on one side and Slovenia as a relatively new democracy on the other. Also political freedoms and political equality are not absolute but relative dimensions, matters of a degree, and are as such not equally accepted among individuals.

personification of democracy, the basic task of politicians is above all promotion of democracy, its values and norms. Secondly, this assumption is expected to be even more valid in a country with relatively short political tradition. Slovenia is a democratic European country, member of the European Union, but only two decades ago Slovenia was a part of the communist bloc, where democratic ideals, values and institutions were non-existent for over half of century. And thirdly, elected political bodies are designed as an institutional embodiment of democracy, but bureaucracy on the other hand, is supposed to make the state more efficient and effective, not more democratic. Politicians seeking another election may be more likely to appreciate the rights to contestation. Bureaucrats bear responsibility for carrying out policies that are being contested, so they may see less virtue in contestation and conflict. To verify our hypothesis, we will use several mutually complementary methods and techniques, among them also detailed empirical research.

Participants in two Slovenian empirical studies, one conducted in 2003 and the other in 2009 were divided into two main groups, one consisting of senior civil servants and one of politicians. The purpose of this division was to establish whether there existed different images and perceptions about the role these two principal groups of actors played in the political process, and to find out about the relationship between them.

In the first empirical study, the senior civil servants group consisted of 469 persons, *i.e.* of all secretaries general of ministries and of all undersecretaries. Under the then valid Civil Servants Act (2002, article 80), both groups occupied the highest positions within the Slovenian civil service system. The politicians group consisted of 228 persons; of these ninety were from the legislative branch (*i.e.* Members of Parliament) and 138 from the executive branch of Government. We conducted the survey towards the end of 2003 and at the beginning of 2004[3].

In the second empirical study, the senior civil servants group consisted of 173 persons, *i.e.* of all General Directors, Secretary Generals in Governmental Ministries, Directors of Ministerial Sectors, and Heads of Administrative Units across the country. Under the current Civil Servants Act (2007, articles 80-82), all stated groups are considered administrative managers, highest-ranking civil servants within the Slovenian civil service system[4]. The politicians group consisted of 132 persons; of these ninety were from the legislative branch (*i.e.* Members of Parliament) and 42 from the executive

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3 The response rate (numbers in brackets) was very good: we received 342 completed questionnaires (49.1%), of these 233 came from senior civil servants (49.7%), 64 from politicians employed in the executive branch (46.4%), and 45 from Members of Parliament (50.0%). See Hacek (2005) for full results.

4 It should be clearly stated that senior civil servants groups from 2003 and 2009 are not entirely comparable, because of different normative frameworks in both periods. The normative framework that changed in 2005 brought considerable instability to the top of bureaucratic apparatus, the main reason being the introduction of time limited mandate for senior civil servants and limited influence of politics on the process of senior civil servant's selection.

branch of Government. In both studies we were mainly interested in the executive branch, for two obvious reasons: first, because it also employs senior civil servants, and second, because research of relationship between senior civil servants and politicians would usually focus on this branch (Peters, 1988, p. 17). We conducted the survey towards the end of 2008 and at the beginning of 2009[5].

2. Support to political freedoms and competition

Freedom of political expression is the oldest in the set of democratic values. The nominal commitment to freedom of speech is wide-spread in democratic states; in one of the studies made by Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981, p. 175), which involved a sample of adults from Great Britain, all respondents agreed with the following statement: "The possibility to ever learn the truth decreases without the freedom to express different views." A majority of Western European countries have lasting experiences with democracy, but historical experience in democracy in Slovenia is brief. Slovenia gained independence from the former Yugoslavia and established the democratic political system only back in the early 1990s. With this distinction in mind, we strive to estimate the attitude of the general public towards democracy and democratic norms and then, at least indirectly, compare it to the attitude of administrative and political elites. Table 1 explains the relationship of the general public towards political freedoms and equality. We can notice that the majority of Slovenian population is benevolent toward political freedoms (76.8% believe that democracy and political equality should go hand in hand), social equalities, multi-party system and equality of all people before the law. Another survey (Tos, 2004, p. 465)[6] has investigated the attitudes of the Slovenian public towards different forms of political participation. The findings were not surprising. The Slovenian public (91.3% of respondents) does not agree with revolutionary activity as the possible form of society transformation, but general elections as the form of political participation are generally accepted by the majority (84.3% of respondents) of population (Tos, 2004, p. 513). The survey "Slovenian public opinion 2008/1"[7] investigated the attitude of the general public towards the democratic political system; 87.7% of the citizens see democracy as a positive political system. Also another most recent survey, "Slovenian public opinion 2011/2"[8] confirms the findings above, as a majority of Slovenian

5 The response rate (numbers in brackets) was very good: we received 154 completed questionnaires (50.5%), of these 87 came from senior civil servants (50.3%), 21 from politicians employed in the executive branch (50%), and 46 from Members of Parliament (51.1%). See Hacek (2009) for full results.

6 The question was "Do you agree or disagree with the following forms of political participation?" (N=1042).

7 See "Slovenian public opinion 2008/1", (N=1288).

8 The survey was conducted in spring 2011 by the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana. The questions were "Do you believe that essential part of democracy are the following (among others): a) elections, where people can freely choose their leaders; b) political freedoms that protect people from state violence and c) higher social equality" (N=1069).

citizens (84.5%, 74.8% and 60.1% respectively) do see elections, political freedoms and higher social equality as an essential part of democracy.

Table 1: Attitude of the general public towards the political freedoms and political equality (N=1073, in %)

I think that democracy should include…	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
… political freedoms	37.7	39.1	11.9	1.1	10.1
… higher social equality	14.0	44.4	26.6	4.9	10.2
… equality of all people before the law	36.3	36.6	14.1	3.5	9.5
… multi-party system	29.1	34.9	17.5	4.7	13.8

Source: Slovenian public opinion survey, see Tos (2004, p. 455).

Of course, all these questions to the general public are very general in their nature, so it is not possible to compare them directly with the much more specific questions we posed to the administrative and political elites. That was never our intention, anyway. We merely attempted to expose the general attitude of the Slovenian public towards democracy and the values it represents for two decades after the change of the political system. With this in mind we have successfully demonstrated that the majority of general public is strongly in favor of democratic political system and democratic values. Table 2 shows the statements that Slovenian administrative and political elites were asked to agree or disagree with. Our intention was to establish how firmly they defended the right to express an objection, to criticize, and to have a different view.

The first statement (A) refers to the possibility that "certain extremist organizations" engage in "unfair or illegitimate tactics". The question that administrative and political elites were asked was whether more control over such activities should be necessary. The question was intentionally formulated in this way in order to explore whether respondents thought such destructive measures should be left uncontrolled. We were almost asking our respondents whether subversives should be allowed free play. The aim was to press support for civil freedoms to the breaking point[9]. The second question (B) explored whether respondents thought the freedom of political propaganda should be let unlimited. Table 2 also enables comparison with some Western European examples from the research done by Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981) in the late 1970s.

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9 Although the wave of political terrorism had not yet crested Europe at the time of our survey, the large number of our respondents noted the need to control physical violence, even if it was politically motivated.

Table 2: Support of administrative and political elites
to political freedoms and pluralism (in %)

Statement	Answers in selected Western countries 1977-1980 (in %) **		Slovenia 2003		Slovenia 2009	
*	SCC	P	SCC	P	SCC	P
A. Some maintain that certain extreme organizations use dishonest or illegitimate measures. Is enhanced control over such measures necessary in your opinion?						
Yes, unconditionally necessary.	26	23	50	37	56	43
Yes, under certain conditions.	43	41	45	57	41	54
No, no control is required.	31	36	5	6	3	3
	(N=242)	(N=249)	(N=226)	(N=107)	(N=86)	(N=65)
B. Freedom of political propaganda shall not be unlimited; it shall be carefully controlled by the state.						
I agree.	40	27	37	39	43	46
I disagree.	60	73	63	61	57	54
	(N=254)	(N=277)	(N=218)	(N=102)	(N=84)	(N=59)
C. Conflicts in a society are negative.						
I agree.	24	19	23	30	33	36
I disagree.	44	50	71	63	65	49
Can't say.	32	31	6	7	2	15
	(N=373)	(N=388)	(N=232)	(N=109)	(N=85)	(N=67)
D. Modern societies develop mainly as a result of social conflicts.						
I agree.	55	64	45	45	42	44
I disagree.	45	36	55	55	58	56
	(N=256)	(N=263)	(N=225)	(N=103)	(N=85)	(N=59)

* SCC = high civil servants; P = politicians

** Evenly distributed samples from Great Britain, Germany and Italy were included in the first two questions; evenly distributed samples from Great Britain, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands were included in the third question; evenly distributed samples from Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands were included in the last question.

Source: Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981, p. 177); for Slovenia, Hacek (2005; 2009).

We can see that the majority of European elites rejected the possibility of control over political freedoms, however without expressing an anti-liberal attitude; only a minority of elites (though a slightly larger proportion of members of the administrative elite) did express an anti-liberal attitude[10]. Three quarters of European leaders (at least partly) opposed the restricting of the right to different views, even in the case of extreme organizations. We can see that the attitude of Slovenia's administrative and political elite is slightly more anti-liberal with strengthening anti-liberal trend forming in the period 2003 to 2009, in particular as regards members of the administrative

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10 As Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981) found out later, "anti-liberals" are well represented particularly among Italian civil servants.

elite, (over) half of whom speak in favor of unconditional restriction of political expression. Further, slightly more Slovenian politicians (again, with strengthening anti-liberal trend) than their European colleagues are of the opinion that the freedom of political propaganda shall be controlled by the state.

The next two questions (C and D) measured the support of administrative and political elites to political freedoms and pluralism and explored the desirability or harmfulness of social conflict. Table 2 shows that more than a half of members of administrative (55%) and political (64%) elites in four Western European countries thought that, in a modern society, social conflict suggested development. In Slovenia, a slightly smaller proportion (45% in 2003; 42% and 44% in 2009) of administrative and political elites shares the same opinion. We can also see that Slovenian politicians give slightly more support to political freedoms and pluralism than Slovenian senior civil servants. It goes without saying that with the four variables used, we were not able to determine the absolute support to political freedoms and pluralism, but were still able to highlight some differences between both Slovenian elites and between Slovenia as a relatively new democracy and some traditionally democratic Western European states.

3. Support to political equality and participation

Similarly as when measuring the support to political freedoms and competition, we used several questions to measure the support of administrative and political elites to political equality and participation. The simplest of all was the first question that explored the role the public should play in politics in general and more specifically in policy-making process. We can see that Slovenian elites (in particular when compared with the Western European) give relatively high support to direct public involvement in politics, whereby there are only slight differences between the views of Slovenian senior civil servants and politicians. As one could expect, the political elites are more inclined towards direct public involvement in politics; but this is hardly a surprise in a country where "direct democracy" has been the primary guidance in reforming and reinventing political system on different levels of Government (Brezovsek and Nahtigal, 2011, p. 148; Baclija, Brezovsek and Hacek, 2008, p. 229).

Table 3: Support of administrative and political elites
to political equality and populism (in %)

Statement	Answers in selected Western countries 1977-1980 (in %)**		Slovenia 2003		Slovenia 2009	
*	SCC	P	SCC	P	SCC	P
E. *What role shall the public play in politics in general and in policy-making?*						
1. Its role shall be limited to participation in elections.	16	9	2	2	1	3
2. The public shall take interest in politics and communicate its opinions to its representatives.	45	30	36	32	37	27
3. The public shall be directly involved in politics.	39	61	62	66	62	69
	(N=388)	(N=434)	(N=227)	(N=104)	(N=84)	(N=62)
F. *For several years now, there has been an ongoing debate in some countries on increased control of the public over authorities and increased public participation in the exercising of authority. What is your opinion in this regard?*						
1. Favorable	44	66	87	87	84	96
2. Undefined	26	18	13	11	13	3
3. Not favorable	30	16	0	2	3	1
	(N=478)	(N=532)	(N=232)	(N=109)	(N=86)	(N=66)
G. *Elitist index***						
1. high	15	6	18	13	19	20
2. medium	46	36	51	52	63	55
3. low	39	58	31	35	18	25
	(N=330)	(N=361)	(N=159)	(N=77)	(N=83)	(N=60)
H. *We are interested in your opinion on your own role. In comparison with the broader public, how do you feel as regards your know-ledge, skills and sense of respon-sibility?*						
1. very superior	20	8	6	3	6	0
2. superior in a limited sense	58	42	36	38	47	35
3. not superior	22	50	58	59	47	65
	(N=481)	(N=539)	(N=232)	(N=108)	(N=87)	(N=65)

* SCC = high civil servants; P = politicians.

** Evenly distributed samples from Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Sweden and France were included in the first question; evenly distributed samples from Great Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, France and Sweden were included in the second question; evenly distributed samples from Great Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, France and Sweden were included in the last question.

*** Elitist index is an aggregate index composed of answers to six statements, whereby the inclusion to the three categories is conditional upon an affirmative answers to six questions.

Source: Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981, pp. 182-183); Hacek (2005; 2009)

Table 4: Support of administrative and political elites
to political equality and populism between politicians compared (in %)

Statement	Slovenia			
	Politicians from executive branch 2003	Politicians from executive branch 2009	Politicians from legislative branch 2003	Politicians from legislative branch 2009
E. *What role shall the public play in politics in general and in policy-making?*				
1. Its role shall be limited to participation in elections.	2	0	2	5
2. The public shall take interest in politics and communicate its opinions to its representatives.	28	40	37	21
3. The public shall be directly involved in politics.	70	60	61	74
	(N=61)	(N=20)	(N=43)	(N=42)
F. *For several years now, there has been an ongoing debate in some countries on increased control of the public over authorities and increased public participation in the exercising of authority. What is your opinion in this regard?*				
1. Favorable	86	95	89	96
2. Undefined	12	0	9	4
3. Not favorable	2	5	2	0
	(N=64)	(N=21)	(N=45)	(N=46)
G. *Elitist index***				
1. high	14	18	11	23
2. medium	51	48	53	46
3. low	35	34	36	21
	(N=49)	(N=21)	(N=28)	(N=42)
H. *We are interested in your opinion on your own role. In comparison with the broader public, how do you feel as regards your knowledge, skills and –sense of responsibility?*				
1. very superior	0	0	7	0
2. superior in a limited sense	42	24	32	41
3. not superior	58	76	61	59
	(N=64)	(N=21)	(N=44)	(N=44)

Source: Hacek (2005; 2009)

The first category, which comprises members of administrative and political elites who are least enthusiastic about political equality, is almost undetectable in Slovenia, in both 2003 and 2009 surveys. In Western European countries there are twice as

many senior civil servants as politicians among the "opponents" to political equality, who are also less favorable to direct public involvement in politics. Their answers suggest that Slovenia's administrative elite is more in favor of – in comparison with the Western European colleagues – an active role of the public in politics in general and also in policy-making. Politicians lead (as compared with senior civil servants) both in Western European countries and in Slovenia, but their precedence over senior civil servants in Slovenia is fairly unpretentious.

In the next part of the study (F) exploring support of administrative and political elites to political equality and public participation, we asked a less philosophical question, probing the attitude of respondents towards participatory democracy. Looking at the results obtained in Western European countries, we can see that two thirds of politicians and almost half of senior civil servants in six Western European countries are favorable to increased public participation and control over authorities. The results obtained in Slovenia are quite different; namely, a great majority of administrative and political elites are favorable to increased public participation and control over authorities, whereby there are practically no differences between the views of senior civil servants and politicians in either of surveys.

The third part of the study (G) exploring support of administrative and political elites to political equality and public participation was labeled "elitist index" (Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman, 1981, p. 183). The index is composed of affirmative answers to six statements. A high elitist index suggests that administrative and political elites feel superior to "ordinary" citizens. Both in Western European countries and in Slovenia the proportion of those included in high or middle elitist index based on their answers is larger among senior civil servants, albeit just slightly in 2009. Compared with their Western European colleagues, higher portions of Slovenia's elites are included in both high and middle elitist index, especially among politicians. There are just slight differences between Slovenian senior civil servants and politicians, latter being more elitist. The only difference worth mentioning was observed in connection with the last statement[11]; in Slovenia, 79% of senior civil servants, 95% of Members of Parliament, and 95% of politicians from the executive branch agreed with this statement in survey, conducted in 2009. More politicians (95%) than senior civil servants (83%) also agreed with the statement that "all people shall be given an equal opportunity to exercise influence over authorities" but, as said, the differences are not too big. Full political equality is a commendable ideal, still very alive in a relatively new democracy as surely is Slovenia, but results from traditional and long-lasting democracies are more realistic. People cannot be equally competent to deal with the complexities of public issues. Some efforts to increase public access to Government are useful, but some form of leadership from the top will most likely always be present. In stating this modal view, we can expect also that more and more bureaucrats in Slovenia will start to

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11 *i.e.*, "All people shall be given the opportunity to vote, although they may not be capable of doing this competently".

emphasize the "realistic" need for competence and leadership, whereas politicians will always be more in favor of the "idealistic" goals of ever greater political equality (Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman, 1981, pp. 182-187).

The last part of the study (H) explores support of administrative and political elites to political equality and public participation and inquires whether members of the elites feel superior in comparison with the broader public on account of their roles[12]. The answers suggest that the majority of members of Slovenia's elites in both surveys from 2003 and 2009 do not feel superior, but in any case they feel less superior in comparison to their Western European colleagues. Those who feel most superior are senior civil servants in the survey conducted in 2009, although their proportion is lower when compared with their Western European colleagues[13].

4. Final observations

Let us remember that in exploring the commitment of both elites to democratic principles, we focused on two key dimensions of democracy, *i.e.* political freedoms and pluralism on the one hand and political equality and populism on the other hand, all of which was the main hypothesis of this paper. Our analysis gave the following answers: both Slovenian senior civil servants and politicians are generally favorable to political freedoms and equality, even more so than their Western European colleagues included in the study of Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981); also the general attitudes of the both elites are not much different from the general attitudes of the general public, who is, in large proportion very much in favor of democracy and its ideals and values. The differences between the two elites are relatively small and are most noticeable with regard to the question about control over certain extreme organizations. Here, more than a half of senior civil servants (50% and 56% from both surveys conducted in 2003 and 2009, respectively) expressed their support to unconditional restricting of political expression[14]. Further, we established that compared with their Western European colleagues, higher portions of Slovenia's elites are included in both high and middle elitist index, with highest portions among politicians. At the same time, the similarity of democratic values of both elites points towards the village life model of relationship between civil servants and politicians (Peters, 1988, p. 150), but there is not enough evidence to confirm that presumption. Based on their perception of their

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12 The question was: "We are interested in your opinion on your own role. In comparison with the broader public, how do you feel as regards your knowledge, skills and feeling of responsibility?".

13 In Western European countries, the proportion of those who feel superior is the largest among members of the administrative elite (20%). The proportion of those who do not feel superior is the smallest among members of the administrative elite (22%).

14 The same support was expressed by 37% (2003) and 43% (2009) of politicians. Members of Parliament (32% in 2003 and 50% in 2009) were recently more supportive to unconditional restricting of political expression, whilst politicians employed in the executive branch were recently less supportive (41% in 2003 and 29% in 2009).

own role, Slovenian senior civil servants feel slightly more superior, but still far less when compared with their Western European colleagues. What is interesting is that these findings are based on the elitist index, whereby respondents had to answer a set of indirect questions, but to a much smaller degree to the question directly asking about their feeling of self-superiority[15].

To conclude, Slovenian politicians are slightly more favorable to political freedoms and political equality than senior civil servants. However, the difference is not dramatic so that the general impression that both elites are favorable to political freedoms and political equality prevails[16]. The question remains, however, why both Slovenian politicians and senior civil servants differ from their colleagues in Western democracies. The bullet-proof answer will require further data collection, in-depth analysis and also some more time flow, but we can (try to) ascertain that the differences are as follows: a) the consequences of a half-a-century long undemocratic tradition and (slowly falling) enthusiasm about a relatively new democratic political system, and b) of semi-consolidated political and, especially, bureaucratic elites that are still not fully prepared to be responsible for dealing with realistic and complex public issues.

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15 The question was: "We are interested in your opinion on your own role. In comparison with the broader public, how do you feel as regards your knowledge, skills and feeling of responsibility?".

16 Aberbach *et al.* (1981, pp. 205-208) made the same conclusion, *i.e.*, that politicians were slightly more favorable to political freedoms and political equality than senior civil servants, with the only difference that differences between the two elites were slightly bigger in western European countries than in Slovenia.

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