Tim Haughton Explaining the Slovak Sonderweg

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Explaining the Slovak Sonderweg: Slovakia’s Path of Political Transformation During Her First Five Years of Independence (1993-8)

Ph.D. Thesis

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Abstract

Accounts of the first five years of Slovakia's independence tend to find an explanation for her transformation from a front-runner to join NATO and the European Union into the black sheep of Central Europe in two words: Vladimír Mečiar. This thesis is an attempt to assess that claim.

After two introductory chapters, one exploring the terrain of Slovak politics, and the other assessing the utility of applying theories of democratization and political culture, the thesis examines Mečiar's role in explaining Slovak development. Employing theories of leadership and decision-making, the role of the former Slovak prime minister is examined in detail. Mečiar's position vis-à-vis his own party, HZDS, and the input of other political actors into the decision-making process is evaluated. A central chapter of the thesis explores the formation and functioning of the 1994-8 governing coalition. Utilising comparative coalition theory, the chapter gauges the part played by the two smaller parties, ZRS and SNS, in the 1994-8 government. In order to ascertain the degree of responsibility for Slovakia's political development that deserves to be placed on Mečiar's shoulders, the thesis incorporates a consideration of the part played by the institutional framework of politics and Slovak public opinion.
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_TJH, Stroud, November 2001._
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Frequently Used Abbreviations

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEE</td>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DÚ</td>
<td>Democratic Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
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<td>FNM</td>
<td>National Property Fund (of Slovakia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>Movement for a Democratic Slovakia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVO</td>
<td>Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava</td>
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<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MK</td>
<td>Hungarian Coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MKDH-Spolužitie</td>
<td>Coalition of Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement and Coexistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSR</td>
<td>National Council of the Slovak Republic (Slovak Parliament)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDK</td>
<td>Slovak Democratic Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDSS</td>
<td>Slovak Social Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDL'</td>
<td>Party of the Democratic Left</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIS</td>
<td>Slovak Information Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMK</td>
<td>Hungarian Coalition Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>Slovak National Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOP</td>
<td>Party of Civic Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>SV</td>
<td>Common Choice</td>
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<td>ZRS</td>
<td>Workers' Association of Slovakia</td>
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Preface

Popular accounts of the first five years of Slovakia's independence tend to find an explanation for her transformation from a front-runner to join NATO and the European Union into the black sheep of Central Europe in two words: Vladimír Mečiar. This thesis is an attempt to assess that claim.

After two introductory chapters, one exploring the terrain of Slovak politics, and the other assessing the utility of applying the general democratization, transition and consolidation theories to explain the Slovak case, the thesis examines Mečiar's role in explaining Slovak development. Employing theories of leadership, decision-making and power, the role of the former Slovak prime minister is examined in detail. Mečiar's position vis-à-vis his own party, HZDS, and the input of other political actors into the decision-making process is evaluated. To what extent did Mečiar control his party and government? Was HZDS merely a supportive organization happily rubber-stamping decisions made by its leader? A central chapter of the thesis explores the formation and functioning of the 1994-8 governing coalition. Utilising comparative coalition theory, the chapter gauges the part played by the two smaller parties, The Workers' Association of Slovakia (ZRS)

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and the Slovak National Party (SNS), in the 1994-8 government. How much power did SNS and ZRS have and how did they use it?

In order to ascertain the degree of responsibility for Slovakia’s political development that deserves to be placed on Mečiar’s shoulders, the thesis also incorporates a consideration of the part played by the institutional framework of politics, Slovak political culture and public opinion.

The term \textit{Sonderweg} is used in the title of the thesis not because the thesis aims to compare post-communist Slovakia with pre-World War Two German political development\textsuperscript{2}, but because Slovakia clearly took a special/distinct/separate path of political development to her neighbours, particularly from those in the Višegrad Four (Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland). As Kant and others have shown, German is a more precise language, and the term \textit{Sonderweg} is better than any available in the English language’s otherwise rich vocabulary.

The thesis is focused primarily on Slovakia and on the 1993-8 period. In order to explain the Slovak political experience, however, Slovakia’s political development will be analysed in comparative perspective. Although a full and systematic discussion of political developments in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)\textsuperscript{3} would be beyond the scope of a mono-authored Ph.D. thesis,


\textsuperscript{3} CEE is taken to mean the former countries of communist Eastern Europe excluding Russia.
Slovakia’s experience will be compared and contrasted throughout the thesis with other CEE countries, particularly her erstwhile partner, the Czech Republic.

A Note on Structure, Parameters and Methodology

One of the central themes of this thesis is the interconnection between numerous factors. Although for analytical purposes the thesis concentrates on one factor at a time, it should be stressed that these cannot be put into watertight containers. Moreover, certain issues could be discussed in different categories. Relations between Mečiar and President Michal Kováč, for example, could be discussed in the chapter on the role of the prime minister; this thesis, however, deals with that fraught relationship in the chapter on institutions. Certain factors, such as Slovakia’s historical experience, clearly permeate throughout every chapter, hence they have been placed in an early chapter. Other factors such as economic policy can be separated into sections. Throughout the reading of the thesis it is hoped the reader will come to appreciate why, for instance, the international economic climate is discussed when analysing decision-making theory, but privatization is almost exclusively reserved for the chapter on HZDS.

This thesis concentrates on the 1993-8 period, from independence to the autumn general elections five and three-quarter years later. All chronological cut-off points, even those that appear logical such as 1993-8 in the Slovak case, are to some extent arbitrary, but I would suggest a timeframe which begins with Slovak independence and ends with a general election widely regarded by all sides as being highly significant is sensible.
Historians have the benefit of archives, full of formerly restricted documents now declassified. Political scientists, however, have to make do with publicly available sources. In addition to consulting a number of documents housed at the Slovak Parliament, a close reading of the Slovak press and analysis of public opinion data from the Institute of Public Affairs (IVO) this thesis has employed elite interview. As Pridham has noted, elite interview is instructive for both its objective and subjective character: it enables one to confirm data and crosscheck information, whilst also garnering inside knowledge and participants' perceptions of the decision-making process. In conducting the qualitative interviews, rather than adopt a rigid robotic approach, a template questionnaire method was employed. Specific, pre-prepared questions were asked in order to obtain descriptions of the how and why of decision-making, but flexibility was retained at all times to allow me to build up a personal rapport with the interviewees.

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Theories of Democratic Transition, Consolidation and Political Culture and their Utility in Explaining the Slovak Sonderweg

This chapter begins the task of grappling with the questions at the heart of the thesis, through the prism of democratization theory. An examination of the utility of applying the theories of democratization, consolidation and political culture to the Slovak experience is not just instructive, because those theories concern themselves with the underlying questions of political transformation, but also because many of the most intelligent attempts to explain political development during the 1990s in CEE in general, and Slovakia in particular, have utilized those theories.  

Defining Democracy and Democratic Consolidation

There are as many definitions of democracy as most of us have had hot dinners. Debates over the nature of democracy tend to be hairsplitting affairs which generate more heat than light. As Barrington Moore put it in his seminal work on democracy, arguments over the ‘definitions of democracy have a way of leading away from the

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real issues to trivial quibbling. The best definition of modern liberal democracy, or *polyarchy* as he terms it, was provided by Robert Dahl. Polyarchy is characterized by the following features: elected officials (in whom control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested); free and fair elections; inclusive suffrage; the right to run for public office; freedom of expression; alternative information (citizens not only have a right to seek out alternative sources of information, but these alternative sources exist and are protected by laws); associational autonomy (citizens also have a right to form relatively independent associations or organizations including independent political parties and interest groups). In addition, "[p]opularly elected officials must be able to exercise their constitutional powers without being subjected to overriding (albeit informal) opposition from unelected officials."

Democratic consolidation has generated almost as many definitions as democracy some more 'minimal' than others. Linz and Stepan's more extensive definition

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7 Hereafter polyarchy and democracy are treated as synonymous
will be used, however, because as they assert, ‘democratic consolidation requires much more than elections and markets.’ The five ‘arenas’ of a consolidated democracy for them are a ‘free and lively civil society’, an ‘autonomous and valued political society’, the rule of law, the existence of a ‘state bureaucracy that is usable by the new democratic government’, and an ‘institutionalized economic society’.

Slovakia Through the Prism of Democratization Theory

Unlike the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Estonia and Slovenia, Slovakia was not invited at the European Union summit in Luxembourg in 1997 to join the first wave of applicant states to begin entry negotiations with the EU. Slovakia was excluded thanks to her failure to satisfy the political criteria laid down by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993. The European Commission’s Agenda 2000 assessment criticized Slovakia for the ‘gap between the letter of constitutional law and political practice’, insufficient respect for the rights of minorities and a general disregard for the principles of a democratic state.

In attempting to explain the different patterns of democratization and democratic consolidation across CEE numerous factors have been suggested, including cultural-historical explanations (distinguishing between Catholicism and Orthodoxy

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12 *ibid* p7
and Habsburg and Ottoman rule), geographical proximity to the West\textsuperscript{14}, the level of socio-economic development, the strength of civil society, the incidence of popular unrest during communist times, and the mode of extrication from communism to name but a few.\textsuperscript{15} Even the process of categorizing these theories has generated much debate.\textsuperscript{16} Kopecký and Mudde placed explanations of different patterns of democratic consolidation into three categories; structural accounts emphasizing economic development, modernization, and prevailing cultural patterns; institutional accounts; and actor-behavioural.\textsuperscript{17} Such a categorization is helpful, but the concern in this chapter is the process of democratization, not just its final phase (consolidation)\textsuperscript{18}, hence an alternative six-way categorization will be employed: modernization, structural, evolutionary, transition, path dependency and

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{14} Jeffrey S. Kopstein and David A. Reilly, ‘Geographical Diffusion and the Transformation of the Postcommunist World’, \textit{World Politics}, 53, (October 2000), pp. 1-37
\item\textsuperscript{15} Lewis, ‘Theories of Democratization’, pp. 4-26 (pp. 6-9); Paul Lewis, ‘Democratization in Eastern Europe’ in David Potter et al (eds.), \textit{Democratization}, Cambridge: Polity Press in association with the Open University (1997) pp. 399-420
\item\textsuperscript{17} Putnam’s three models of institutional behaviour provides a useful alternative categorization see Robert D. Putnam, \textit{Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy}, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1993) pp. 9-12
\item\textsuperscript{18} Others have argued a clear distinction needs to be made between the transition ‘to a democracy’ and ‘the subsequent transition from an initial democratic arrangement towards a truly consolidated democracy.’ See Petr Kopecký & Cas Mudde, ‘What has Eastern Europe taught us about the democratization literature (and vice versa)?’, \textit{European Journal of Political Research, 37}, (2000), pp. 517-39 (p517)
\end{itemize}
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particularists.¹⁹

(a) Modernization theorists

At the core of the modernization theory of democracy is the simple notion that as a
country modernizes it becomes more likely to adopt a polyarchical political
system.²⁰ Even the briefest glance at a history book shows that four hundred years
ago there was not a single polyarchy in the world, whereas by the mid-1990s there
were 70-80²¹. Moreover, these polyarchies are concentrated in the most
economically developed nations. Based on his five indices of development (per
capita income, number of telephones per 1000 people, per cent of males in
agriculture, degree of urbanization and level of literacy), Seymour Martin Lipset,
who popularized the modernization approach, famously concluded: 'the more well
to do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy';²² a sentiment
shared three decades later by Diamond and Marks.²³ Even those sceptical of the

¹⁹ One could add here another category of Marxist analysis such as that forwarded by
Chilcote et al in Ronald H. Chilcote (ed.), Transitions From Dictatorship to Democracy:
It is this author's contention, however, that the most useful neo-Marxist theories sit
comfortably in the structuralist category.

²⁰ Apter argued development will systematically generate democracy see David E. Apter,
Rethinking Development: Modernization, Dependency and Postmodern Politics, Newbury
Park: Sage (1987)

²¹ Potter, 'Explaining Democratization', pp. 10-24 (p9)

²² Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics, London: Heinmann

²³ Larry Diamond and Gary Marks, 'Seymour Martin Lipset and the Study of Democracy'
in Gary Marks & Larry Diamond (eds.), Reexamining Democracy: Essays in Honor of
modernization thesis, such as Samuel P. Huntington, accept that ‘an overall correlation exists between the level of economic development and democracy’.\(^{24}\)

Although there is indeed a strong relationship between levels of development and the incidence of democratic regimes, the onus is on modernization theories to prove that modernization itself generates and stabilizes democracy. The strong relationship could be due either to the fact that democracies are more likely to emerge as countries develop economically or democracies may be established independently of economic development, but may be more likely to survive in developed countries.\(^{25}\) Correlation, however, is not causation. Amongst modernization theorists explanations for the process involved are often either absent or vague.\(^{26}\) Lipset’s account, for instance, stresses moderation and tolerance. These, he argues, are linked to education which broadens one’s outlook, increases tolerant attitudes, restrains people from adopting extremist doctrines and increases their capacity for rational electoral choice.

Modernization theories tend to be far too linear.\(^{27}\) The underlying assumption is that as a country acquires more telephones per head it is more likely to become democratic. Human history rarely proceeds along a smooth path. Indeed modernization theory per se cannot explain why there was not democratization in


\(^{26}\) See, for example, Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, Glencoe, II: The Free Press (1958) pp. 46-64

\(^{27}\) Lawrence F. Kaplan, ‘China and Freedom’, *Prospect*, (October 2001), pp. 28-33
Eastern Europe and the USSR prior to 1989 when levels of GDP per capita, literacy and even the number of telephones suggested the countries should be democratic. Moreover, modernization in Latin America in the late 1960s and early 1970s was not leading to democratization, but rather, as O’Donnell noted, a tendency to consolidate the non-polyarchies and to the establishment of new patterns of dependence and mass praetorianism.\(^{28}\) Although most of these countries democratized during the third wave in the late 1970s and 1980s, even modernization theorists would have to accept that the process of democratization is non-linear. Exogenous factors such as war often play their part. Many European countries democratized after the Second World War, as did Argentina after the Malvinas conflict. Indeed one could consider democratization in Central and Eastern Europe to be, in some respects, the by-product of losing the Cold War.

Nonetheless, modernization theory may help explain variations within CEE. If one compares the Višegrad Four (V4) to the Balkans it is clear the latter were ‘slower to take the path of democratization’ and in terms of, for example, GDP and wealth indicators such as ownership of consumer goods they were behind the V4.\(^{29}\) There are, however, conflicting signals regarding Slovakia economic position vis-à-vis her former federal partner. Průcha’s analysis suggests by 1992 differences between the economic and living standards of Slovak and Czech nations was ‘reduced to a


\(^{29}\) Lewis, ‘Theories of Democratization’, pp. 4-26 (p15)
minimum' by 1992\textsuperscript{30}, but a glance at raw GDP per capita statistics shows Slovakia (on $1930) well below the Czech lands ($2450). Slovakia's figure, however, was similar to Poland's ($1910) and much higher than countries such as Bulgaria ($1330), Romania ($1330) and Albania ($520).\textsuperscript{31}

Three more criticisms ought to be made briefly. Firstly, the process of modernization is not/has not been the same in all countries, something modernization theories brush over. Do different models of modernization and the timing and sequence of countries in the modernization process affect the process of democratization? It seems plausible to suggest so.\textsuperscript{32} Secondly, modernization theory assumes modern liberal democracy is the political expression of modernity, but does why does it have to be?\textsuperscript{33} Thirdly, modernization theory, with its precepts derived from the Western experience of development, can also be attacked for its ethnocentricity.\textsuperscript{34} The last argument does not cut much ice in the Slovak example. Eastern Europe - in the Cold War geographical sense – is 'quintessentially a part of the broad pattern of shared experiences and values in the European area'\textsuperscript{35}. In the


\textsuperscript{31} Lewis, ‘Theories of Democratization’, pp.4-26 (p9)

\textsuperscript{32} The notion of path dependency will be discussed below.

\textsuperscript{33} James Hughes, ‘Transition models and democratization in Russia’ in Mike Bowker & Cameron Ross (eds.), \textit{Russia after the Cold War}, London: Longman (2000) pp. 21-49


Central European lands, where the precepts of Western Christianity were adopted, those societies 'shared in aspects of feudalism, mediaeval Christian universalism, the Renaissance, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and the Enlightenment.' Yet as Schöpfelin argues, each of these aspects 'was shared slightly differently, less intensively, less fully', with the result that East European participation in what can be dubbed the 'European experience' was only partial.

As Huntington argues, 'no level or pattern of economic development is in itself either necessary or sufficient to bring about democratization'. The 'explanatory capacity' of the modernization framework is, therefore, rather 'limited', representing at best 'a probabilistic statement about the conditions under which political democracy is likely to thrive and the situation in which democratization is likely to occur...'. Indeed many recent accounts of democratization which incorporate modernization theory have attempted to address these shortcomings, for

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37 Schöpfelin, Politics in Eastern Europe, p11. Ethnocentricity will be discussed in greater details in the particularist section below.


39 Lewis, 'Theories of Democratization', pp. 4-26 (pp.12-3)
example, by inserting a political agent thesis into their explanatory framework.\textsuperscript{40} Modernization \textit{per se} is not enough to explain Slovak political development.

\textbf{(b) Structural Theorists}

Structural theories of democratization focus on power relationships between various social groups. As the structures of power change so do the political systems. Certain structural patterns lead towards democracy, others towards authoritarianism. The approach tends to be comparative, historical, and examines long-term trends. In his classic study, \textit{The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy}, Barrington Moore provided an explanation for why Britain, USA and France had taken the liberal democratic path, why fascism triumphed in Germany and Japan, and why Russia and China had gone communist.\textsuperscript{41} Democratization was, for Moore, a struggle between classes.\textsuperscript{42} The explanation, which examines power relations on the eve of industrialization, tends to be far too deterministic assuming events decades or centuries ago determine the nature of the current polity. Moore, however, should be credited with providing an explanation of the process of democratization, something the modernization theorists fail to do.

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\textsuperscript{40} G. L. Munch, ‘Democratic transitions in comparative perspective’, \textit{Comparative Politics}, 26, (1994), pp. 355-75


Moore's thesis, encapsulated in his pithy phrase 'no bourgeoisie, no democracy', was taken up and challenged by Rueschemeyer et al.\textsuperscript{43} They argue that whether or not a society moves towards liberal democracy is 'fundamentally shaped by the balance of class power' and 'it is the struggle between the dominant and subordinate classes over their right to rule that – more than any other factor – puts democracy on the historical agenda and decides its prospects.'\textsuperscript{44} For Rueschmeyer et al the working class, not the bourgeoisie, is the most consistently democratic force. The role of the working class has historically varied enormously depending on the alignment of other classes, the position and the power of the state, and transnational forces. At times when the working class has been comparatively weak the middle classes have pushed for democratization to improve their own position. At the core of Rueschmeyer's analysis are three ideas. Firstly, no class can be considered in isolation. Secondly, alliances of classes can vary and can be more or less favourable to democratization. Thirdly, capitalist development changes class alignments and hence can be fundamentally important in explaining democratic prospects.

The analysis is class-based. Rueschmeyer et al believe class to be the 'master key to understanding the social structuring of interests and power in society.'\textsuperscript{45} How relevant is class to an understanding of democratization process in the former communist countries of Europe? Geoffrey Evans believes class still matters,


\textsuperscript{44} Rueschmeyer et al, \textit{Capitalist Democracy & Development} p47

\textsuperscript{45} ibid p5
arguing in an article with Matějů and Řehábová, that the early post-communist period had seen a polarization between a ‘disadvantaged class’ and the ‘professional’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ classes.\(^\text{46}\) Class interests have been rising, they argue, because of restitution, privatization, the loss of the working class’s leading role and the increase in inequality thanks to marketization.\(^\text{47}\) The utility of class to explain voting behaviour will be discussed later in this thesis, but for the purposes of assessing class based theories of change, what appears evident is that those who wish to stress class still matters tend to equate class with occupational stratification, reminiscent of the British relative class voting school\(^\text{48}\). Class in the Marxian and Weberian sense, which lie at the heart of the structuralist theories of change, are not about fine gradations of stratification and relative class voting.\(^\text{49}\) To try to justify class still matters Evans \textit{et al} have moved the goalposts so far apart that almost anyone can score. Besides, inspired by the work of Włodek Weslowski and others, many sociologists studying the East European Communist regimes had found Marxian concepts of class wanting and had developed sophisticated models of stratification based on multidimensional social status indicies (education, work-


\(^\text{47}\) \textit{ibid} p235

\(^\text{48}\) See, for example, Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell and John Curtice, \textit{How Britain Votes}, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1985)

complexity, power, income, material and cultural lifestyle). Nonetheless, work on social stratification in the Czech and Slovak Republics has yielded results for the purposes of this thesis. Social stratification in the Czech and Slovak Republics was very similar in 1993, only private entrepreneurship was more developed in the Czech Republic. What was noticeable was the greater proportion of Slovaks employed in the eastern market orientated industries which were hardest hit by the process of marketization. The winners and losers of marketization and their explanatory power for voting behaviour will be discussed below.

(c) Evolutionary

Although one could squeeze the work of Tatu Vanhanen into either the structuralist or the modernization camps it would be an uncomfortable fit. He deserves a category to himself. Vanhanen is a universalist who evokes Darwinian notions. His approach is quantitative: cross-national measuring a number of different variables for 147 and 172 countries. It seems reasonable to assume that political systems are ‘continually adapted to serve the interests of the most powerful competitors’. He builds on the Aristotelian notion that the nature/type of regime is determined by the

53 Vanhanen, Process of Democratization, p3
relative strength of the different social classes\textsuperscript{54} and fuses this argument with Darwinian notions to argue that democratic regimes emerged because they were the best way of allocating scarce resources. Human beings were adapting to their environment.\textsuperscript{55}

At the heart of Vanhanen's work is his statistical measure the Index of Power Resources (IPR). It is calculated from three separate measures: The Index of Knowledge Distribution (IKD), the Index of Occupational Diversification (IOD) and the Distribution of Economic Power Resources (DER). In turn, these three measures were calculated from other statistics: IKD from the number of students per 1000 of population and the level of literacy; IOD from the level of urbanization and the size of the non-agricultural population; and DER from the number of family farms and the degree of decentralization of non-agricultural economic resources.\textsuperscript{56}

Vanhanen's theory could help to explain why countries from Eastern Europe and USSR did not democratize during the Communist period. Although they were modern in the Lipsian-Cutrightian sense, their IPR was low mainly due to the DER component which in turn is explicable by the very low levels of decentralization of the nonagricultural economic resources. This suggests that if the Eastern European countries are to successfully democratize all they need to do is decentralize economic resources. Vanhanen argued in 1990 'on the basis of my explanatory

\textsuperscript{54} Aristotle, \textit{The Politics}, (translated by T.A. Sinclair), London: Penguin, revised edition, (1981) pp. 235-358. The notion of democracy as a pact is also an integral part of the transition school which will be discussed below.

\textsuperscript{55} Vanhanen, \textit{Process of Democratization}, pp. 48-9

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid} especially p65

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variables I conclude that the prospects of democracy in Yugoslavia are good and that we can expect the emergence of pluralist democracy in some way or other.\textsuperscript{57} The evidence would suggest other factors must be taken into consideration.\textsuperscript{58}

Vanhanen attempted to rectify this by introducing a new measure into his equation: the Index of Structural Imbalance (ISI).\textsuperscript{59} ISI is based on the mean deviations of the three sectional indexes (IOD, DER, IKD). The higher the ISI the more insecure the political system. Vanhanen then attempts to devise a new measure the IPR-ISI to explain democratization. IPR-ISI is calculated on the basis of IPR + \( \frac{1}{4} \) ISI.\textsuperscript{60} He provides no explanation of why it should be \( \frac{1}{4} \) ISI and not, say, \( \frac{1}{2} \) ISI. It appears arbitrary and given the fact his results fit his theory it is easy, although cynical, to suggest, \( \frac{1}{4} \) ISI was chosen because it produces results which back up his arguments. Despite this Vanhanen’s contribution to the democratization debate is extremely valuable. By concentrating on the notion of distribution of power resources and by undertaking extensive quantitative analysis, Vanhanen has helped move the debate along mainly by showing that structurally countries like Czechoslovakia were overdue for democratization by the 1980s.

\textsuperscript{57} Vanhanen, \textit{Process of Democratization}, p140
\textsuperscript{58} Although one could make a strong case for using Vanhanen’s theory as an explanation of Slovenia’s successful progression to democracy.
\textsuperscript{60} Vanhanen & Kimber, ‘Predicting and Explaining Democratization in Eastern Europe’, pp. 63-98 (pp 76-9). Vanhanen labels this measure the Index of Power Resources and Structural Imbalance (IPRI) in Vanhanen, \textit{Prospects of Democracy}, pp. 56-70
(d) Path Dependency

Path dependency theories have been popular explanations for significant social phenomena, including the transformations in CEE. Path dependency is not an exclusive explanation and can incorporate many of the other approaches. If path dependence is, as Sewell defined it, 'that what has happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time', few would disagree but does that tell us anything more than history matters? Two more developed path dependent theories have been forwarded by Stark and Bruszt, and Fish. In the former, the argument runs that 'it is the differing paths of extrication from state socialism that shape the possibilities of transformation in the subsequent stage.' The latter argues the decisions on economic reform made after the initial democratic elections determine (with some caveats) the course of economic reform. There is an element of truth in both.

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63 Stark and Bruszt, *Postsocialist Pathways*, p82

64 M. Steven Fish, ‘The Determinants of Economic Reform in Post-Communist World’, *East European Politics and Societies*, 12, 1, (Winter 1998), pp. 31-78
Clearly the mode of extrication (violent/non-violent etc.) affected the political environment in the immediate post-revolutionary situation. Equally, the best time to undertake radical economic reform was soon after the revolutions when the willingness of the populace to suffer the consequences was at its highest. If one accepts Fish’s model root and branch, however, the question which arises (and his model does not explain) is why non-communists do well in the first post-revolution elections in some countries, but not in others? Path dependency theories suffer from two main problems. There is very little space allowed for the impact of external events and shocks. Politics may not just be about responding to what Harold MacMillan described as ‘events, dear boy, events’ or what Machiavelli called ‘accidenti’, but unexpected, external events affect the course of a polity. Moreover, path dependency theories downgrade the role of agency. Fish’s model, for example, cannot explain the path of economic reforms carried out by the Dzurinda government in Slovakia since 1998.

Path dependency, however, should not be immediately cast into the dustbin. It can help an analysis of post-1993 Slovakia. Central to the more sophisticated path dependent theories is the idea of a critical juncture. Such junctures become critical because ‘once a particular option is selected it becomes progressively more difficult to return to the initial point when multiple alternatives were still available.’ The

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66 For a more general critique of path dependency theory see Beverley Crawford and Arend Lijphart (eds.), *Liberalization and Leninist Legacies: Comparative Perspectives on Democratic Transitions*, Berkley: University of California Press (1997)

67 Mahoney, ‘Path dependency in historical sociology’, pp. 507-48 (p513)
formation of the 1994-8 government and the initial steps pursued in that
government's early days set a course, which induced further movement in the same
direction and it could be argued set up a process of what Mahoney has dubbed,
'self-reinforcing sequences'\(^6^8\). Former HZDS deputy chairwoman and cabinet
minister Ol'ga Keltošová is in no doubts that Slovak history would have been
different had an alternative government been formed in the autumn of 1994.\(^6^9\) Once
that government had been formed, because of the policies pursued and the reaction
of both the opposition and the international community to those policies, changes to
the policies became increasingly unlikely. Partly, for that reason a significant
portion of this thesis is devoted to the formation and functioning of the 1994-8
government.

(e) Transition theorists

Transition theorists such as Rustow, Linz and Przeworski focus not on impersonal
structural and large-scale societal change, but rather on the actions, choices and
strategies of political elites.\(^7^0\) Movements towards democracy are to be explained
not by reference to social indicators, but to the 'strategic interactions and

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\(^{6^8}\) *ibid* p512

\(^{6^9}\) Ol'ga Keltošová (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 18 April 2000)

\(^{7^0}\) Dankwart Rustow, 'Transitions to Democracy', *Comparative Politics*, 2, (April 1970),
pp. 337-63. Yossi Shain and Juan Linz, *Between States: Interim Governments and
Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern
Russell Bova, 'Political Dynamics of Post-Communist Transition: A Comparative
Perspective' in Nancy Bermeo (ed.), *Liberalization and Democratization: Change in the
Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University
arrangements among political elites, conscious choices among various types of
democratic constitutions, and electoral and party systems.\textsuperscript{71} Rustow saw that after
national unity had been established the national community went through a
prolonged and inconclusive political struggle. Then there is a decision phase, a
historical moment, when the parties to the struggle decide to compromise and adopt
democratic rules which gives each some share in the polity. (There is an obvious
parallel with Vanhanen’s work here.) The need to precede democratization with the
resolution of the national identity problem in Rustow’s model raises questions for
the Slovak example, not just in terms of Slovakia’s federal state status pre-1993, but
her substantial Magyar minority residing within the boundaries of the state, for as
Rustow argued, ‘the vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be must have no
doubt or mental reservations as to which political community they belong to.’\textsuperscript{72}
Baogang He’s persuasive critique of Rustow, however, suggests ‘national identity
problems do not necessarily rule out democratization’ because ‘...democracy can
accommodate multiple identities and demands and can consequently help to
manage problems of national identity’, through mechanisms such as ‘granting
autonomy, recognizing minority rights, or establishing coalition governments.’\textsuperscript{73}
The failure of Mečiar’s 1994-8 government, in particular, to follow the necessary

\textsuperscript{71} Don Chull Shin, ‘On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of
Recent Theory and Research’, \textit{World Politics}, 47, (October 1994), pp. 135-70. See also Jon
Elster, Claus Offe, Ulrich K. Preuss \textit{et al}, \textit{Institutional Design in Post-Communist
especially p110. The role of institutions is discussed in chapter 6.

337-63 (p350)

\textsuperscript{73} Baogang He, ‘The National Identity Problem and Democratization: Rustow’s Theory of
Sequence’, \textit{Government and Opposition}, 36, 1, (Winter 2001), pp. 97-119 (pp. 103, 108,
109)
‘inclusive democratization strateg[ey]’\textsuperscript{74}, however, suggests Rustow’s stress on a resolution of a national problem should not be immediately discarded. Indeed, the Mečiar-led governments’ uneasy relationship to the Slovak Republic’s ethnic Hungarians should be seen as a problem of a new state ‘still very much in the treacherous process of state-building’\textsuperscript{75}

In transition accounts, democracy is initiated by those within the authoritarian regime who make a rational decision that liberalization is better than the status quo. Gates and Humes have provided a fascinating, but highly complex, mathematical elucidation of this process. Politicians are unlikely to reach for their copy of Games, Information and Politics when they are deciding to liberalize, nor are they likely to make detailed mathematical calculations, but they are likely to weigh up the relative likelihood of various scenarios.\textsuperscript{76} Once liberalization has begun in earnest various political actors begin to involve themselves in the interplay between regime and opposition forces. Here various different groupings come to the fore hardliners, softliners, opportunists, moderates and radicals. These groupings within the elite make decisions based on rational calculations of what is in their best interest and revise their preferences in response to others’ action and probability of outcomes.

\textsuperscript{74} ibid p110

\textsuperscript{75} Kopecky & Mudde, ‘What has Eastern Europe taught us about the democratization literature (and vice versa)?’, pp. 517-39 (p530)

\textsuperscript{76} Scott Gates and Brian D. Humes, Games, Information and Politics, Michigan: University of Michigan Press (1997) chapter 5. Although their figures are arbitrary they do highlight the thought processes that might go on inside the heads of the elites.
The route to liberal democracy\textsuperscript{77}, in the transition accounts, is determined fundamentally by the agency of elite initiatives and actions not by changing structures.

All transition theories concentrate on the role of key individuals within the political process. The stress on the Carlyle notion of the \textit{Great Man of History} is open to the usual raft of criticisms. All transition theorists accept, however, that no decision is made in a vacuum. Indeed Linz and Stepan have highlighted the importance of regime type for transition paths.\textsuperscript{78} They make the distinction between totalitarian, post-totalitarianism, authoritarian and sultanistic regimes. Countries transforming from a frozen post-totalitarian regime such as Czechoslovakia in 1989 are likely to have peaceful mass protest followed by an interim government, whereas sultanistic regimes such as Ceauşescu tend to have armed struggle and the violent overthrow of the regime. The nature of any interim government is also important to the process of transition.\textsuperscript{79}

Although the transition theorists have more to say about the early stages of democratization than the consolidation phase, they do highlight the importance of one key variable, the elite.\textsuperscript{80} Higley and Burton, who argue the ‘forms and the


\textsuperscript{78} Linz & Stepan, \textit{Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation}, pp. 55-65

\textsuperscript{79} Shain & Linz, \textit{Interim Governments}

stability or instability of regimes depend heavily on the internal relations of political elites'\textsuperscript{81}, have distinguished between the consensually united elites in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic with disunited elites in Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Slovakia, where the old communist political elites have been 'much more successful at holding on to power.'\textsuperscript{82} They argue further that 'although opposition governments have held power briefly in Bulgaria and Slovakia, electoral processes have seldom posed a serious threat to the dominant ex-communists'.\textsuperscript{83} On the surface, such an argument has some basis. After the 1992 elections, many of the top constitutional functions in Slovakia were held by former members of the Party. Of the 150 MPs who passed the Slovak Constitution, 99 were former members of the Communist Party (KSČ), and a significant number of HZDS deputies were former members of KSČ.\textsuperscript{84} Such evidence, however, belies the fact, for instance, that Mečiar had not been a member of the Party since his expulsion in 1970 and the post-communist SDL has spent more time out of government than in.\textsuperscript{85} Moreover, in a broader sense (both sectorally and geographically) Róna-Tas has argued the

\textsuperscript{81} John Higley and Michael G. Burton, 'Types of political elites in postcommunist Europe', \textit{International Politics}, 34, (June 1997), pp. 153-68 (p162). See also Szomolányi, Klukatá cesta Slovenska k demokracii


\textsuperscript{83} Higley & Burton, 'Types of political elites in postcommunist Europe', pp. 153-68 (p162)

\textsuperscript{84} Soňa Szomolányi, 'Slovakia Between Eastern and Central European Ways of Transition' in Vladimíra Dvořáková (ed.), \textit{Success or Failure? Ten Years After}, Prague: Česká společnost pro politické vědy & Slovenské združenie pre politické vedy (1999) pp. 24-38 (p30); Szomolányi, Klukatá cesta Slovenska k demokracii, p90

post-communist elites were recruited from the second rank of the old elite. Most people who climbed into elite positions after 1989, therefore, she argues would have been there anyway even if communism had not collapsed.\(^{86}\)

Terms such as 'the elite' can, however, mask important differences. How many of the Communist elite in the 1970s, for instance, were genuine Communists? Garton Ash suggested many of those who joined the Communist party in the 1970s did so 'not because they believed in communism but because they were interested in making a career.'\(^{87}\) Throughout CEE Communist Parties reacted differently to the events of 1989. Whereas the Czech section of the Czechoslovak Communist Party remained hard-line thanks in part to the fact that the higher echelons of the Party was populated by members who had reached the top opposing reform in the late 1960s\(^{88}\), the Slovak Communist Party (KSS) led by the then Young Turks, Pavol Kanis, Peter Weiss and Viliam Pleza, distanced themselves from the federal organization and began moves to set up a new party based on social democratic principles and keen to join the international social democratic club.\(^{89}\) Indeed, a case can be made that the Slovaks were hindered by the Czechs in the late 1980s and

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\(^{89}\) Peter Weiss (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 25 February 2000); Anna Grzymala-Busse, 'Reform Efforts in the Czech and Slovak Communist Parties and their Successors 1988-1993', *East European Politics and Societies*, 12, 3, (Fall 1998), pp. 442-71; Szomolányi, *Kľukatá cesta Slovenska k demokracii*, pp. 30-1
early 1990s. Whereas Poland and Hungary underwent 'refolution', Slovakia was hindered by the domination of the Prague-based agenda, where 'hopelessly unimaginative communists were in a stand-off with dissidents who had been totally excluded from professional life.' This argument should not be pushed too far, but the different attitudes towards the post-communist polity of the Czech and Moravian Communist Party and SDL since 1989 suggest Henderson's argument has some merit.

When grappling with the concept of the 'elite', two other points deserve mention. Writing about Croatia Vesna Pusić distinguished between a 'power' and a 'moral elite'. The latter she defines as 'one which by virtue of public pressure, had made an important contribution to the collapse of the old system and the fundamental transformation of political life, but which did not itself have a base in any recognized social group which could have served as a power base, and was not professionally qualified and identified with politics.' Secondly, argues Szomolányi, Slovakia's 'highly fragmented and unconsolidated elite' can be contrasted to Hungary's 'consensual' elite.

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91 Henderson, 'Evaluating Slovak Transition', pp. 33-40 (p35)
The merit of the transition theorists’ approach is to have put individual human beings back into the democratization process - albeit rational, calculating individuals - but they do run the risk of falling into Moore’s *presentist* trap. The elite should not be studied to the exclusion of everything else, a more holistic approach is required. Democratic consolidation, as the Linz and Stepan definition suggests, and Ekiert and Kubik have argued, is a ‘highly contingent and complex process taking place in several spheres of the socio-political organization of society.’ Moreover, no decision is made in a vacuum. Successful political leadership, whilst not being able to transcend environment, culture and history, can stretch these to the limits; a point which will be discussed in following chapters.

Many of the transition theorists’ work on CEE builds on ideas and concepts derived from the Latin American and Southern European experiences. Are the transition theorists, therefore, guilty of what Sartori called ‘conceptual stretching’? Are we, in the words of Bunce, ‘comparing apples with apples, apples with oranges (which are at least varieties of fruit) or apples with, say, kangaroos?’ As Bunce argues

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96 Bunce, ‘Should Transitologists Be Grounded?’, pp. 111-27 (p112)
‘along virtually every dimension that economists, sociologists and political scientists recognize as important’ (social structure, ideology, political economy, ‘the configuration of political and economic elites’, civil-military relations and its ‘position in the international hierarchy of power and privilege’) the communist regimes of CEE differed from the authoritarian regimes of Southern Europe and Latin America.97

Bunce made two other important points. Firstly, she emphasized differences in the international context. The transitions in CEE are ‘taking place in an international system which is itself in transition’98 and not in a ‘stable, bi-polar international environment’99. This element of Bunce’s argument appears problematic for much of CEE, partly because the international political context in the 1990s has helped produce an environment in which authoritarian regimes find it difficult to function.100 The carrot incentive, however, was equally in evidence in the ‘return to Europe’ Zeitgeist prevalent throughout much of the region, manifested particularly in the desire to join the European Union (EU). Just as in the Spanish, Portuguese and Greek cases, membership of the EU is seen to some extent as a reward for democratic consolidation.101 The EU’s role within the desire to join the European mainstream, however, should not be overemphasized: in Helen Wallace’s terms we

97 ibid p119
98 ibid p120
99 ibid p118
100 Lewis, ‘Theories of Democratization and Patterns of Regime Change in Eastern Europe’, pp. 4-26 (p4)
should not conflate ‘Europeanization’ with ‘EU-ization’. Moreover, the international context cannot explain *per se* differences in democratic transition and consolidation because it is a ‘constant.’ What matters is how the individual country receives and deals with the European message. In the Slovak case the EU’s impact on internal developments is mixed. EU pressure was important in ensuring the signing of the Basic Treaty with Hungary in 1995, but the EU’s *démarches* complaining about the state of democracy in Slovakia were insignificant in terms of policy change.

Bunce’s second point is more telling, ‘the most striking contrast’ lies in the different agenda. In southern Europe and Latin America ‘the issue was democratization; that is, a change in political regime’, whereas in CEE the task is no less than ‘the creation of the very building blocks of the social order’. Schmitter and Karl dispute this point emphasizing the social, economic, military and administrative transformations in the Southern European and Latin American

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102 Helen Wallace, ‘The Domestication of Europe and the Limits to Globalisation’, unpublished paper delivered to IPSA Congress, Quebec (August 2000)
103 Kopecky & Mudde, ‘What has Eastern Europe taught us about the democratization literature (and vice versa)?’, pp. 517-39 (p531)
105 Keňtošová interview; Culture Minister Ivan Hudec (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 5 April 2000); HZDS deputy chairman Augustin Marián Húška (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 4 April 2000)
106 Bunce, ‘Should Transitologists Be Grounded?’ pp. 111-27 (p120) (Emphasis in the original)
107 *ibid* p121
cases. Nonetheless, the scale of the task facing CEE was greater than that facing most countries democratizing in previous waves. Not only did CEE countries face the challenge of simultaneously democratizing and replacing a command with a market economy, but also in contrast to many previous examples of democratization ‘third wave democracies have started democratization backwards, introducing free elections before establishing such basic institutions as the rule of law and civil society...’ Indeed, given the scale of the task, those employing the ideas generated from the study of Latin America and Southern Europe, were pessimistic at the beginning of the 1990s about the chances of democratization in CEE. If nothing else, the ethnic dimension of transition has been more in evidence across CEE than in Latin America or Southern Europe. As Bunce noted in her pithy observation, ‘there is a former Yugoslavia, a former Czechoslovakia and a former Soviet Union’ but there is ‘no “former Peru” or “former Spain”.’

112 Bunce, ‘Should Transitologists Be Grounded?’, pp. 111-27 (p126). See also Offe, *Varieties of Transition*, p31
(f) Particularists

Bunce’s argument leads on neatly to the arguments of the particularists. The perennial debate of comparative political science between the universalists and the particularists cannot and should not be avoided in the discussion of democratization. Hirschman famously argued that ‘[l]arge-scale social change typically occurs as a result of a unique constellation of highly disparate events and is amenable to paradigmatic thinking only in a very special sense.’

In the democratization debate, the particularist baton has been picked up by Huntington, who argued in *The Third Wave* that democratization could not be explained by common, independent variables, rather the ‘causes of democratization differ substantially from one place to another.’ Huntington makes six points, all of which are worth considering. Firstly, no single factor is sufficient to explain the development of democracy in all countries or in a single country. Secondly, no single factor is necessary to the development of democracy in all countries. Thirdly, democratization in each country is the result of a combination of causes. Fourthly, the combination of causes producing democracy varies from country to country. Fifthly, the combination of causes generally responsible for one wave of democratization differs from that responsible for other waves. Sixthly, causes responsible for the initial regime changes in democratization wave are likely to differ from those responsible for later regime changes in that wave. All these points are true. Should the political scientist, therefore, abandon all attempts at comparative analysis?

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114 Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p38
115 ibid p38
The answer is emphatically no. Huntington signposts the danger spots for political scientists. Comparative theory which provide universalist explanations of democratization should be treated with a pinch of salt if not an entire Marseille salt field. There are elements of the unique and universal present in every situation. Comparison illuminates common, not identical, patterns. A successful and insightful use of comparative political analysis requires the coexistence of both commonality and diversity in cases to be examined. Moreover, whilst it would (probably) not be a particularly fruitful exercise to compare the democratization process in seventeenth century Britain with twentieth century Nicaragua, comparing countries which have emerged from a similar experience such as the former Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and using comparative theory as a tool to explain both what was common and what was specific to each country would seem to be very fruitful.

Nonetheless, universalist theories a la Vanhanen and Lipset tend to ignore the extent of cultural differences. Although (as will be discussed below) culture as an explanatory variable can be overstressed it is worth noting that modern, liberal, representative democracy is very much a European idea. There are two types of polity where polyarchy has little relevance. Firstly, ‘cohesive polities’ where there is a strong sense of community and where the definition of the individual is in communal terms, not as an atomistic individual, for example, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Secondly, ‘multi-communal’ polities which comprise several cohesive and
self-conscious communities each seeking to preserve its traditional way of life.\textsuperscript{116} Although the former countries of Central and Eastern Europe do not fall into these categories it is worth appreciating that the model of polyarchy may not be exportable to all four corners of the globe.

If one is tempted to retreat into a culturahst backwater it is worth remembering just as universalist theories tend to paint over differences and classify dark greys as black, so culturahst theorists tend to portray cultures as homogenous blocks. Murmansk is not Moscow, Békés is not Budapest, Bardejov is not Bratislava. Moreover, culturalism can be transcended. Both Taiwan and South Korea are culturally Confucian, but both have functioning polyarchies, while Singapore does not (in the fullest sense).

Slovakia’s task was not an easy one. She was faced not only with what Mason described as the ‘herculean task’ of marketization and democratization\textsuperscript{117}, but with the need to build up an independent state.\textsuperscript{118} Szomolányi argues Slovakia had to build up many state institutions from scratch, which she compares to the Czechs who ‘inherited the fully functioning state and political know-how of the former Czechoslovakia.’\textsuperscript{119} In a similar vein to other new states emerging from a larger


\textsuperscript{118} Szomolányi, \textit{Klukatá cesta Slovenska k demokracii}, p13

Tim Haughton Explaining the Slovak Sonderweg

communist federation, such as Ukraine\(^{120}\), a significant number of Slovaks working in the higher echelons of the federal state, most notably those working in the Czechoslovak foreign service, stayed in the former federal capital after the split.\(^{121}\) Nonetheless, arguments stressing the trials and tribulations of a new state should not be pushed too far. Slovakia was at an institutional disadvantage compared to her erstwhile partner, but it would be wrong to suggest Slovakia started from an institutional *tabula rasa*. A number of institutions already existed under the federation. Two important institutions, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Slovak National Bank, however, had to be created from scratch. Nonetheless, ‘talk of the young state’, as Zajac noted, became, however, ‘an institutional excuse for every problem of the state offices from the bad performance of a clerk at a post office counter to governmental instructions that diplomats should improve the Slovak Republic’s reputation by serving sausages at receptions.’\(^ {122}\)

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Political Culture as an Explanatory Variable

At the heart of many accounts of the transitions in CEE is the concept of political culture. Many writers on CEE in general and Slovakia and Czechoslovakia in particular have suggested in both the communist and post-communist periods political culture is a helpful explanatory variable. Brown and Wightman, for example, did not argue political change in Czechoslovakia could be explained entirely in terms of political culture, but they maintained political culture is a central component of an adequate explanation of change in Czechoslovakia post 1956, particularly 1963-8. Baer argued Mečiarism ‘...represents a continuity of [the] traditional features of populist authoritarianism, lack of political pluralism and exclusionist nationalism [in Slovakia], which is why it should be conceived of as only the most recent (and possibly the final) wave of a long standing conservative...’

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Slovak political culture.\footnote{Josette Baer, ‘Boxing and politics in Slovakia: “Meciarism” [sic] – roots, theory, practise’, \textit{Democratization}, 8, 2, (Summer 2001), pp. 97-116 (p109)} For Baer, Slovaks’ inclination to ‘authoritarian-paternalist rule and a high acceptance of nationalist-populist rhetorics [sic]’ was all thanks to Communism, Czechoslovakism, Magyarization and the ‘influence of a rural catholic clergy traditionally rooted in conservatism and paternalistic hierarchies.’\footnote{ibid p113} Mareš \textit{et al} explained the different development trends in the Czech and Slovak Republic post 1989 was ‘due to their respective cultures’ and the resultant ‘understandings of the goals which their societies should pursue’.\footnote{Petr Mareš, Libor Musil & Ladislav Rabušic, ‘Values and the welfare state in Czechoslovakia’ in Christopher G. A. Bryant & Edmund Mokrzycki (eds.), \textit{The New Great Transformation? Change and Continuity in East-Central Europe}, London & New York: Routledge (1994) pp. 78-98 (p78)} The argument rests on four propositions: the \textit{natural} Czech disposition to democracy demonstrated during the First Republic, the \textit{failure} of Communism to change this natural disposition, the difference between the cultural values of Czechs and Slovaks and more broadly the utility of political culture theory which will be examined first.

\textbf{(a) Definitions}

The concept of political culture may have only entered into the discourse of mainstream political science thanks to the pioneering work of Almond, Verba and Pye\footnote{Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, \textit{The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations}, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1963), new edition, Boston: Little Brown (1989); Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba (eds.), \textit{Political Culture and Political Development}, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1965). See also Glen}, but the notion of political culture has pervaded thinking about politics at
least since Plato.\textsuperscript{131} It is at times a nebulous concept with every author forwarding his or her own definition.\textsuperscript{132} Political culture theory concerns itself with ‘the importance of values, feelings, and beliefs in the explanation of political behaviour.’\textsuperscript{133} Rather than filling the remainder of this thesis with a list of definitions, which could easily be done, Glenda Patrick’s definition will be used. Partly, because she looked at a number of different definitions of political culture, noted the points of convergence and attempted to provide a reconceptualization, but equally because her definition is clear and workable. The intention here is to analyze the utility of the concept not to nit-pick definitions. Patrick defines political culture as ‘the set of fundamental beliefs, values and attitudes that characterize the nature of the political system and regulate political interaction amongst its members.’ At the core are those beliefs, values and attitudes that define the purpose, procedural rules, and role relationships of the system.\textsuperscript{134}

Culture, arguably an even more nebulous concept than its political offshoot, is taken here to be, in the words of Clifford Geertz, ‘an historically transmitted pattern of


\textsuperscript{134} Patrick, ‘Political Culture’, pp. 265-314 (p297)
meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life. The Geertzian conception of culture is one of a system of meaning and identity that accounts for why and how people in any given setting act as they do, rather than the idea of culture as a set of norms or behaviours that directly shape action.

At the heart of the difference between the political culture tradition and culture approach is one of emphasis: Almond and Verba tend to work from individual values and attitudes (as reported by the subjects themselves) up, whereas culture approaches tend to start from the collectivity. For most of this chapter, however, for reasons of space, but also because despite their different starting points they are remarkably similar, the political culture and the cultural approaches are lumped together.

(b) Culture, Political Culture theories and their Critics

Political scientists can be divided into those who think political culture explains a lot and those who think it explains very little, if anything. For proponents of the

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concept such as Pye, ‘in any particular community there is a limited and distinct political culture which gives meaning, predictability and form to the political process.’\textsuperscript{138} Political culture provides a link between the events of politics and the behaviour of individuals in relation to those events. The concept of political culture, argues Pye, assumes that each individual, in his or her own historical context, ‘learn[s] and incorporate[s]’ into his own personality knowledge and feelings about the politics of his people and community.\textsuperscript{139} The stress on ‘learn and incorporate’ suggests an active process. It is, therefore, not enough simply to argue as many Czechs do over a glass of \textit{pivo} or twenty, for example, that because Czechoslovakia had a democracy between the wars that the natural political culture of the Czechs is therefore democratic. It needs to be constantly learnt and incorporated.

Culture, according to Ross, is relevant to the study of comparative politics. Firstly, because it ‘provides a system of meaning that people use to manage their daily worlds’; and secondly, it is ‘the basis of social and political identity that affects how people line up and how they act on a wide range of matters’.\textsuperscript{140} Culture, for Ross, ‘provides a framework for organizing the world, locating the self and others in it, making sense of the actions and interpreting the motives of others, grounding an analysis of interests, linking collective identities to political action, and motivating people and groups towards some actions and away from others’. Above all, ‘culture orders political priorities, meaning it defines the symbolic and material objects people consider valuable and worth fighting over, the contexts in which such

\textsuperscript{138} Lucian W. Pye, ‘Introduction: Political Culture and Political Development’ in Pye & Verba (eds.), \textit{Political Culture and Political Development}, pp. 3-26 (p7)

\textsuperscript{139} \textit{ibid} p7

\textsuperscript{140} Ross, ‘Culture and Identity in Comparative Political Analysis’, pp. 42-80 (p42)
disputes occur, the rules (both formal and informal) by which politics takes place and who participates in it.\footnote{ibid pp. 46-7}

The concept of political culture, however, is plagued by numerous problems:

(i) Diversity

There is a recognition amongst political culture theorists that no society has a single, uniform political culture.\footnote{See, for example, Almond and Verba, \textit{The Civic Culture}, especially pp. 14-30.} Larry Diamond argued ‘it is at least somewhat misleading to talk of the political culture of a nation, except as a distinctive mixture or balance of orientations.’\footnote{Larry Diamond, ‘Introduction: Political Culture and Democracy’ in Larry Diamond (ed.) \textit{Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries}, textbook edition, Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers (1994) pp. 1-28 (p18)} Indeed, Almond and Verba’s ‘civic culture’ is a mixed political culture; many individuals are active, but many are inactive.\footnote{Almond and Verba, \textit{The Civic Culture}, especially p339} Archie Brown identified four configurations of political culture: unified, dominant (which coexists with various political subcultures), dichotomous, and fragmented.\footnote{Archie Brown, ‘Introduction’ in Brown & Gray (eds.), \textit{Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States} pp. 1-24 (p8)} Such arguments and classification appear sensible, but they raise numerous questions about political culture’s explanatory power. Indeed, how are we to weigh up the relative importance of the different strands of opinion?\footnote{David Laitin, ‘Political Culture and Political Preferences’, \textit{American Political Science Review}, 82, (1988) pp. 589-93} Advocates of political culture, at times, appear to fall into a Procrustean trap: arguing not all political attitudes and sentiments of people are necessarily relevant...
in defining their political culture, ‘for many are too ephemeral and lightly held to affect fundamental behaviour’. Following along from Patrick’s definition, however, it is plausible to distinguish between opinions about day-to-day politics and the questions of primary politics i.e. those concerning the nature of the political system. Verba in attempting to introduce a hint of caution to political culture theory argues, ‘the student of political culture would be wise to accept the fact that what seems today to be fundamental sets of political beliefs may be quickly cast aside.’ If political culture theory has any validity, however, it surely rests on the notion that such fundamental beliefs are not discarded quickly like last year’s fad.

Even advocates of the culture approach accept the limitations. Ross accepts that even if one employs Geertz’s definition there is still a problem of definition. The word culture is employed on occasions with different adjectives: western, French, Breton, Rural Breton etc. Which should be used? The appropriate level of analysis, argues Ross, depends upon what one wants to explain. Alarm bells should begin to ring here. The concept seems to be a little too malleable, a little too convenient.

147 Pye, ‘Introduction’, pp. 3-26 (p8). Ross also argues that ‘to be useful culture cannot be defined so broadly as to include all behaviours, beliefs and institutions’. See Ross, ‘Culture and Identity in Comparative Political Analysis’, pp. 42-80 (p42)


149 Sidney Verba, ‘Comparative Political Culture’ in Pye & Verba (eds.), Political Culture and Political Development, pp. 512-60 (p521)

150 Ross, ‘Culture and Identity in Comparative Political Analysis’, pp. 42-80 (p61)
A cultural theorist analyzing an event in a small Cornish village, for example, may find rural Cornish culture does not provide a satisfactory explanation and then works up the scale until, perhaps, finding an answer using world political culture. Yet a recognition of diversity is essential to provide a cultural explanation of human beings. If someone attempted to analyze this author’s own actions would it be possible to distinguish whether the action was the product of national political culture, Lancastrian roots, West Country childhood, student days in London, or indeed his time in Plzeň and Bratislava? Although the last point is trivial, it highlights another important aspect cultural theorists tend to ignore: how does an individual’s and a society’s cultural matrix change when (partially) cut off from the source of the cultural identity? Or indeed when another culture is imposed.

(ii) Elite and Mass

Given the accepted diversity of opinion, are some people’s values and opinions more important than others? It seems plausible to suggest the values and the beliefs of the elite(s) are man for man (and woman for woman) more important than those of the mass. Elites must be committed to the regime they are upholding if such a regime is to survive for any period of time. Non-elites, however, may be hostile to democracy, but stable democracy might be achieved – in the short term at least - by means of cooperative arrangements at the elite level.\(^{151}\) Is the impact of the values of the elite variable? Montesquieu, for instance, suggested, at the birth of new polities leaders mould institutions, but afterwards institutions mould leaders.\(^{152}\)

\(^{151}\) Arend Lijphart, ‘The Structure of Inference’ in Almond and Verba (eds.), The Civic Culture Revisited pp. 37-56 (p52)

\(^{152}\) Cited in Putnam, Making Democracy Work, p26
(iii) Where do values come from?

Laying emphasis on the importance of values raises an important question: where do these values come from? They do not just ‘descend from heaven to influence the course of history’\(^{153}\), they must come from somewhere.\(^{154}\) Political culture theorists lay stress on the role of schools, religious organizations and kin groups and on terms like socialization\(^{155}\). Such concepts, however, often not only fail to appreciate the ‘impact of the actions, doctrines and teachings’ of political leaders such as Lenin, Kemal Ataturk and Gandhi\(^{156}\), but they also lack an explanation of the value-generation process. How exactly socialization produces a democratic political culture is not well explained by political culture theorists.

(iv) Institutions

Barry and Pateman attacked *The Civic Culture* arguing the role of institutions should not be downplayed. For them institutions and performance influence value generation, not vice-versa.\(^{157}\) In Almond and Verba’s defence, however, they did

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\(^{156}\) Larry Diamond, ‘Causes and Effect’ in Diamond (ed.), *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*, pp. 229-50 (pp. 234-5)


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argue factors such as socialization, political orientation, and political structure and process must be treated as 'separate variables in a complex, multidirectional system of causality'.\textsuperscript{158} Moreover, Almond's modified version of the original thesis argued 'causal arrows between culture and structure and performance go both ways.'\textsuperscript{159} Such a modification does not, as Whitefield and Evans suggest, render the term political culture 'essentially meaningless'\textsuperscript{160}, but it does lessen its explanatory power. The debate, therefore, moves on to whether values play a major or, as Barry suggests, a 'relatively minor part' in system maintenance.\textsuperscript{161} It seems absurd to argue a successful, functioning democracy could survive \textit{without} its participants holding democratic values. If key sections of society do not hold democratic values they are likely to become 'disloyal' or 'semi-loyal' oppositions.\textsuperscript{162} Moreover, moderation and accommodation may be induced by structural and institutional incentives and constraints. These behavioural orientations, however, are difficult to sustain in the long run unless they become embedded in a deeper, more coherent and encompassing system of beliefs and values at both the mass and elite level.\textsuperscript{163}

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\textsuperscript{158} Almond & Verba, \textit{The Civic Culture}, p498
\textsuperscript{160} Whitefield & Evans, 'Political Culture Versus Rational Choice', pp. 129-55 (p132)
\textsuperscript{161} Barry, \textit{Sociologists, Economists and Democracy}, p95
\textsuperscript{162} The terms come from Juan Linz, 'Elements of Breakdown' in Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (eds.), \textit{The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes}, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press (1978) pp. 14-49
\textsuperscript{163} Diamond, 'Introduction', pp. 1-28 (p10)
\end{flushleft}
(c) Political Culture and Democracy

The establishment, stabilization and longevity of democratic regimes have interested political scientists since Aristotle. At the heart of political culture theory is the idea that democracy requires a distinctive set of political values and orientations from its citizens, values such as moderation, tolerance, civility, efficacy, knowledge and participation.\(^{164}\) The core thesis of *The Civic Culture* was that these values played an important role in the process of democratization and in democratic stability.

Almond and Verba argued that, '[e]ach type of polity—traditional, authoritarian and democratic—has one form of culture that is congruent with its own structures.'\(^{165}\) The civic culture was a mixed political culture. At the core of political culture theory is a universal generalization: 'the congruence/incongruence 'causes' the stability/instability of the political system and/or the political culture as well.'\(^{166}\)

The adoption of democratic values by societal groups may be based on purely rational utilitarian calculations.\(^{167}\) Booth and Seligson’s study of Nicaragua suggests

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\(^{164}\) *Ibid*

\(^{165}\) Almond & Verba, *The Civic Culture*, p34

\(^{166}\) Patrick, ‘Political Culture’, pp. 265-314 (p303)

that people are more likely to support a more liberal regime when it is needed to protect their own relatively weak power position. After the transition from the leftist Sandinistas to a centre-right regime the left became more supportive of democracy. In order to use political culture theory, which stresses fundamental values, it is necessary to differentiate between value positions taken for short-term instrumental reasons and those embraced from a deeper and more coherent belief system. Naomi Chazan has shown that the democratic values of rising African elites easily gave way to authoritarian impulses under immense pressures faced by struggling new regimes. To gauge whether democratic values are held purely for political expediency or not, it would seem therefore that a crisis is necessary to test values.

(d) Putnam’s Theory of Civicness

In *Making Democracy Work* Robert Putnam built a new theory on the basis of what he termed *civiness*. He argued civicness was the key condition for creating strong, responsive, effective representative institutions. Drawing heavily on the writings of de Tocqueville, he forwarded the notion of a ‘civic community’. Such a community, argued Putnam, is characterized by an active, public-spirited citizenry,


168 John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, ‘Paths to Democracy and the Political Culture of Costa Rica, Mexico and Nicaragua’ in Diamond (ed.), *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*, pp. 99-130


egalitarian political relations and a social fabric of trust and cooperation. His research showed that some regions of Italy had vibrant networks and norms of civic engagement, whereas others had 'vertically structured politics', a social life of fragmentation and isolation, and a culture of distrust. Putnam and his collaborators, Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Nanetti, conducted a series of interviews with councillors in the new regional councils of Italy from 1970 to the late 1980s. They found, particularly in the north of the country, respondents displayed a greater preponderance to believe in the merits of compromise and self-limitation over time. Putnam asserted this was due not to electoral replacement or nationwide trends, but to institutional socialization. The new regional institutions, he argued, 'fostered tolerant, collaborative pragmatism.' Putnam's acceptance of the role of institutions in enabling certain values to flourish is very important: it may help to explain why certain values are generated and why some decline. His conclusion that the more civic a region the more effective its government, does raise the perennial proverbial question of chickens and eggs, but this can probably be best solved by accepting there is a symbiotic relationship between the two.

Tarrow has criticized Putnam's chain of causation. Putnam suggests the appearance of the civic capacity in nineteenth-century mutual aid societies is directly related to the horizontal associations of late-medieval city-states. (When discussing late-medieval Italy he contrasts the 'steep social hierarchy' in the south, particularly in

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171 *ibid* especially pp. 15-6

172 Writers such as Schöpflin rightly see self-limitation as one of the essential preconditions of a stable and functioning democracy. See George Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe*, Oxford: Blackwell (1993) chapter 10.

Sicily, with the ‘unprecedented form of self-government’ in the towns of northern and central Italy. This civic capacity led to the relative success of regional institutions in the North ensuring democracy worked (and indeed continues to work). Is, Tarrow asks, the causal link between the political culture of association and the practice of democracy really as straightforward as this? Putnam’s operational dependent variable is not democratic practice, but policy performance. Performance is as likely to be positive in non-democracies. At the heart of Tarrow’s attack is the question of whether a concept derived from contemporary democratic politics can be transposed to other periods of history and to other political systems.

Although Tarrow’s criticisms are perspicacious and arguably rip the heart out of Putnam’s thesis, we should not just discard the dismembered corpse. Some things are worth transplanting. It seems plausible to agree with Putnam that the amoral familism in the Mezzogiorno and the vertical bonds of authority associated with the Catholic Church are not conducive to the creation of the values of tolerance, self-limitation, generalized reciprocity, and feedback which democracy needs.

174 ibid p124
176 Putnam sees generalized reciprocity as a continuing relationship of exchange that is at any time imbalanced or unrequited, but that involves the mutual expectation that the benefit granted should be repaid in the future. Putnam, Making Democracy Work, p172
(e) Political Culture, Civicness and Slovakia

Many Czechs continually hark back to the First Republic as evidence of their democratic heritage. Czechoslovakia between the two world wars was undoubtedly more democratic than much of the rest of CEE, but whether it can be truly classed as a polyarchy remains debatable thanks mainly to the governments' minority policies. The collective memory of this period, however, is weak. The political culture of the First Republic, is in the words of Kopecký, no more than a 'remote reference point, rather than a bench-mark providing us with insights into the patterns of political and social behaviour at present.' Indeed as Holy argued in the mid-1990s, '[t]he people alive in Czechoslovakia who have had any personal or “lived” experience of a democratic political system are too few to be effective carriers of a democratic tradition.' Nonetheless, it seems plausible to suggest the existence of a democracy in inter-war Czechoslovakia and, more importantly, the perception of such a democratic past amongst the Czech populace, particularly in regard to the historical experiences in other CEE countries, plays some role, although it is difficult to assess the importance of that role.

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Portraying the nation as naturally democratic logically implies both that communism was an alien concept and that democratic values persisted in spite of attempts to replace bourgeois values with socialist.\textsuperscript{181} It could be argued, for example, Communism’s alien nature was indicated by the opposition carrying out public demonstrations in 1988 and 1989 in the ‘name of the nation.’ \textsuperscript{182} Equally, Czechs’ democratic nature could be demonstrated by the activities of \textit{Charta 77} and the dissident culture which persisted post-1968 in the face of one of CEE’s more repressive regimes, although such an argument rests on the idea a couple of thousand \textit{Charta 77} signatories were representative of ten million Czechs. Christine Sadowski has argued East Europeans, ‘whilst adapting to the realities of Communism, never fully internalized its values and remained committed to pre-communist political cultures’. \textsuperscript{183} Distinctions can be made between the dominant and the official political culture under Communism which were not (necessarily) synonymous.\textsuperscript{184} In the conclusion to \textit{Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States} Jack Gray argues, ‘[p]erhaps the most important conclusion which this book suggests is that in countries where there has been experience of the fruitful play of competing ideas and competing interests, the experience of Communist government has not weakened but actually strengthened the conviction among the population that political freedom brings both greater justice and greater

\textsuperscript{181} Paul, \textit{The Cultural Limits of Revolutionary Politics}

\textsuperscript{182} Holy, \textit{The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation}, p9

\textsuperscript{183} Christine M Sadowski, ‘Autonomous Groups as Agents of Democratic Change in Communist and Post-Communist Eastern Europe’ in Diamond (ed.), \textit{Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries}, pp. 155-87 (p160)

\textsuperscript{184} Brown, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-24 (p8)
efficiency. Gray et al probably overstate their case, but do highlight the fact that values may not be all that malleable, but also that political systems can have a ‘negative reaction’ (i.e. working in the opposite direction to the intended) on the political culture of the society.

In the specific Czech case, their natural disposition to democracy, however, sits uncomfortably, for example, with the fact that over 40% of the electorate in the Czech lands voted for the Communist Party in 1946, compared to only 30% of the electorate in Slovakia. The path from barroom cliché to established academic fact is littered with inconvenient and uncomfortable facts which the analyst would ignore at his or her peril. Ascribing to nations national characteristics is problematic. Even self-stereotypes may yield contradictions. Holy noted, for example, Czechs see themselves as ‘envious, resentful, conformist, cunning and egoistic’ whilst simultaneously portraying themselves as members of an ‘inherently democratic nation.”

The emerging political culture in the post communist states including the Czech Republic, as Wolchik argues, is an amalgam of (a) values and attitudes that reflect the pre-Communist past, (b) values and attitudes reflecting Communist attempts to

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185 Jack Gray, ‘Conclusions’ in Brown & Gray (eds.), Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States, pp. 253-72 (p272)
188 Holy, The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation, p77
inculcate their own values and attitudes, (c) values and attitudes developed as by products of living in a Communist system, and (d) values and attitudes derived from the particular characteristic of post communism. Nonetheless, the empirical study undertaken by Miller et al between the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1996 suggests that the values in Eastern Europe and the Former USSR are, on the whole, pro-democratic. In terms of democratic consolidation in the Former Soviet Union and East-Central Europe, political values in the early 1990s ‘were part of the solution, not part of the problem.’ Linking back to the work of Booth and Seligson it would be interesting to know to what extent these views are genuine and to what extent merely adopted because that is what is expected in the new world order. Post-war West Germany provides an illustrative example here. It took, arguably, about twenty years before Germany moved from a Schönwetterdemokratie to a polity which could be described as a stable democracy with a supportive democratic political culture.

The arguments for Czechs’ natural disposition to democracy and the persistence of these values through Communism seem not to be clear-cut, but what of their political culture compared to their former federal partner? Although some writers have been keen to describe Slovaks as more likely to be orientated towards

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190 Miller, White & Heywood, *Values and Political Change in Postcommunist Europe*, p28

authority and against democracy\textsuperscript{192}, there does not appear to be a huge difference between the opinions of Czechs and Slovaks. Even when Slovaks are compared against other countries in CEE, they appear to be more akin to other countries in the V4 than outside.\textsuperscript{193} Krause's work however, has shown that a closer examination of Czech and Slovak voters shows the 'similarity of their opinions actually conceals meaningful and significant differences in the weight that they gave to particular issues when making political decisions.' His research suggests 'Czech voters tend to evaluate parties on the familiar basis of socio-economic questions while Slovak voters evaluate parties on the basis of questions about the nation and democracy.'\textsuperscript{194} These points will be explored in the public opinion chapter.


\textsuperscript{194} Krause, 'Public Opinion and Party Choice in Slovakia and the Czech Republic', pp. 23-46 (pp. 23, 24)
Reflections on The Utility of Democratic Transition, Consolidation and Political Culture in Explaining the Slovak Sonderweg

Political culture, culture and civicness all have some use in explaining the nature of post-communism in Central and Eastern Europe. There are numerous difficulties with the concepts: identification, measurement, classification, diversity, origins, maintenance and malleability. Moreover, culture is difficult to disentangle from other factors such as institutions and performance. It is clear that there are two-way relationships between these factors and political culture.

A democracy requires a certain set of values. Even amongst those who see political culture as a useful explanatory tool, however, there is a recognition that culture is 'seldom direct and seldom operates alone. Rather, it is generally permissive and almost always acts in conjunction with other variables.'\textsuperscript{195} Machiavelli was right when he suggested that the success or failure of free institutions is dependent upon the character of citizens or their 'civic virtue.'\textsuperscript{196} The values of self-limitation, bargaining, generalized reciprocity and the idea of civicness are not just essential preconditions of democracy, they are integral parts. 'Without the norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement, the Hobbesian outcome of the Mezzogiorno – amoral familism, clientelism, lawlessness, ineffective government, and economic stagnation – seems likelier than successful democratization and


\textsuperscript{196} Putnam, \textit{Making Democracy Work}, pp. 86-7
economic development. The experience of pre-communism, the desire to negate Communism, the 'power of the democratic magnetism exerted by the West' and the performance of the countries in the post-communist period all play their varying roles in determining whether these values are adopted or not. In short, although democratic values are necessary for the functioning of a polyarchy, political culture on its own is not a satisfactory explanatory variable for democratization. In conjunction with other variables such as agency and the institutional framework, however, political culture can be helpful. Given that fact, chapter seven is devoted to an examination of public opinion.

Social scientists impelled to make sense of unfinished events 'tend to reify theory, to see each event as the unmediated fulfillment of some broader social-science theory'. Theory, however, is a tool. It can help explain why and how a process occurs, or indeed does not occur. Not even the most adept toolmakers, however, can make a hammer work as a screwdriver. Tools have their function and should be used merely for that function. All the theories of democratization offer something, but the evidence from CEE suggest that 'any singular account of democratization is unlikely to be convincing or even feasible at all.' Indeed this chapter has attempted to show no theory of democratisation per se is sufficient to explain political

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197 ibid p183
200 Lewis, 'Theories of Democratization and Patterns of Regime Change in Eastern Europe', pp. 4-26 (p24)
development in Slovakia since independence. A satisfactory explanation of Slovakia’s deviation from the Central European transition path followed by the other members of the V4, however, needs to incorporate ideas and questions raised in this chapter.

As mentioned above, the idea of the critical juncture in the path dependency literature is important to a discussion of Slovakia’s political trajectory. Why was the HZDS/ZRS/SNS coalition formed after the autumn 1994 elections? Did the formation of that government set the country on a path which would lead inevitably to the country’s exclusion from first wave entry into NATO and the EU? Modernization can help explain variations in democratization in CEE, particularly between, for instance, Hungary and Albania, but in terms of measures of GDP, literacy etc., modernization cannot explain the different paths taken by the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Similarly, structuralist explanations have to contend with the fact that in terms of social stratification, Czechoslovakia’s two successor states were remarkably similar. Given the seeming inability of these variables to provide an answer should we look instead to agency as the key explanatory variable? The movement to democracy is, in the transition school, a product of conscious decisions made by members of the elite, which raises questions which run through the remainder of this thesis: Who made the key decisions? How were these decisions made in Slovakia between 1993 and 1998? What were the motivations of the decision-makers: rationality, power, ideology, office or a combination or mixture of these four? But to what extent did the decision-makers have any room for manoeuvre? Were they hemmed in by factors such as party organization, party system configuration, the media and international pressure? Moreover, given the fact that decisions are made within institutional frameworks,
what role did components of this framework, such as the constitution and parliament, play in constraining agency? This thesis aims to answer these questions, but before launching into an assessment of the agency variable, some of the particularists' concerns need to be taken on board by examining the terrain of Slovak politics.
The Terrain of Slovak Politics

Blank canvases, on which a new political reality can be painted without any trace of what went before, do not exist, or at least have not existed for millennia. Although 1 January 1993 marked an important change in Slovak history, it is necessary to avoid what Lipták describes as ‘the year zero syndrome’.\textsuperscript{201} Events prior to 1993 cannot be placed into a different watertight container to events post-independence.

This chapter identifies key pillars upon which independent Slovakia was built. The chapter is not a review of Slovak academic historiography, but rather an exploration of historical themes as they are commonly understood and depicted in Slovak public life. The themes discussed briefly here are intended to assist the reader through the argument of the thesis. Rather than make a series of repeated detours throughout the course of the thesis, I have decided to take the reader on a brief spin pointing out the key surrounding features of the terrain of Slovak politics which shape the road along which we shall travel. The motifs which will be highlighted are as follows: The nation deprived of a state; Hungary and Hungarians; Slovakia’s place in Czechoslovakia; the impact of Communism; economic reform; Slovak nationalism and the end of Czechoslovakia.

\textsuperscript{201} Lubomír Lipták, \textit{Storočie dlhšie ako sto rokov: o dejinách a historiografii}, Bratislava: Kalligram (1999) p143
History matters in Central Europe, perhaps too much. Indeed, Chmel wrote of the people of the region being a ‘bit ill with history’. Slovakia, argued Šimečka, suffers from ‘earthquakes’, not of the seismological kind, but of its metaphorical ‘historical’ cousin. Nonetheless history, or rather the perception of historical events, matters. The image of a nation’s past, argued Kirschbaum, ‘is one of those subjective elements from which nationalist leaders draw inspiration and the justification for their actions.’ Indeed writers such as Goldman, who ascribe great importance to Mečiar, argue the Slovak prime minister’s influence was ‘magnified’ and his political authority ‘buttressed’ by his ‘personification of the burdens of the past’.

A Small Oppressed Nation Denied her Independence for Centuries

The Slavs of what is now Slovakia are not the only ethnic group to have been subjected to domination during the course of the last millennium. ‘Central Europe is inhabited by Central European people’, Grendel noted wryly, ‘but its territory very frequently serves as a stopping-off point for the troops of foreign armies’. ‘The people of Central Europe are conquered, one might say continuously raped at

202 Rudolf Chmel, Moja maďarská otázka, Bratislava: Kalligram (1996) p31
regular intervals’, he added, ‘according to some kind of historical algorithm.\textsuperscript{207} Central to Slovak consciousness, however, is the belief that another Central European ethnic group, the Hungarians, is responsible for 1000 years of subjugation.

The Great Moravian Empire (833-907) looms large in the Slovak psyche. Indeed its spirit is summoned up in the first sentence of the preamble to the Slovak constitution.\textsuperscript{208} It is seen as the beginning of Slovakia’s national history\textsuperscript{209} and as a golden age by Slovak nationalist historians.\textsuperscript{210} Great Moravia is one of the ‘favourite identity-affirming subjects’ of a section of the intelligentsia in Slovakia, close to Mečiar and his allies such as the cultural organization, Matica Slovenská, and to other nationally-inclined groups such as Korene, the Independent Association of Slovak Economists (NEŽES), and the Conference of the Slovak Intelligentsia (SKSI).\textsuperscript{211} Slovakia does have one other period of her history pre-1993 when she achieved independence, but the wartime state is problematic, partly because Jozef Tiso’s regime has been roundly condemned by many both within Slovakia and abroad thanks to its complicity in the Holocaust/Shoah\textsuperscript{212}, but also

\textsuperscript{208} \textit{Ústava Slovenskej republiky}, Bratislava: Remedium (1992) p13
\textsuperscript{210} Milan S. Ďurica, \textit{Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov}, Bratislava: SPN (1996)
because of the usable events of Slovak history, HZDS politicians have been keener to emphasize the Slovak National Rising (SNP) against the Nazis in 1944.\(^{213}\) (There would be a logical inconsistency in elevating the 1944 rising to the status of a heroic event and simultaneously glorifying the wartime puppet state.) Although the SNP was used extensively by the Communists, the 1944 rising remains the historical event of which Slovaks are most proud.\(^{214}\) In the absence of another usable event/period in history and the lack of national founding myths such as 'Romulus and Remus or Libuše',\(^{215}\) the spirit of the Great Moravian Empire is invoked. Blame both for bringing the empire to an end and ushering in ‘1000 years of subjugation’ is laid at the door of the Magyars.\(^{216}\)

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\(^{215}\) Hofbauer, *Slovensko na krížovatke*, p43

\(^{216}\) Although the Hungarian issue is the most important for the purposes of this thesis it is worth mentioning that according to Eva Krekovičová’s study, the most common images of the other in Slovak folklore are of Roma and Jews. See Eva Krekovičová, *Medzi*
Initially, Slovaks just perceived themselves to be ‘Slavs’ or the ‘Slavs of Hungary’. A ‘Slovak’ national identity only began to emerge from the mid-seventeenth century onwards through religious activities and writings associated with Juraj Tranovský, the Jesuit Trnava University, J.B. Magin, Juraj Papánek, Juraj Sklenár, Bernolák, Jan Kollár and Pavel Josef Šafařík, although the concern was often more the position of the Slavs vis-à-vis the Magyars, rather than anything specially Slovak. It was Ľudovít Štúr in the 1840s who first claimed the Slovaks formed a Slav nation of their own deserving their own state within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Nonetheless, relations between the Slovaks and Magyars were not ‘fundamentally confrontational’ until the nineteenth century when magyarisation advanced in ‘leaps and bounds’, particularly through language laws passed by the Hungarian Diet of 1843-4 and in 1896 and 1907. Magyarisation was intensified after the Aussgleich in 1867. The few secondary


219 Brock, *The Slovak National Awakening*, p7


221 Brock, *The Slovak National Awakening*, p53

222 Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, p113


schools allowed to teach Slovak were closed in 1874, the Matica slovenská was suppressed in 1875 and the 1868 Nationalities Act reduced the non-Magyars to the status of tolerated minorities.

Fear and distrust of Hungarians continued after 1918, reinforced by the fact that Hungarians were involved in five invasions of Slovak territory (1919, 1938, 1939, 1944 and 1968) since the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Daniel Rapant, a historian writing in the 1930s, for example, wrote of the longing to recreate a Greater Hungary living on ‘in the soul of the majority of today’s Hungarian nation.’ Relations between Slovakia and Hungary were not just determined in the early 1990s by ‘intensive historical precedents, traumas and unfinished [nedopovedané] history.’ As the last Czechoslovak Ambassador to Hungary Rudolf Chmel noted, three other issues were important in creating an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion: the border, treatment of national minorities and the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros dam. Even in the first two of these, however, the legacy of the mythopoetic 1000 years plays its part. Writers keen to improve the human rights of minorities in Slovakia were savvy enough to realise that the issue of the

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226 Mikuš, *Slovakia*, p36


230 Chmel, *Moja Maďarská Otázka*, p333
Hungarian minority was not important just because it ‘concerns a minority’, but also because it concerns the ‘country as a whole’.\(^{231}\)

In independent Slovakia ethnic Hungarians have often been viewed as fifth columnists. During his third premiership, Mečiar argued, Hungarian nationalism ‘rose from month to month’\(^{232}\) thanks to a three-pronged attack by the ethnic Hungarian politicians in Slovakia, the influence of the Hungarian government and the activities of lobbying groups abroad, particularly the World Congress of Hungarians.\(^{233}\) The activities of the Hungarian minority helped fuel Slovak nationalism. As the former HZDS cabinet minister Ol'ga Keltošová noted, ‘without Duray there would have been no Slota’\(^{234}\), a view shared to some extent by Šimečka.\(^{235}\) In 1994, for example, two high-profile meetings, one of Slovak nationalists in Šurany and the other of Hungarians in Komárno, made great propaganda out of each other. Leading SNS politicians were open about the importance of the Hungarian issue to their vote. Ján Sitek told this author the ‘Hungarian card’ was worth ‘at least 3%’ for SNS.\(^{236}\) Throughout the 1990s (as the chapter on public opinion will demonstrate) (ethnic) Slovak politicians failed to

\(^{231}\) Miroslav Kusý, Čo s nasimi Maďarmi, Bratislava: Kalligram (1998) p8
\(^{232}\) Vladimir Mečiar (with Dana Podracká & Ľuba Šajdová), Slovenské Tabu, Bratislava: Silentium (2000) p97
\(^{233}\) Mečiar, Slovenské Tabu, pp. 136-7
\(^{234}\) Ol'ga Keltošová (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 18 April 2000). (NB Miklós Duray and Ján Slota were powerful figures in ethnic Hungarian politics and SNS respectively. Both were widely viewed as hardline.)
\(^{236}\) Ján Sitek, SNS member and Defence Minister 1994-8 (interviewed by the author, Podbiel, 25 May 2000)
persuade members of the Hungarian minority to support their parties. The Hungarian writer Lajos Grendel, for example, recalls the 1994 election when he considered voting for the Democratic Party (DS), but he read the party’s programme in Domino efekt including the passages regarding relations to the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and was disappointed by the empty rhetoric. Indeed, the section referring to national minorities is stuck at the end (just before policy on sport), limited to ten lines and suggests national minority policy should not be driven primarily for reasons of justice, but for a concern for ‘internal security.’

**On Being a Junior Partner**

Slovakia’s union with the Czechs was an altogether happier and more mutually beneficial affair than living under Hungarian rule. The Slovaks joined the Czechs in 1918 because they saw in this step the only possibility ‘to fulfil their strivings for self-determination.’ Independence had, on the whole, not been sought during the nineteenth century, rather a key theme of her foreign policy had been the search for a partner with whom to federate. Within Czechoslovakia Slovaks wanted equality. This unrequited desire for equality was the ‘leitmotiv’ of the Slovak

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239 Vladimir Bakoš, Question of the Nation in Slovak Thought, Bratislava: VEDA (1999) p100

240 The author is grateful to Robert Pynsent for pointing out a few voices such as Štúr’s and some in the pages of Hlas, however briefly and incoherently, did seek independence.

question throughout the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{242} Just as the history of Hungary was seen to be ‘Magyar’, so the history of Czechoslovakia was seen to be ‘Czech’.\textsuperscript{243} Whether or not and to what extent Slovakia was discriminated against is not important for our purposes\textsuperscript{244}; what matters is the perception of discrimination. In typically stark prose a leading member of HZDS’ nationalist wing, Roman Hofbauer, for instance, depicts 40 years of Czech exploitation of her junior partner. Slovakia, he complains, was ‘degraded’ into a store for the Czech nation and used as a source of cheap labour and natural resources for the benefit of Czech industry and exports. Slovakia’s ‘human and intellectual potential’, he laments, was ‘decimated’.\textsuperscript{245} Hofbauer’s comments are indicative of a broader theme in Slovak thought that Slovakia is trapped between Czechs (who did not want Slovaks to have their own language or nationhood) and Magyars (who wanted to annihilate them linguistically).\textsuperscript{246} A sentiment which was tapped into in a common slogan used in 1992 that Slovakia had the right to step out of the shade of power, the shadow of history dominated by foreign powers, to find her ‘place in the sun’.\textsuperscript{247}

\textsuperscript{242} Chmel, ‘Úvod: Slovenská otázka v 20. storoci’, pp. 5-34 (p34)
\textsuperscript{243} ibid p9
\textsuperscript{245} Hofbauer, \textit{Slovensko na krížovatke}, pp. 6, 11
\textsuperscript{246} Pynsent, ‘Hungarians a Hyphen and Havel’, pp. 185-97 (p190)
Forty Years of Communism

Communism had a profound impact on Slovakia. Just as a label such as '1000 years of Slovak serfdom' fails to appreciate significant developments and substantive differences between different time periods within the chronological parameters, so 'Forty Years of Communism' fails to reflect fully the variety of both the state's policies, particularly before, during and after the events of 1968 and popular attitudes towards the regime. The views of Czechs on the Communist regime swung more markedly back and forth from zeal to disillusionment over the four decades. As Pithart noted, Czechs 'stormed the heavens of communism immediately after the war, then again at the end of the 1960s', whereas Slovaks were 'always considerably cooler towards these ideological hallucinations and furies.' Nonetheless, bearing these caveats in mind, for the purposes of this thesis two aspects of Communism's effect are worth mentioning briefly here, because they permeate many of the chapters which follow: Communism's impact on values and citizens opinions of the role of the state.


For four decades citizens were subjected to educational systems designed to produce good Communist citizens\textsuperscript{251}, taught through textbooks telling Communist narratives about what it means to be ‘Slovak’ or ‘Czechoslovak’\textsuperscript{252}, and socialized in settings where the market, private property and civil society were largely (if not totally) absent.\textsuperscript{253} In 1989 the overwhelming majority of Czechoslovak citizens had no experience of a functioning Western democracy. Their view of democracy tended to be distorted having seen democracy, in the words of Kipke and Vodička, ‘through the shop window’ able to see only its ‘glistening [třpytivé] side’\textsuperscript{254} and not its less shiny side.

The citizens of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe stepped into the post-communist world with a contradictory view of the state. On the one hand, it was seen as responsible for solving all major problems and as the provider of material


security and social welfare guarantees,255 on the other hand citizens were apprehensive if not downright fearful of much outside the private realm.256 ‘Citizens in Central and Eastern Europe have good reason to distrust political and social institutions’, wrote Mishler and Rose; ‘[m]ost have lived their entire lives under authoritarian regimes, some more totalitarian than others but all inclined to subjugate individual interests to those of the Communist Party’.257 The Slovak writer Martin Šimečka declared in 1992 he had never trusted any state, although given his well-known dissident father he may be unrepresentative of ordinary Slovaks.258 A friend of Šimečka’s saw Slovaks as an ‘anti-state nation’, never having had their own government, but being subjected to power from elsewhere, Slovaks had learnt not to trust power. Mečiar’s success in 1992 (which will be examined later) could be seen in this context as a direct result of his battle against Czech power.259


258 Martin M Šimečka, ‘Striptiz Bratislava’ (1992), reprinted in Šimečka, Hladanie obav, pp. 91-5 (p91)

The recall and description of the Communist period by Mečiarite circles will become clearer throughout the remainder of thesis, but it is worth stressing here the fine balancing act performed. On the one hand, Mečiar himself has talked of the 1989 revolution in glowing terms: ‘...I stood on the platform in Trenčín and railed against the Communist Party, while behind me all the leaders of the Regional State Security stood helpless. This was beautiful.’ On the other, Mečiar and his allies opposed lustration (the banning of collaborators of the secret police from holding certain government positions) and built up alliances with the old nomenklatura.

Economic Reform

The speed, direction and results of economic reform have been at the core of major political developments affecting Slovakia during the 1990s, particularly the division of Czechoslovakia and the popularity of various political parties. For the purposes of this chapter two aspects associated with economic reform deserve to be emphasised: the underlying structural weaknesses of the Slovak economy and the impact of Klausite economics on the Slovak part of the common state.

Disagreement between the Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus and his Slovak counterpart, Mečiar, over the speed of economic reform was central to the decision to end the life of the federal state. Many Slovaks felt they were getting a raw deal from Klausite economics. Mečiar, for example, articulated a commonly held

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260 Interview in The Slovak Spectator, (29 November-5 December 1999)
concern when he complained in August 1990 that out of 230 km of new motorways and 1000 km of new railway tracks planned, only 18 km of the former and 186 km of the latter were to be built in Slovakia.\(^{262}\) Some Slovak nationalists took the argument further arguing that Klaus’s economic reform was a weapon used by Prague to impoverish deliberately Slovakia.\(^{263}\)

The Czech economy was better suited to economic reform than her federal partner. During Habsburg rule parts of the empire, including Bohemia and, to some degree, Moravia, underwent industrial modernization, whilst areas in the east, like Slovakia, remained agricultural.\(^{264}\) Although industrialization began in Slovakia under Habsburg rule and continued during the First Republic (1918-1939), the majority took place under the Communists.\(^{265}\) (By 1989 two-thirds of Slovak national

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income was generated by industry.\textsuperscript{266} The process of rapid industrialization, although forced and tied to Communism's illiberalism, helps explain the comparatively benign light in which Slovaks view the Communist experience: the picture of the sterile, wasted years after 1968, which was prevalent in the Czech part of the common state\textsuperscript{267}, was not as widespread in Slovakia, where economic growth and improvements in education were witnessed in the 1970s and 1980s.\textsuperscript{268}

Prominent amongst this new industrial development were factories involved in armaments production. Defence accounted for just 1.5% of total industrial production in the Czech lands, but 7.3% in Slovakia.\textsuperscript{269} Moreover, the 'bulk of the Soviet-licensed heavy weaponry was produced in Slovakia'.\textsuperscript{270} Defence spending is often one of the first casualties of peace; Czechoslovakia was no exception. President Havel and Federal Foreign Minister Jiří Dienstbier's policy to cut armaments production hit the 70 000 Slovaks who had jobs related to the arms industry. It would be incorrect, however, to place the blame solely on Havel and Dienstbier's shoulders. Demand for Czechoslovak arms fell thanks to an overall slump in demand across the former Warsaw Pact countries and the Gulf conflict.

\textsuperscript{266} Ales Capek and Gerald W Sazama [sic], 'Czech and Slovak Economic Relations',\textit{ Europe-Asia Studies, 45, 2, (1993), pp. 211-35}


\textsuperscript{268} Žatkuliak, 'Čo otvoril november 1989', pp. 76-91 (p81)


inspired embargo on Iraq.\textsuperscript{271} Whatever the cause, the decline in the defence industry had a greater impact in Slovakia. Statistics vary, but the resultant defence-related unemployment was around three-times higher in Slovakia.\textsuperscript{272}

More broadly, Slovakia’s other industries such as textiles were disadvantaged thanks to their reliance on eastern markets. Klausite reform led to factory closures and resultant unemployment in Slovakia. Deděk’s close statistical analysis has shown the difference was not as great as some commentators made out. In 1992, for example, the dependence of Slovak exports on markets in CEE transition economies (13\%) was almost identical to the Czech Republic (12\%), although reliance on markets in the former USSR was far greater in Slovakia (17\%) than in the Czech Republic (9\%).\textsuperscript{273} Nevertheless, the perception that Slovakia was suffering disproportionately was prevalent and helps explain the waning support for a market economy in Slovakia. A survey in April 1992, for example, found only 39\% of respondents in Slovakia, as opposed to 52\% in the Czech lands, supported the introduction of a market economy.\textsuperscript{274} Such feelings of discontent were embodied in the Christian Democratic Movement’s (KDH) alternative to the federal reform package in 1991 arguing for policies which better respected the ‘specific attributes of the Slovak national economy’\textsuperscript{275} and in HZDS’ 1992 election

\textsuperscript{271} ibid pp. 1048-9
\textsuperscript{272} ibid p1049
\textsuperscript{275} ‘Alternativy dalšího postupu ekonomicky reformy’, Hospodářské noviny, 19 March 1991 p4
manifesto which called for the 'abandonment of the unitary approach of economic reforms'.

Slovak Nationalism

Slovakia and the other Slav nations of Eastern Europe, it has been argued, were doomed to adhere mostly to illiberal nationalism because these people suffered from feelings of 'inferiority or inadequacy'. Others have distinguished between the civic and traditional social democratic north of Central and Eastern Europe (i.e. Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) from the nationalist-populist south incorporating countries such as Albania, Romania, Macedonia and Slovakia. Carpenter argues that centuries of political subjugation fused with backward socio-economic conditions to create political systems where ethnocentric nationalism and authoritarian populism were prevalent, redolent of Metternich's statement, 'Bei Pressburg fängt Asien an'. (This disdainful view is not restricted to former Austrian chancellors. One Czech friend told this author 'za Brnem je Asie' [Beyond Brno is Asia]). Slovakia, argued Carpenter, 'has been influenced to a far greater degree by [...] imperial domination and extreme economic backwardness. There is an element of truth in such arguments. The long rule of Hungarians and Czechs, as Chmel noted, meant that the Slovak nation [národ] lived in 'constant fear of its

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276 'Tezy volebného programu HZDS', Národná obroda, 29 April 1992, special supplement
279 Quoted in Bennett Kovrig, 'Marginality Reinforced' in Barany and Volgyes (eds.), The Legacies of Communism in Eastern Europe, pp. 23-41 (p24). Pressburg was the Habsburg Empire's name for Bratislava.
280 Carpenter, 'Slovakia and the Triumph of Nationalistic Populism', pp. 205-20 (p207)
territorial, national, spiritual and other attributes.\textsuperscript{281} Both Plamenatz and Carpenter, however, have taken their arguments too far. As Liah Greenfeld has shown, all the nationalisms she examined (English, French, Prussian, German and American) developed with elements of inferiority contained within them.\textsuperscript{282} Indeed as Auer argues, a Manichean distinction between eastern (i.e. illiberal) and Western (i.e. liberal) nationalism is not helpful.\textsuperscript{283} To ‘depict Eastern Europe as one dismal swamp of political primitivism on the periphery of European modernity’ is ‘reductionist’ and fails to appreciate the complexity and variety within the region.\textsuperscript{284} Moreover, Carpenter’s views, as Henderson has argued, seem more to do with placing Slovakia in the most appropriate category based on pre-conceived notions, than a close examination of the facts.\textsuperscript{285} Nevertheless, as Šimečka argues, Slovakia needed a legitimating ideology in 1993 and nationalism provided one.\textsuperscript{286}

Czechoslovakia’s End

Attempting to explain Czechoslovakia’s demise has generated a wealth of literature. Some explanations stress economic factors highlighting the different structures of the Czech and Slovak economies, with heavy industry particularly prevalent in the

\textsuperscript{281} Chmel, \textit{Moja Mađarská Otázka}, p374
\textsuperscript{283} Stefan Auer, ‘Nationalism in Central Europe – A Chance or a Threat for the Emerging Liberal Democratic Order?’, \textit{East European Politics and Societies}, 14, 2, (2000), pp. 213-45
\textsuperscript{284} Bennet Kovrig, ‘Marginality Reinforced’ in Barany & Volgyes (eds.), \textit{The Legacies of Communism in Eastern Europe}, pp. 23-41 (p26)
\textsuperscript{286} Šimečka, \textit{Hľadanie obav}, p92
latter\textsuperscript{287}, other accounts stress the different world-views of average Czech and Slovaks\textsuperscript{288}. Nationalism is a word which often crops up as a cause of Czechoslovakia's end, usually with 'Slovak' preceding the word nationalism, but some do see Czech nationalism as the cause of the common state's demise.\textsuperscript{289} Many of these accounts have more than a grain of truth in them, but the key to understanding Czechoslovakia's demise lies in a potent mixture of personalities, incompatible political programmes, the loss of many of the advantages of a common state in the post-communist world and a will to maintain the federal state amongst key political figures, all played out in a constitutional structure which promoted imbroglio over solution.\textsuperscript{290}


\textsuperscript{289} Hilde, 'Slovak Nationalism and the Break-up of Czechoslovakia', pp. 647-65

Key Motifs in Slovak Politics

The themes discussed in this chapter run through the remainder of the thesis, sometimes clearly stated, at other times understated but still present. Slovak nationalism, for example, is stressed when discussing public opinion and the electoral success of HZDS and SNS, but nationalist concerns, particularly with regard to the Hungarians, were important in foreign policy formation even if the aspects of foreign policy discussed in this thesis do not discuss fully the Hungarian dimension. The thesis is, after all, not an examination of Slovak-Hungarian relations. Equally, the thesis is not an explanation of the causes of Czechoslovakia’s split, but the reasons for the common state’s demise (personalities, the process of economic reform, Slovakia’s desire for greater control over her own affairs etc.) run throughout the following account and help explain, for example, HZDS’ political programme and support base.

Slovakia’s position as a new state in 1993 is central to much of the subsequent discussion. Slovakia’s challenge was not just to democratize and marketize, but to build up the apparatus of an independent state. As shall be seen, that additional

challenge, for instance, was both a hindrance in the realm of foreign policy and an opportunity in terms of constructing an institutional framework. Slovakia's status as a new state was also a central component of how Mečiar projected himself. He contrasted himself, whom he saw as the creator and father of modern Slovakia, to many opposition groups whom he described as enemies of Slovakia. In his autobiography, for example, he castigated three of his opponents and leading critics during the 1990s, Fedor Gál, Peter Zajac and František Šebej, describing them disparagingly as 'Czechoslovakian' and haters of the Slovak cross.

\[291\] Vladimir Mečiar (with Dana Podracká & L'uba Šajdová), Slovenské tabu, Bratislava: Silentium (2000)

\[292\] ibid p198
Vladimír Mečiar: the Power of the Prime Minister through the Prism of Leadership and Decision-making Theory

How and why decisions are made lie not just at the centre of an explanation of the path a polity takes, but also at the heart of political science. Pluralists, Marxists, Elite theorists, Corporatists, New Rightists, Neo-Pluralists and every other school and faction of political science all agree on one thing: politics is about power. Power is manifested in decisions. This chapter will not concern itself with the perennial debates between these schools of thought per se. Instead, various models of decision-making theory will be examined and an attempt will be made to test their applicability to the Slovak example. The aim of the chapter is to use the models to identify the role played by Mečiar in the decision-making processes of his governments in order to help an assessment of his role in determining Slovakia’s political path.

After examining a number of components of leadership and decision-making models including rationality, trade-offs and power, this chapter proposes frameworks for understanding decision-making and leadership based on the concepts of constraint and opportunity. The chapter ends by operationalizing these models in a case study looking at Slovakia’s NATO policy from 1993-8.

Vladimír Mečiar is the bête noire of liberal Slovaks, castigated by members of the Bratislava-based, Sme-reading liberal intelligentsia as the cause of Slovakia’s woes. ‘Because in Slovakia it’s this way’, complained Mečiar, ‘the bus is late, the hens aren’t laying eggs – it must be my fault.’ Former HZDS politicians have painted unambiguous pictures of policy formation in Slovakia. Ivan Mjartan, for example, argued ‘policy is made by one man in Slovakia and that man is Vladimir Mečiar.’

‘I will tell you unambiguously’, stated another HZDS defector, ‘Mečiar decided everything’, a view shared by many Western journalists. At times Mečiar portrays himself as omnipotent: ‘All the big changes in the country were as a result of me. What politician in the world has done as much in such a short time as me? Build a state, a currency, a stable market, security structures, international relationships.’ The fact that Vladimir Mečiar is unlikely ever to be a deserving recipient of a John Stuart Mill medal for services to liberty and tolerance, however, should not deflect the social scientist away from asking what role he played in policy formation and decision-making and his role in determining Slovakia’s political trajectory.

Do humans act rationally?
The rational model of man is simple. Homo economicus is a calculating, self-interested individual. Economic Man acquires all the necessary information,
compares the information on the different options, and then selects the option best able to achieve his or her goals and interests. Like the model of perfect competition in economics, however, it is best treated as an ideal type. As Herbert Simon has argued, human rationality is limited by a number of factors, including the incomplete and fragmented nature of knowledge, the unknown consequences of decisions, limited attention spans and memory capacities, and the fact that human beings are creatures of habit and routine. Rational thinking is not totally absent from decision-making, but it cannot by itself explain anything. Humans are not computers. They act, at times, according to hunches, intuition, feelings and impressions, and tend towards satisficing.

Even if we suspend judgment on the rationality of individuals, any rational model has to explain not just that for a number of rational reasons choosing option x rather than y is rational for an individual, but that option x was chosen because of these rational reasons and not because of other factors. To the theoretical problems with pure rationality can be added the difficulty of applying the rational model to Mečiar himself. Whilst it is probably going too far to describe Mečiar as 'mentally

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302 James G. Marsh and Herbert Simon, Organization, New York: John Wiley (1958)
unbalanced, he does seem to rely more on emotion than reasoned judgment when explaining his decisions, most notably when a lachrymose Mečiar waved goodbye and burst into song after losing the 1998 election. Nonetheless, describing the negotiations which spelt the end of Czechoslovakia, Václav Klaus contrasted favourably his discussions with Mečiar, which he described as rational and reasoned, to those with Ján Čarnogurský and others where reasoned debate, according to Klaus, was often absent.

Trade-offs

Decisions involve trade-offs. Building on the work of Alexander George, Irving Janis has built a model of trade-offs in decision-making. He sees humans as aiming for high quality decisions. The decision-maker, however, is forced into trade-offs. He or she is limited by cognitive constraints such as limited time, affiliative constraints such as the need for social acceptability, and egocentric constraints such as a desire for prestige.

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305 Interview with Mečiar on STV 1 October 1998


3.1 Trade-Offs in Decision-making

Janis’s model concentrates on the individual decision-maker. In modern liberal democracies, however, there is not just one individual who acts in the policy process, but a variety of different actors some of whom play leading roles and some supporting. Howlett and Ramesh have identified five: elected officials, appointed officials, interest groups, research organizations and the mass media. This list is internally orientated and ignores the role of international factors and actors. Indeed, in the Czech case in particular, the input of international bodies such as the EU and
what John Lloyd called ‘international financial institutions’ (IFIs)\textsuperscript{308} have been significant. The establishment of the Czech Republic’s Security and Exchange Commission in April 1998, for example, was the result of years of pressure from powerful international financiers. The Czechs held out for years, but after the Czech economic miracle was seen to be more of a mirage they relented to international pressure.

The influence of IFIs on Slovak economic policy is mixed. \textit{Davos Man}\textsuperscript{309} requires policies based on the new economic orthodoxy rooted in neo-liberalist/neo-monetarist theories.\textsuperscript{310} Alternatives, such as neo-Keynesian demand-management, are less likely to attract loans and foreign direct investment (FDI). Slovakia’s relatively small size and the poor state of her economy, meant she was dependent not just on the external sector, she also needed financial support to develop the industry to produce goods and services for export.\textsuperscript{311} The influence of the IMF on Slovakia’s economic policy, particularly in the early days of her independence, is clear. In February 1993, Slovakia failed to meet the IMF’s criteria for loan approval. Slovak economic officials realized they would have to impose strict monetary and fiscal rules at the expense of manifesto promises. Not long after the IMF granted Slovakia a $90m loan in May 1993, the Slovak parliament, at the

\textsuperscript{310}Lloyd, ‘How to Make a Market’, pp. 29-32
\textsuperscript{311}OECD, ‘Economic Survey of the Slovak Republic, February 1999’ posted at \url{www.oecd.org/eco/surv/esu-slo.html}
IMF's prompting, voted to raise the sales tax from 23% to 25% on most goods and from 5% to 6% on services.\textsuperscript{312} Mečiar and his allies, however, began to distrust solutions offered by the IFIs, complaining IMF policies failed to understand the needs of Slovakia and offered a programme suitable for Africa.\textsuperscript{313}

A clear distinction can be seen between the economic policies pursued by the second and third Mečiar-led governments. Much to the chagrin of the IFIs, when Mečiar returned to power after the 1994 elections, a policy of fiscal expansion (particularly in the run-up to the 1998 election)\textsuperscript{314}, economic growth at the expense of rapidly rising debt\textsuperscript{315}, and the Slovakia-first privatization policy became the driving forces of the government's economic policy.\textsuperscript{316} The pursuit of these economic policies allied to concerns about the condition of Slovakia's fledgling democracy meant investors were wary of putting their money into the country. Although Slovakia's cumulative FDI tripled from 23870 million Slovak crowns (Sk) in 1994 to 69698 million Sk in 1998\textsuperscript{317}, FDI in Slovakia was 'quite low by regional standards' accounting for just 5% ($700m) of FDI in the V4 ($14bn) in

\textsuperscript{313} Mečiar, \textit{Slovenské tabu}, p33
\textsuperscript{314} \textit{Financial Times}, 6 October 1998, p38
\textsuperscript{315} External debt rose from $3bn at independence, to $8bn by the end of 1996, and $10.5bn by March 1998. \textit{See Eastern European Monitor}, (August 1998), p8
\textsuperscript{316} The domestic aspects of the 1994-8 government's economic policies will be discussed in greater depth in the next two chapters
Even in per capita terms Slovakia's cumulative inflow of FDI (of around $100) was only a fifth of the level in the Czech Republic and an eleventh of the amount obtained by Hungary. Slovakia's level, however, was marginally higher than Poland's. FDI figures, nevertheless, should be taken with a pinch of salt. The Czech figures for FDI had been swelled thanks to a few large-scale projects such as the partial privatization of STT and the investments in Škoda and by Philip Morris. Nonetheless, the fact that the 1994-8 Mečiar-led government pursued a privatization policy which favoured domestic buyers and were not willing to open up comparable companies to Škoda in Slovakia, such as the steelworks VSŽ, however, speaks volumes. The influence of the IFI on economic and financial policy, however, was still in evidence during the life of the 1994-8 government. In an effort to comply with OECD standards steps taken to liberalise international capital flows were introduced, including the opening of the short-term Treasury bill market to foreign investors in December 1997 and, in compliance with a World Trade Organization decision, the 7% import surcharge introduced in mid-1997 was gradually phased out and reduced to zero in October 1998. Nonetheless, concerns remained over the lack of progress on bankruptcy reform and the lack of transparency in privatization. At times, however, such as in the realm of banking reform in 1996-7, Mečiar and his finance minister Sergej Kozlik wanted to

319 IBCA, ‘Republic of Slovakia’, (November 1997), p12
implement reforms recommended by IFIs, but other bodies such as the concerns of one of HZDS' coalition partners, ZRS, proved a stumbling block to reform.\textsuperscript{321}

The importance of the mass media in policy formation has generated much debate. Writers such as Chomsky see the media as pivotal, whereas others such as John Kingdon see the role of the media as marginal.\textsuperscript{322} The jury is still out on whether the media's role in Slovakia can be categorized as 'reinforcement', 'agenda-setting', 'framing' or 'direct effects'.\textsuperscript{323} The Mečiar-led government's vigorous campaign against the pro-opposition press in the run-up to the autumn 1998 elections\textsuperscript{324}, however, suggests how important it viewed the role of the media in influencing opinion. It is wrong, however, to see the media as omnipotent agenda setters. The media are malleable. Newspaper, television and radio journalists are all dependent on the hand that feeds them. In the Slovak case, the slavish pro-Mečiar reporting of Slovenská republika under the control of Ján Smolec and Eduard Fašung, and the favourable coverage accorded by state Slovak television with Jozef Darmo and Igor Kubiš holding the reigns, helped bolster Mečiar's position in the country.

\textsuperscript{324} See Vladimír Holina (ed.), \textit{Média a volby II (dokumenty monitoring)}, Bratislava: Slovenský syndikát novinárov with the support of the Phare programme (1999). See also \textit{Financial Times}, 28 May 1998
Nonetheless, there was little direct pressure exerted on Slovak TV by the Mečiar-led governments. Former central director of Slovak TV, Peter Malec, told Andrej Školkay ‘during my time ... [in the job] there was not a single phone call of that kind, and I had only one such meeting with Mr. Mečiar and Mr. Slobodník [the erstwhile minister of culture].\(^{325}\) The evidence suggests less a policy of strict enforcement and more a meeting of minds. Nevertheless, through Mečiar’s three tenures as prime minister whilst he received very favourable coverage in *Slovenská republika*, Slovak TV and from the Association of Slovak Journalists, thanks to both the policies pursued by the governments and a steady stream of corruption scandals, a strong opposition media emerged around the newspaper *Sme*, the Syndicate of Slovak Journalists, *Radio Twist*, the Czech media\(^{326}\), and latterly the private television station, *Markíza*\(^{327}\), dividing the media into pro- and anti-Mečiar camps\(^{328}\). The writer Peter Pišťanek satirized beautifully this division. His character Vlado declares he will no longer attend press conferences because ‘[t]here can’t be any questions for those who trust me. And again, for those who don’t trust me there can’t be any answers.’\(^{329}\) The role of the media in post-communist Slovakia is

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\(^{326}\) Mečiar blames the Czech media in particular for sullying his name abroad. See Mečiar, *Slovenské tabu*, pp. 193-4

\(^{327}\) Mečiar complained bitterly in his autobiography of being the subject of media lies. See *Slovenské tabu*, pp. 37-8


complex and is worthy of a doctoral thesis in itself. Certain questions such as the influence of the tabloid coverage of corruption and privatization scandals in Plus 7 Dni and the most popular newspaper, Nový čas, remain unanswered. Nonetheless, although a simplification, it appears the opposition media helped set the agenda for opposition politicians, but within the pro-Meciar camp the media acted more in the reinforcing mode.

Decision-making and the locus of power

Any attempt to analyse decision-making raises fundamental questions of where power lies in a polity. The debate between pluralists, neo-pluralists, Marxists, elite theorists, new rightists and the myriad of other schools and factions has often tended to generate more heat than light, due in large part to the constant mixing of descriptive and prescriptive analysis. Nonetheless, the literature raises important questions. Is the state an inert body, a weathervane, or does it systematically promote the interests of a sectional group, class or economic system? How do issues get on the agenda? Who holds power?

Lukes identified three views of power. A one-dimensional view, associated with the work of the pluralists, focuses on key issues, observable conflict and

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Skolkay, The Role of the Media in Politics and Society in Slovakia

These themes will be briefly revisited in the public opinion chapter

See Patrick Dunleavy and Brendan O'Leary, Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy, Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan (1987)

subjective interests seen as policy preferences revealed by political participation. The two-dimensional view, in contrast, associated with the work of Bachrach and Baratz\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^5\), concentrates on issues and potential issues and non-decision making. The three-dimensional view focuses on decision-making and control over the political agenda, issues and potential issues, observable and latent conflict and subjective and real interests. Lukes favours the third model because it ‘allows for consideration of the many ways in which “potential issues” are kept out of politics, whether through the operation of social forces and institutional practices or through individual decisions.’\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^6\)

The one-dimensional model, with its stress on diverse and open pluralist decision-making has its drawbacks. As Gaventa asked at the beginning of his study of quiescence in an Appalachian valley, ‘[w]hat is there in certain situations of social deprivation that prevents issues from arising, grievances from being voiced, or interests from being recognized? Why, in an oppressed community where one might intuitively expect upheaval, does one instead find, or appear to find, quiescence?’\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^7\) Bachrach and Baratz attacked the pluralist position by arguing power can be used not just to make decisions, but to confine the scope of decision-


\(^3\)\(^6\) Lukes, *Power*, p24

Empirical studies on air pollution in US cities, and blacks in Newark and Mississippi in the decade after the publication of their articles appeared to validate their thesis, moreover, Newton’s work raised questions over Dahl’s original work. Other writers, such as Wolfinger, however, were quick to argue if the second face of power cannot be seen how can we know it exists? Although Bachrach and Baratz’s concept of the non-decision is problematic (a decision not to have a decision about x is after all a decision in itself), their work does highlight the fact that certain policy options do not even reach the agenda stage. For the most part decision-making, as Galbraith argued, is framed by the conventional wisdoms of the day. But how applicable is Bachrach and Baratz to post-independence Slovakia? After all, they were attempting to demonstrate what they saw as the cosy world of decision-making in New Haven. It would be hard to argue that Slovak

politics between 1993 and 1998 had the necessary underlying consensus their argument requires.

Moreover, it is not enough for political scientists to state that because some situation benefits a particular person or group that the beneficiaries necessarily created or deliberately maintain that status quo. In this light, Schattschneider’s ‘mobilization of bias’ thesis\(^{344}\), which maintains there is collusion between politicians and mass media to exclude threatening issues from the scope of effective electoral competition, should be taken with a large dose of salt if not an entire Marseille salt field. As Payne remarked, just because taxi-drivers in Seattle get more business when it rains, does not mean they cause the heavens to open.\(^{345}\)

Nevertheless, the work of the two-dimensional theorists does suggest both that pure political equality does not exist and that the public agenda is distorted to some extent; points the neo-pluralist school were willing to concede.\(^{346}\)

Lukes’s idea of a contradiction between those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude is a ‘descendent of the Marxist notion of false consciousness’\(^{347}\) and subject to of all the problems associated with that concept,


most notably the patronising idea that left-wing social scientists understand someone else’s best interest better than the individual himself/herself. Even Barry, however, who is heavily critical of Lukes, accepts that there are occasions where ‘the inferior [in a power relation] does not raise an issue that he would like to, either because he knows it is hopeless and does not want to waste effort or because he fears that he will suffer a sanction even for raising it.’\textsuperscript{348}

Even if we could map perfectly power distribution in a polity, as Barry argues, we would not be able to ‘predict with complete confidence who will get what.’\textsuperscript{349} Somebody might get something they want, for example, because other people out of a sense of duty or affection give it you. Equally, one might be able to free-ride off the back of somebody else exercising their power.\textsuperscript{350} An individual’s power is dependent on ‘what the outcome would have been in the absence of his intervention.’\textsuperscript{351} Nevertheless, bearing that caveat in mind a power map is helpful in understanding the who, why and how of decision-making. ‘Power’, as Clegg argues, ‘is better regarded not as having two faces or being layered into three dimensions but as a process which may pass through distinct circuits of power and resistance.’\textsuperscript{352} These ideas of power and resistance, or what can be labelled

\begin{itemize}
  \item Barry, ‘The Obscurities of Power’, pp. 303-6 (p305)
  \item Brian Barry, ‘Power: An Economic Analysis’ in \textit{Democracy and Power}, pp. 222-69 (p228)
  \item \textit{ibid} p228
  \item Brian Barry, ‘Is it Better to be Powerful or Lucky?’ in \textit{Democracy and Power}, pp. 270-302 (p272)
\end{itemize}

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‘opportunity’ and ‘constraint’ run through the remainder of this chapter and indeed the entire thesis.

**Differences between decisions**

Not all decisions are the same. Indeed it is foolish to attempt to treat all decisions as the result of the same process. Simon makes a distinction between ‘programmed’ i.e. routine, standard procedures and repetitive decision-making, and ‘non-programmed’ decisions i.e. those that are new and non-routine.\(^{353}\) To Simon’s model one could add the idea that when a leader comes to power they do not know how to act. After a while they learn the ropes and an increasing share of their decisions becomes routine. Simon’s model, however, was written at a time when he was collaborating with computer experts, a fact that is reflected in his terminology and influenced his opinions. Humans are not computers. Simon’s model should be modified. Decision-makers scanning their in-tray make a qualitative distinction between *unimportant* decisions, those that can be subjected to quick-and-easy decision-making, and *important* decisions, over which time and original thought will be spent.\(^{354}\)

Lindblom attacked the notion of decision-making as a rational process.\(^{355}\) He distinguished between *root* (those where the decision-maker(s) start from fundamentals every time with past experience incorporated only within a theory)
and branch (continually building step-by-step from the current situation) decisions. For him, the overwhelming majority of policymaking tended to be of the latter rather than the former variety. He saw policymaking as a process of muddling-through. Policy is not made once and for all, or driven by theory, or according to a system, rather it proceeds through incremental change, mutual adjustment, negotiation and accident. Incrementalism, however, portrays decision-makers as myopic creatures concerned only with small changes to the left and right unconcerned with goal attainment. Whilst much policy making regarding unimportant policy decisions is incremental, on issues perceived to be important decision-makers tend to project their vision on to the policy made. Moreover, incrementalism may only have limited applicability to the Czech and Slovak examples. After all, it is only relevant where there is a continuity of problems to be addressed and where there is a stable policy environment. Although the decision-maker(s) subjective distinction between important and unimportant is the most significant, distinction should also be made between well-structured problems and ill-structured problems. When a problem is complex, it is much harder to deal with it in a simple, routine way.

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357 Lindblom was keen to stress his theory of incrementalism was that ‘neither revolution, nor drastic policy change, nor even carefully planned big steps are ordinarily possible.’ (emphasis added). Charles E. Lindblom, ‘Still Muddling, Not Yet Through’, Public Administration Review, 39, (November/December 1979), pp. 517-26 (p517)
A Brief Note on Language

As Ludwig Wittgenstein argued, language can not only be a means of conveying an idea, but also a restriction on the scope of thought. Similarly, in a Foucauldian sense the language of politics can be seen to construct public policy. Indeed the notion of discourse, so beloved by anthropologists, should not be totally discounted. In the Czech case, for example, in the early and mid-1990s, any policy couched in the language of Europe or the West was (perceived by decision-makers to be at least) more appealing to voters. In Slovakia the language of the ‘nation’ played a similar role. Although Edelman’s view that problems enter discourse and existence because they are reinforcements of ideologies probably overstates the case, it seems plausible to suggest that convenient statistics and symbols (whether real or fabricated) are used by decision-makers to justify a decision.

360 See Michel Foucault (ed.), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, New York: Pantheon (1972)
361 A sweeping generalization, but nonetheless valid
362 The role of the nation and nationalism will be discussed later in the thesis
Groupthink

The method of making a decision is of importance. Janis has developed the notion of groupthink. ‘The more amiability and esprit de corps among members of an individual group of policy makers’ he argued ‘the greater is the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink.’ Janis furnishes his theory with numerous case studies such as the Iran hostage rescue, the Bay of Pigs disaster and Watergate. His work has validity. Humans can be sheepish at times. Politicians can be sycophantic. This last point will become more apparent in the coalition formation and functioning chapter. Particularly in the last years of the 1994-8 government’s existence there was something of the bunker mentality in the workings of the government.

Towards a framework for analysing decision-making

Given all the problems outlined above it may seem a futile task to construct a model of decision-making, but the following model is not intended to be a panacea. Rather, it offers a framework for understanding decision-making. The framework lays emphasis on two points. Firstly, the importance of cognitive and contextual constraints in decision-making theory. No decision is made in a vacuum. Whatever the decision and whoever makes the decision, the context in which the decision is made cannot be ignored. Secondly, the interrelationship between various factors. Rather, the framework should be regarded as a theoretical vat into which the empirical data of a particular example can be poured. The types of decisions produced will be determined by what has gone into the decision-making process. By weighing up these factors alongside MacMillan’s ‘events, dear boy events’,

365 Janis, Groupthink, p13
what has been labeled the events matrix (i.e. all the events taking place at the time of decision-making), one can begin to understand why certain decisions were made in Slovakia.

3.2 A Framework for Understanding Decision-making

Cognitive constraints

Time Limits

Perceived limitations of available resources

Complexity of the issue

Perceived lack of dependable knowledge

Contextual Constraints

History

Public Opinion

Culture

World opinion

EVENTS MATRIX

The Decision-maker(s)

Power and status relations amongst decision-makers

Personalities of decision-maker(s)

Ideology, values and stated aims of the decision-maker(s)

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE TO THE DECISION-MAKER

The Decision
Mečiar and Leadership

The concept of leadership is, in the words of Elgie, 'the unidentifiable in pursuit of the indefinable.'\(^{366}\) Definitions and classifications abound.\(^{367}\) As with so many of the terms employed by political scientists, the word leadership has been used to describe many different phenomena. Leadership is often associated with concepts such as power, influence, command and authority 'in confusing if not contradictory terms.'\(^{368}\) The term, however, is not so elastic as to be nebulous and devoid of any utility. Moreover, whilst there is some truth in Edinger's assertion that, '[i]n sum, the importance that one attaches to individual leadership in the analysis of political developments depends on one's perspective,'\(^{369}\) such an argument suggests political scientists should have a quick look at the terrain of the land of leadership, take their snaps from the places recommended by their guide books, then pack their bags and move swiftly on. Although attempting to reach perfect objectivity is the social science equivalent of finding the Holy Grail, Edinger's remark fails to accept that


\(^{368}\) Lewis J. Edinger, 'Approaches to the Comparative Analysis of Political Leadership', *Review of Politics*, 52, (1990), pp. 509-23 (pp. 510-1)

\(^{369}\) Edinger, 'Approaches to the Comparative Analysis of Political Leadership', pp. 509-23 (p520)
by looking at a problem from a number of different perspectives, one can arrive at a rounded and sophisticated analysis.\textsuperscript{370}

\textbf{Analyzing Leadership}

Jones conceives of ‘two worlds of political analysis’\textsuperscript{371}. One is the world of economic rationality and Newtonian causation, where politics ‘consists of actions and reactions, forcings and adjustments, and well-understood, if complex, laws governing the resulting interactions.’\textsuperscript{372} In this world social actors are seen as utility maximizers. Such a worldview found expression in Anthony Downs’s classic voting study.\textsuperscript{373} He saw voters as preference revealers and politicians as vote maximizers. According to such a view, politicians in a democracy wanting to maximize their votes will respond to what people want. Or rather to what politicians believe people want. It is difficult to ascribe such motives to Václav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar. Klaus’s free market reforms were driven, especially in the early stages, by a conviction in the merits of neo-liberal Thatcherite economics. Even Klaus, however, baulked at certain policies recommended in the \textit{How to Create a Market Economy} handbook. Acutely aware of the unpopularity of the consequences he stopped short of a full liberalization of rents for example.\textsuperscript{374} As for Mečiar, it is hard to ascribe to him the motives of a Downsian politician. Indeed given the fact that

\textsuperscript{370} Inspiration is drawn in this regard from the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein. See, for example, Ludwig Wittgenstein, \textit{Philosophical Investigations}, translated by GEM Anscombe, second revised edition, Basil Blackwell: Oxford (1958)

\textsuperscript{371} Jones, ‘Causation, Constraint, and Political Leadership’, pp. 3-16 (pp. 6-12)

\textsuperscript{372} \textit{ibid} p6


\textsuperscript{374} see above
the Downsian approach is based on the primacy of economic policy and the existence of rational actors, one could make a case to suggest that the Mečiar regime infused with more than a whiff of nationalism and clientelism does not fit into the model. There is, however, some degree of rationality to Mečiar’s policies. Mečiar’s language and policies delivered a sizeable number of votes for HZDS and helped retain the support of HZDS’ coalition partners. Politics is all about gaining, retaining and exercising power. In democracies all politicians who want to have power must indulge, to some extent, in vote-maximization.

Both Mečiar and Klaus, however, fit more comfortably into Jones’s second worldview, where probability and uncertainty are dominant. From this perspective preferences in politics are less directly related to goals than those in economics, so actors can more easily persuade others that a certain policy relates to their ends in politics. In economics preferences change exogenously, whereas in politics preferences also change endogenously i.e. by persuasion or by what Riker prefers to call ‘manipulation’.

‘Like the Roman god Janus, the study of political leadership looks two ways: one toward the accomplishments of individual leaders, the other toward the economic, political, institutional, and cultural constraints on the exercise of leadership.’

Whilst Jones’s comment on the state of analysis may be correct, thinking about

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375 Although the word rationality may appear problematic in this instance, there is a real sense of rationality in the ‘I scratch your back, you scratch mine’ policies of clientelism.

376 Jones, ‘Causation, Constraint, and Political Leadership’, pp. 3-16 (pp. 6-12)


378 Jones, ‘Causation, Constraint, and Political Leadership’, pp. 3-16 (p3)
leadership in a dualist way with the great man on the one hand and constraints on the other is unhelpful. Rather leadership should be considered as a continuum. All leaders lead to some extent and all leaders are subject to constraints. As George Jones has argued, the role of leaders (he was referring to British prime ministers) should be conceived as an elastic band which is stretched to a greater or lesser extent by the office holder. Why the elastic band is stretched to a greater or lesser extent is what leadership theorists should be concerning themselves with.

**Leaders and Followers**

At the core of leadership is a relationship between leaders and followers. Indeed, 'one cannot understand leadership without understanding followership.' Wildavsky sees leadership as a function of political culture. He describes a number of different regimes such as ‘fatalistic’, ‘equity’, ‘hierarchy’ and ‘market’ regimes, all of which are determined by the underlying political culture. Such an account, however, is far too functionalist and determinist. He downplays the role individuals can play. ‘When you know more about what a third baseman is likely to do by knowing his personality than by understanding the rules and customs of baseball’, he argues, ‘one of you is crazy.’ Yet surely a more appropriate baseball metaphor would be the pitcher or the batter. The pitcher’s personality, his skill, the

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379 George Jones, ‘Mrs. Thatcher and the Power of the Prime Minister’, *Contemporary Record*, 3, 4, (April 1990), pp. 2-6
382 For an interesting application of Wildavsky’s ideas see Gunner Grendstad, ‘Party Followship and Leadership in Norway’, *Party Politics*, 1, 2, (April 1995), pp. 221-44
quality of his supporting fielders, the quality of the batter and the score in the innings, game and championship all play their part in the type of ball he will pitch.

A word frequently used in connection with leadership, in both academic discourse and common parlance, is charisma.\textsuperscript{384} Charismatic leaders have the ability to inspire in their followers an ‘unshakeable confidence’ in their ability to lead.\textsuperscript{385} They are ‘treated as if endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.’\textsuperscript{386} There is something of the charismatic leader in Mečiar.\textsuperscript{387} Former culture minister Ivan Hudec once described Mečiar as a man of whose like we only see every 1000 years\textsuperscript{388}. Even ‘charismatic’ leaders, however, cannot be understood without reference to their followers. For whilst the charismatic individual has the ‘ability to compel’ the ‘follower has a matching capacity for being compelled.’\textsuperscript{389}

The Context of Leadership

Just as no man is an island, no leader acts in a vacuum. Leadership opportunities are indeed ‘highly contextual: what can be done and with what results are contingent on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{384} In addition to Weber cited above, see Robert C. Tucker, ‘The Theory of Charismatic Leadership’, \textit{Daedalus}, 97, 3, (1968), pp. 731-56.
\item \textsuperscript{385} Folkertsma, \textit{Ideology & Leadership}, pp. 3-4
\item \textsuperscript{386} Max Weber, \textit{The Interpretation of Social Reality} (edited by J. E. T. Eldridge), New York: Schoken Books (1980) p229
\item \textsuperscript{387} Martin Bútora & Zora Bútorová, ‘Slovakia’s Democratic Awakening’, \textit{Journal of Democracy}, 10, 1, (January 1999), pp. 80-95 (p81)
\item \textsuperscript{388} Ivan Hudec (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 5 April 2000)
\item \textsuperscript{389} Charles Lindblom, \textit{Charisma}, Cambridge, MA & Oxford: Oxford University Press (paperback edition) p7
\end{itemize}
There is evidence to suggest ‘personal rule’ tends to prevail in states where the ‘legitimate authority of individuals in top executive positions is less well established by constitutions and laws. Moreover, no leader however charismatic, competent and efficient can circumvent the fact that (s)he does not start from a blank canvas. ‘Leaders suffer from the mistakes of predecessors’, notes Gardner, ‘and leave some of their own misjudgements as time bombs for successors. Secondly, a leader’s constraints and opportunities are in constant flux. There is therefore a real sense of horses for courses. As Bailey puts it, ‘[i]n wartime Coriolanus is a hero, in peacetime an embarrassment.'

The impact of leaders does depend on the current political situation, predecessors etc. There is, however, strong empirical evidence to suggest that leaders do ‘make a difference’. Bunce’s study showed that in both capitalist and socialist states succession was a powerful mechanism of policy innovation. Budgetary priorities changed far more in the immediate aftermath of succession far more than they do at other times. Moreover, she found that new leaders have an ‘immediate and enduring effect on budgetary allocation’ in their first year in office. Given the fact that Bunce was writing about stable and well established regimes and factoring in here
Jowitt's notion of the 'genesis environment', in seems plausible to assert that in the transition phase leaders can make a difference. A casual glance at the Czech and Slovak examples seems to bear this out.

**Alistair Cole's Leadership Model**: Constraints and Opportunities

Cole's model provides an excellent framework for analyzing the presidency of Francois Mitterrand. He accepts the limitations of his model. 'It is difficult', he notes for example, 'to quantify elusive concepts such as political skill, intelligence, or the capacity for mobilization.' Given the fact that his model was designed to help explain the leadership of Mitterrand one should be careful not to fall into an induction trap. Nonetheless, various factors highlighted by Cole, whilst at times differing in the Slovak example are worth noting. Cole stresses the importance of the 'positional context' of the leader. The seven-year presidential mandate and the 'virtual irremovability' of the president whilst in office sets apart the French president from other politicians. This contrasts starkly with the experience of Mečiar, for example, who was ousted from his first premiership in 1991 by a vote in the Presidium of the Slovak National Council (the Slovak parliament) and whose

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398 ibid p460

399 ibid p460

400 ibid p460
second premiership came to an end three years later thanks to a vote in the Slovak parliament.

Equally, what Cole labels the ‘configuration of the party system’ is of significance.\textsuperscript{401} Mitterrand was the father of the French Socialist Party (PS). He was the man who united the disparate factions of the left and delivered electoral success. Moreover, soon after he was elected president in 1981 he dissolved parliament. The subsequent parliamentary elections produced a PS majority which owed its existence largely to Mitterrand himself. Mitterrand used his electoral success to place his avowed supporters in positions of power. Whilst the Czech and Slovak examples do not accord completely with the French example, the fact that ODS and HZDS have become increasingly identified as Klaus’s\textsuperscript{402} and Mečiar’s parties has given the two men significant power over other members and possible usurpers. Indeed it is noticeable that after failing to turn their parties in different directions and sideline the party leaders high profile names such as Jozef Moravčík in Slovakia and Jan Ruml in the Czech Republic felt the best way to pursue their objectives was to leave the HZDS and ODS respectively\textsuperscript{403}

Cole’s model can be criticized for defining a leadership situation in kitchen-sink terms. Beliefs, values, the physical environment, perceptions, the surrounding

\textsuperscript{401} \textit{ibid} pp. 462-3

\textsuperscript{402} Even at the ODS founding congress many saw the party as a one-man band. See Marián Leško, \textit{Lúdia a lúdkovia z politickej elity}, Bratislava: Petrex (1993) p34

\textsuperscript{403} Jozef Moravčík (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 7 May 2001)
culture etc. etc. are all thrown into the theoretical stew. This is indeed a potential problem. Woods may not be seen for the trees. Yet to fully understand the nature of the leadership wood a political scientist needs to briefly examine all the different trees. Even seemingly insignificant trees may be important in defining the nature of the wood.

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### 3.3 An Adapted Form of Cole's Leadership Model

**Leadership Resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Characteristics</th>
<th>Positional Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Political skill</td>
<td>• Longevity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clarity of Goals</td>
<td>• Constitutional Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Capacity for mobilization</td>
<td>• Interactions within the executive (ministers, other leadership contenders, staff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Political Intelligence</td>
<td>• Leader as decision-taker/policy coordinator/power broker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal Attributes (eg courage, ruthlessness, stamina)</td>
<td>• Appointments and Dismissals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Political Style (eg reactive, conviction, pragmatic)</td>
<td>• Configuration of the Party System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multi-role capacity</td>
<td>• Implementation and policy process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mode of election</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Constraints:**
- Past policy choices and alliances
  - **Internal:**
    - State of opposition
    - Socio-economic equilibrium
    - Cultural traditions
    - Societal parameters (public opinion, interest articulation)
    - Diminishing political returns
    - Judicial constraints
  - **External:**
    - Prestige of nation in the international system
    - Role of supra-national bodies
    - Interdependency of the international economy
    - Bureaucratic influence in foreign policy making

**Opportunities:**
- **Internal:**
  - Strength from variables under the positional context (see above)
  - Ability to define internal constraints as opportunities
- **External:**
  - Personalized tendencies in foreign policy making
  - International summitry
  - Crisis foreign policy making
  - Ability to define external constraints as opportunities

Cole has provided a valuable framework. In essence a leader who stretches the elastic band a long way is one who minimizes constraints and maximizes opportunities. What many books on leadership fail to appreciate is that some
leaders choose to adopt a more consensual method of leadership, not necessarily out of weakness, but out of a preference for that style of governance.⁴⁰⁵

**Mečiar’s Personal Characteristics**

It is customary for many Western and Western-orientated commentators to portray Vladimír Mečiar as a ‘backward looking bully’.⁴⁰⁶ Not a typical British football hooligan bereft of brain cells, but rather, a clever thug hatching his carefully conceived plans and using, what Cole labels as his ‘positional context’⁴⁰⁷, first to gain power and then to divide the opposition and hold onto power. This view suggests that he cloaked his policies in the rhetoric of nationalism, not from any concern for the health or fate of the Slovak nation or her people, but due to the simple requirements of power politics. He ‘is not a right-winger, nor a left-winger, nor even a representative of the centre’, wrote Karol Wolf, ‘he is simply and solely a power politician.’⁴⁰⁸ Abby Innes, writing about Czechoslovakia’s demise, depicts Mečiar as a naked power seeker. He ‘acted from the beginning as an ideological property developer, garnering every available constituency with little regard for consistency.’ For Innes, Mečiar’s nationalism was ‘secondary, insofar as it was functional, to the aim of achieving power’ ⁴⁰⁹. Others with regular contact with the

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⁴⁰⁵ Gardner believes only strong leaders are leaders. See Gardner, *On Leadership*.


⁴⁰⁷ see above


three-times prime minister buy into the power-driven argument. Former head of the intelligence branch of the Slovak Intelligence Service (SIS), Igor Cibula, claimed the main objective of all Mečiar’s political actions was in order to remain ‘at the top of the power pyramid’. SDĽ politician Pavol Kanis complained whenever Mečiar came to him with something concerning the state ‘in reality he was just following his own egoistic power interest’. In his autobiography, however, Mečiar rejected accusations of being a power politician, or indeed of seeking office or fame.

There is plenty of evidence to support the power-driven view. Between, June 1992 to February 1993 in absence of a president, for example, the prime minister assumed presidential powers and used them to name the members of the newly established constitutional court. His act flew in the face of a parliamentary resolution adopted on 21 January 1993 asking the Slovak government to postpone any decision on the naming of judges. Mečiar knew the importance of placing his men in positions of influence and power. Laws were, therefore, passed in 1994 and 1995 giving the cabinet the right to appoint the heads of the statistical office and the


410 ‘Smer Rusko’ interview with Igor Cibula, Plus 7 Dni, (5 May 1997), pp. 14-5 (p15)
411 Interview with Pavol Kanis, Plus 7 Dni, (9 February 1998), pp. 16-8 (p18)
412 Mečiar, Slovenské tabu, p55. See also interview in Pravda, 6 May 1991, pp. 2, 3
413 Mečiar, Slovenské tabu, p246
Academy of Sciences, chief of the general staff and director of the Slovak Information Service (SIS); these posts had previously been filled by nominees of the president. His governments also dabbled in centralization. In the July 1996 administrative reforms, for example, the country was divided into eight regions and 79 administrative districts. The heads of the newly created regions and districts were appointed by central government. Although primarily about power, this administrative reform was, however, tinged with nationalism. The new local boundaries reduced the political influence of the Hungarian minority in southern Slovakia.

Reducing all Mečiar’s actions to the simple pursuit of power is problematic. Those sympathetic to Mečiar argue the peaceful way he left office in 1994 (and indeed in 1998) demonstrate he is not a ‘man of power’. It is hard (but not impossible) to imagine Mečiar advocating Hayekian capitalism if Slovak electoral arithmetic demanded it. He was (and is) a Slovak nationalist who adjusted his sails to catch the prevailing wind to reach the shore of power. When he became prime minister for the first time on 27 June 1990 he was not a separatist, but ‘nationally orientated.’ When he was booted out as Slovak premier in April 1991 he realized the route to power most likely to be successful was one incorporating a nationalist dimension. Political entrepreneurs, like their capitalist brethren, promote whatever product will increase their political profits (i.e. votes, support), and will be happy to jettison

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415 Goldman, Slovakia since Independence, pp. 77-9
everything to maximize their political profits whether it is constitutional norms or nationalist ideology. Besides, despite the fact he hated losing office, he left peacefully in 1991, 1994 and 1998. He is not a power politician pure and simple, but power is integral to his political motivation.

If the pure power-driven model is rejected other motivations are required to complete the picture. Of the various ambitions of leaders suggested by Elgie and Blondel\textsuperscript{418}, Mečiar is clearly not a man who is just concerned to ensure government runs smoothly. Policy outcomes and the desire to make a mark do matter to him. He is driven in part by his vision of a strong, dynamic and proud Slovakia\textsuperscript{419} (however warped we may consider it to be) and worked ceaselessly to achieve it.

The Positional Context of Mečiar’s Rule

Personal characteristics only make sense as determining factors of policy if understood within what Cole calls the ‘positional context’ and what can be described as the formal structure. The constitutional position of the prime minister is ambiguous. The short section of the Slovak constitution (limited to just 23 articles) devoted to executive power is divided into two sections: the president and the government. In the government section the post of prime minister is mentioned just five times, mainly to state the office holder has to be a Slovak citizen, is nominated and dismissed by the president (article 110) and the removal of a prime minister automatically means the fall of the government (article 116). The prime


\textsuperscript{419} Mečiar, \textit{Slovenské tabu}, p281
minister is seen merely as a part of the government.\textsuperscript{420} Article 119 does spell out the powers of government. The government decides collectively on bills, regulations, policy and implementation, budget, treaties, on basic issues in domestic and international affairs, introduction of bills into parliament, motions of confidence, granting of amnesties and the appointment and removal of some personnel filling constitutional positions.\textsuperscript{421} Constitutionally, the position of the executive relative to the power of parliament is rather weak. Indeed, article 86f, for instance, confers to parliament (not government) control over setting up government departments and other government bodies.\textsuperscript{422}

The constitution, as Malova argues, is ‘even less specific’ about the appointment and dismissal of individual ministers.\textsuperscript{423} Whereas article 111 states the president appoints and recalls ministers on the advice of the prime minister, article 116.4 allows the prime minister the right to present a motion of dismissal for a member of the government.\textsuperscript{424} This ambiguity provoked a conflict between the president and prime minister in 1993 when Mečiar began dismissing what he regarded as obstreperous ambassadors and ministers. Kováč took the case to the constitutional court which ruled in his favour, although the prime minister is entitled to propose

\textsuperscript{420} Ústava Slovenskej republiky, Bratislava: Remedium (1992) pp. 44-7
\textsuperscript{421} ibid pp. 46-7
\textsuperscript{423} Malová, ‘Slovakia’, pp. 308-32 (p361)
\textsuperscript{424} Ústava Slovenskej republiky, p46
dismissals and appointments to the president. The prime minister’s powers are also restricted by political factors, most notably electoral arithmetic in the parliament. The continued life of the government is dependent on retaining the confidence of the parliament (article 114). Nonetheless, thanks to party support, the acquiescence of his coalition partners and majority support in parliament, Mečiar was able to get his way over numerous appointments (e.g. Krajčí, Hamžík and Česnek in 1996, Krampllová in 1997) and dismissals (e.g. Kňažko in 1993, Hudek, Schenk and Ducký in 1996).

Aware of the constitutional limitations of the prime minister’s position, Mečiar attempted to increase his power both by installing favourable personnel and changing the institutions. In the face of criticism from his allies, most notably the then foreign minister and deputy chairman of HZDS Milan Kňažko, Mečiar proposed candidates to fill the (indirectly elected) presidency and chairmanship of parliament, who were close to him. Although Roman Kováč failed to get elected president, his namesake, Michal Kováč, another HZDS member, was elected Slovakia’s head of state. Mečiar also used the window of opportunity created by the lack of a head of state to appoint members of the constitutional court. The non-elected branches of government were also not immune from Mečiar’s meddling. In early 1993, for instance, he replaced numerous civil servants across all ministries.

Malová, ‘Slovakia’, pp. 347-77 (pp. 361-2). The relationship between Kováč and Mečiar is discussed more extensively in the institutional framework chapter.

Ústava Slovenskej republiky, Bratislava: Remedium (1992) p45

and parts of the state administration.\footnote{Jan Obrman, 'Internal Disputes Shake Slovak Government', \textit{RFE/RL Research Report}, 2, 14, (2 April 1993), pp. 13-7} Parliament was also used to place allies in key public positions including the heads of Slovak Radio, Slovak TV and a new Slovak prosecutor general during the \textit{Long Night} in November 1994.\footnote{This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.}

The Slovak Intelligence Service (SIS) provided another important component of the positional context of the prime minister’s power. Indeed Williams suggested SIS ‘added a coercive, menacing dimension’ to Mečiar’s regime.\footnote{Kieran Williams, ‘Slovakia since 1993’ in Kieran Williams and Dennis Deletant, \textit{Security Intelligence Services in New Democracies: The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania}, Houndsmills: Palgrave in association with SSEES, UCL (2001) pp. 123-58 (p123)} Mečiar’s relationship to the Czechoslovak Security Service (ŠtB) between 1968 and 1993 remains ‘ambiguous’ having been spied upon during normalization, but then listed as a potential recruit in the 1970s.\footnote{Whether he was an ŠtB agent or not remains unproven. See Williams, ‘Slovakia since 1993’, pp. 123-58 (p124)} During his brief tenure as Slovakia’s interior minister from January to June 1990 men such as Jaroslav Svečhota, who would become important after independence, were appointed to powerful posts in the security services. There is evidence, although by no means conclusive, to suggest Svečhota not only filched and destroyed the ŠtB file (six pages long with the number 31 068)\footnote{\textit{Lidové noviny}, 2 October 1998 p3} on Mečiar, but that he handed it over to Mečiar along with dossiers on his political rivals.\footnote{Williams, ‘Slovakia since 1993’, pp. 123-58 (p125)} Whether these accusations are true or not it is
clear Mešiar's tenureship of the interior ministry clearly helped him to increase his power base and gain valuable information over his rivals.

The peaceful and legal birth (through constitutional amendments and inter-republic treaties) of Slovakia resulted in a fair degree of continuity in institutions including the security intelligence sector. Allied to this continuity was the 'flawed purge' of ŠtB officers and the shortcomings of the law passed in 1991 designed to reform the federal intelligence service, particularly in regard to parliamentary oversight, which helped create an easily manipulable security service. Kieran Williams argues, however, the main responsibility for the abuse of the security intelligence lay 'in the choices of the new state's political elite, especially of Mešiar and his closest confederates', particularly SIS' boss from 1995 Ivan Lexa. During Mešiar's third stint as prime minister, SIS were involved in numerous events from what in colloquial English could be termed 'dodgy' to the downright criminal. Phone tapping and campaigns designed to discredit the opposition were widespread. The fingerprints of SIS on the most infamous chain of events during the third Mešiar-led government, the abduction/kidnapping of President Kováč's son and the car bomb which killed Róbert Remiáš, are clear for all to see. The taped telephone conversation between Lexa and interior minister Hudek on 16 October 1995 suggested, at the very least, the government was not helping enquiries. Mešiar's personal role in these activities, however, remains unclear. The issue was raised on

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434 ibid p124
435 ibid p124
436 ibid p138
437 As is the case with fingerprints a microscopic chance exists of misattribution
438 Sme, 14 May 1996

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a number of occasions in cabinet, but neither Mečiar nor Hudek, were forthcoming.\(^{439}\)

The positional context, as Cole argues, provides not just restrictions on power and influence but opportunities. Nevertheless, modern government is beyond the scope of just one man, even one who claimed to put in a 18-20 hour working day as Slovak premier, sometimes even sleeping in his office.\(^{440}\) Mečiar placed in powerful positions people he could trust. Most notable amongst these was Anna Nagyová who became head of the \(\text{úrad vlády}\) (roughly equivalent to a prime ministerial office). She acted not only as a gatekeeper deciding who could or could not see the prime minister\(^{441}\), but as a trusted confidant. Although rumours spread that the relationship was as much sexual as political, Nagyová was, if not loved, then respected by Mečiar’s colleagues as a tough-minded organizer and administrator.\(^{442}\)

In contrast, Mečiar’s other female ‘advisers’ and ‘confidants’, such as Blažena Martinková, appear not to have been employed primarily for their political skills.\(^{443}\)

The decision to clear out of the ministries certain personnel in 1993 was a recognition by Mečiar that political actors operate in different ‘policy spheres’\(^{444}\).

\(^{439}\) Hudec interview, Keltošová interview

\(^{440}\) See Mečiar, \textit{Slovenské tabu}, pp. 243, 60

\(^{441}\) Ratislav Tóth, Chair, Office for the Strategic Development of Society 1995-8, (interviewed by the author, Banská Bystrica 10 February 2000)

\(^{442}\) \textit{ibid}


whereas high policy fundamental to the peace and economic well-being of the country is the preserve of the premier, close advisors and the cabinet, low-level policy involving incremental policy adjustments are invariably the preserve of civil servants. Mečiar had neither time nor interest in every aspect of policy, but his placing of personnel helped to ensure decisions would not be taken by unreliable people. Mečiar's position was similar to Helmut Kohl who placed himself 'at the centre of a network of personal loyalties – a web he himself had woven over the course of many years. All the information (of which individual members of the system held only fragments) converged on him'.

Nonetheless, Mečiar was not the only man holding the strings. A section of Slovak businessmen, who helped fund HZDS, was rewarded by a skewed privatization policy designed to promote their 'parochial interest.' Whilst Mečiar's governments do not fit into Elgie's 'monocratic' model of executive power, they do sit reasonably comfortably into Rhodes' prime ministerial/prime ministerial clique category. The workings of the

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445 Michael Mertes, 'Germany Moves On', Prospect, (March 2000), pp. 10-1 (p10)
446 This will be discussed in greater details in the following chapter. For a discussion of how powerful groups skew an agenda see Edward Rhodes, 'Do Bureaucratic Politics Matter? Some Disconcerting Findings from the Case of the US Navy', World Politics, 47, (October 1994), pp. 1-41;
447 This argument forms part of Allison's Model III. See Graham Allison, Essence of Decision, Boston: Little, Brown (1971) pp. 164, 166
cabinet will be examined in a later chapter, but clearly Mečiar did much to define a
government’s ethos and atmosphere, which in itself can generate predictable
solutions to most policy problems.450

**Internal Constraints**

The position of the Slovak prime minister is restricted by internal and external
constraints. Whilst for a small state such as Slovakia the opportunities to change
external constraints are limited, internal constraints are not givens. Whilst a prime
minister may be hedged in by internal constraints, (s)he can get out the hedgecutters
and other gardening equipment and use skill, dexterity and brute force to alter the
nature of these constraints. The position of Mečiar vis-à-vis his party, coalition, the
president, parliament, constitutional court and public opinion will be discussed in
later chapters, but the role of the opposition to Mečiar deserves special mention in
this regard.

The ‘opposition’ is admittedly a slightly nebulous term, but in the Slovak context
the opposition to Mečiar and his governments can be divided into two groups:
political party opposition and intellectual opposition451. The former were poorly
organized and badly led throughout most of the decade. At times the Mečiar-led
government played clever games of divide and rule. Even as late as July 1997 the
government was holding roundtables and bilateral meetings with members of the
opposition such as the meetings with the leaders of KDH and SDL’ (Ján

450 *ibid* pp. 15-7

451 These groups were not mutually exclusive
Čarnogurský and Jozef Migaš respectively). Slovakia had important issues to discuss. Whilst it would be too naïve to suggest meetings were convened purely for the national interest it would be too cynical to suggest the only motivation for such meetings was to cause rifts amongst the opposition. The opposition did a good job of keeping itself divided until late 1996, when the Blue Coalition (KDH, DÚ, DS) was formed, but the opposition only really got its act together after the 1997 referendum débâcle, which was the stimulus for the formation of the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK). Even then the opposition displayed its ability to carry on its spats and wash its dirty laundry in public. At times politicians such as KDH leader and founder, Čarnogurský, seemed more concerned with the purity of his Christian democratic beliefs than in gaining power. Other politicians, most notably Rudolf Schuster, talked of the need to build bridges between Slovakia’s divided political camps. Schuster’s rhetoric, however, was just a smokescreen to hide his own ambition to become Slovak president.

In retrospect the decision to push for early elections appears to have been a major mistake. When Moravčík, Roman Kováč and fellow defectors from HZDS helped form a new government, they were not keen on pushing for new elections.

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452 RFE/RL Newsline, 13 May 1997; Slovenská republika, 7 July 1997, p5

453 In a similar vein to opposition to the Klaus led opposition in the Czech Republic in the early-mid 1990s. See Innes, Czechoslovakia, p221


Moravčík openly admitted that calling early elections was ‘risky’ for a new party.\textsuperscript{457}

Pressure for early elections had come from SDL, buoyed in part by the success of the post-communist left in Poland and Hungary. The results, however, were disappointing.\textsuperscript{458} The then leader of SDL, Peter Weiss, argued an explanation for SDL’s poor showing does not lie in the inability to ‘delete \[zotrief\] their past sins’\textsuperscript{459}, but rather as a combination of four factors: the failure to unify the left in the early 1990s, thanks mainly to Alexander Dubček’s desire to stay ideologically clean in his bid to become chair of the federal parliament; SDL’s loss of identity in the Common Choice coalition; being in a governing coalition with KDH and its unpopular leader Čarnogurský; and the decision to hold elections after six months, either elections should have been held soon after Mečiar’s fall or delayed so the voters could see the improvements in the country’s economic standing and international reputation.\textsuperscript{460} The coalition, however, could only agree on autumn elections.

In contrast to the fractious nature of political party opposition, the intellectual opposition were well organized and articulate in Slovak and numerous foreign languages. Intellectuals such as Martin Bútora and his wife Zora, Grigorij Mesežnikov, Soňa Szomolányi and many others - often associated with the Bratislava-based think-tank the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) - wrote countless articles and books highlighting corruption and anti-democratic actions in Slovakia and were the first points of contact for many foreign scholars and journalists. These

\textsuperscript{457} Jozef Moravčík (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 7 May 2001)
\textsuperscript{458} the election results will be discussed in chapter 6
\textsuperscript{459} Miloš Luknář, ‘Nie sme v Amerike’, \textit{Plus 7 Dni}, (12 October 1994), p8
\textsuperscript{460} Peter Weiss (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 25 February 2000)
articulate intellectuals did not set out to harm Slovakia's image abroad. Their motivation rather was to highlight the difference between what they regarded to be democratic and the less-than democratic reality in Slovakia. Nonetheless, a result of their work was to influence the outside world's impression of Slovakia.\(^{461}\) It would be incorrect to suggest outside opinion of Slovakia was determined by the IVO academics. All foreign governments worth their salt take internal opposition material with a pinch of salt, but it strains credulity to suggest these opposition groups were insignificant.

**Putting the framework to use: the case of NATO policy**

The 'leadership resources' and 'environmental pressures' of Cole's model and the cognitive and contextual constraints, events matrix and the decision-makers' profile of the decision-making framework offered earlier can be operationalized by looking at Slovakia's NATO policy between 1993 and 1998. Although one can argue foreign policy is often not representative of policy formation and constitutes a special case\(^{462}\), NATO membership was a central question of Slovak politics in the 1990s and deserves attention. The announcement of Slovak Foreign Minister Pavol Hamžík's resignation in 1997 in the aftermath of the botched referendum, argued Wlachovský *et al*, sent a clear message abroad 'that domestic politics and the


personal will of Prime Minister Mečiar are the decisive determinants of Slovak foreign policy. But were they?

(i) What were the Government's Foreign Policy Priorities?
Along with membership of the European Union, the desire to join NATO was not only at the core of the foreign policy sections of both the 1994 HZDS election manifesto and the declaration of the government's programme in January 1995, but became a regular mantra of the government. In the defence section of its 1994 election manifesto, for instance, HZDS declared unambiguously in quasi-religious style that HZDS' desire to see Slovakia become a member of NATO was one of its ten commandments. EU and NATO membership were not, however, pursued for their own sake, but for functional reasons. Firstly, prestige: NATO and the EU are two of the best clubs in international politics. Membership of both organizations signified status. Secondly, security: at the core of the foreign policy of most

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466 HZDS, Programové tézy, p148
governments around the globe is the desire to maintain the state’s independence and territorial integrity. The HZDS-led governments were no exception. As the government’s 1995 declaration promulgated: ‘[w]e consider the North Atlantic alliance to be the most effective security organization. Membership provides a possibility to achieve effective security guarantees.’  

Thirdly, economics: HZDS leader Vladimír Mečiar may not be a man overly susceptible to what Tismaneanu describes as the ‘democratic magnetism’ exerted by the West, rather, he knew EU and NATO membership, through security guarantees and increased trade, would offer Slovakia significant economic benefits.

Slovakia has neighbours to her east as well as to her west. It is in her interests, economically and strategically to build up good and mutually advantageous relations with all neighbouring countries. The actions of the HZDS-led governments raised eyebrows and questions in Western capitals. Where did Slovakia see herself in the schema of international politics? As part of the West, the East or sandwiched in between? In the early 1990s a whole raft of foreign policy orientations had been discussed by Slovak intellectuals including neutrality, buffer zone status and Slovakia as a bridge between east and west Mečiar himself gave out discordant messages. Whilst repeating his mantra of first wave entry of the

467 PROGRAMOVÉ VYHLÁSENIE p2
470 See, for example, Foreign Minister Schenk’s comments in Pravda, 10 July 1995
Western clubs, he also talked of a pan-European system of collective security and even stated the aim of turning Slovakia into a ‘Switzerland of Mitteleuropa’. Such language was not the exclusive reserve of HZDS. Ján Ľupták, the leader of one of Mečiar’s coalition partners, ZRS, expressed his belief in Slovak neutrality in the summer of 1996, although Mečiar was swift to distance himself from Ľupták’s comments. The chair of the nationalist Slovak cultural association Matica Slovenská, Jozef Markuš, declared Slovakia to be members of Eastern European and the Slavonic World. Reluctance to throw Slovakia hook, line and sinker into Western European structures was not just the reserve of those closely associated with the 1994-8 coalition. KDH leader and former Slovak Prime Minister, Ján Čarnogurský, argued in 1995 Central Europe should remain a grey zone in order to maintain equilibrium between West and East and allow countries like Slovakia to benefit from dealing with both. Kieran Williams suggested President Michal Kováč only began to issue an ‘unequivocal declaration of orientation to Western institutions and alliances’ after the autumn 1993 crisis in Russia. Kováč, however, flatly rejected this accusation, but provided no evidence to back up his assertion.

472 See both Slovenská republika and Národná obroda, 4 January 1993
473 Leško, ‘Pribeh Sebadiskvalifikácie Favorita’, pp. 15-85 (p49)
475 See Sme, 26 January 1995
476 Williams, ‘The Foreign Relations of Independent Slovakia’, pp. 87-107 (p88)
477 Michal Kováč (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 11 May 2000)
Foreign policy is not made in a vacuum. Slovakia is a small state and her foreign policy has to respond to the fickle and changeable world of international politics. From the vantage point of the year 2000, it is clear how European geopolitics developed during the 1990s, but to policy practitioners in the early 1990s several scenarios seemed plausible (or at least not totally implausible). Reports, which painted a gloomy picture of an unstable world and containing a raft of predictions such as the rapid diminution of US power, the imminent prominence of China, German desire to achieve hegemony in Europe and the threat of a pseudo-fascist regime in Moscow, were discussed by the government. These reports suggested Slovakia’s security and territorial integrity could not be taken for granted. Such an analysis might appear to be fanciful to someone sitting in London or Washington, but one should look through Slovak eyes. As Lech Wałęsa was fond of reminding us, ‘how you see things depends on where you sit.’ The ‘history factor’ in the decision-making model can be factored in here. Slovakia’s centuries of subjugation and her recent arrival on the world stage of nations made her acutely sensitive towards geopolitical developments which might threaten her independence. As the 1990s dragged on, however, it became clearer that the European geopolitical map would continue to be dominated by the EU and NATO. It became increasingly obvious that fulfilment of the aim of national security would be best achieved through membership of the EU and NATO. However, there was no discernible concomitant increase in HZDS’s enthusiasm for NATO membership.

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478 Such as the one written by the Centre for Strategic Studies at the beginning of 1994. See Williams, ‘The Foreign Relations of Independent Slovakia’, pp. 87-107 (pp. 91-2)
479 Quoted in Garton Ash, *History of the Present*, p33
Part of the motivation for Slovakia seeking alternative structures lay with the unclear signals provided by the West. Zbigniew Brzezinski, speaking in Slovakia in July 1993, for example, divided Europe into three zones. Slovakia was not put in the second zone along with Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia, but in the third group with the countries to her east and south. Ivan Gašparovič responded by arguing that if Brzezinski and his ilk were to start preaching that Slovakia belonged in the first category, he was sure Slovakia would be in the first wave.  

Great weight should not be placed on Brzezinski's comments, but they indicate that even from early 1993, before Mečiar had sullied Slovakia's name in international circles, the West was prepared to consider Slovakia's exclusion from the first wave of expansion. The impression that Slovakia was to be left out gained greater credence in 1994 when President Clinton visited Prague, Warsaw and the Baltics, but expressed no intention of visiting Bratislava. Nonetheless, at other times, such as Clinton's meeting with the V4 leaders in January 1994 and during the then US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Holbrooke's visit to Bratislava thirteen months later, the US made it clear not just that the NATO door was still open but that the occupants would welcome Slovakia. The clearest signal of Slovakia's immanent exclusion from the first wave in July 1996 when the US Congress passed the NATO Enlargement Act which included the offer of $60m of aid to help Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to prepare for eventual admission to the alliance. Slovakia, however, was excluded.

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480 Leško, 'Pribeh Sebadiskvalifikácie Favorita', pp. 20-1
481 ibid pp. 22-3
482 ibid pp. 15-85
(ii) The place of Russia

In May 1998, in its own inimitable style, The Economist described Mečiar as 'an autocratic bully who seems to prefer Moscow to Brussels.' Mečiar attempted to separate the question of NATO from good relations with Russia. When he met Russian premier Chernomyrdin in 1995 he was keen to stress the economic benefits of good relations with Russia whilst distinguishing between membership of European structures (i.e. NATO) and pan-European matters (i.e. relations with Russia). It is too easy to see sinister anti-Western thinking at the heart of 1994-8 HZDS-led government's policy. Economic concerns were paramount. Slovakia needed Russian oil. Despite the price hike in early 1996, the Slovak government continued to buy Russian oil. Mečiar explained this policy on the bases of cost and transportation. Russia owed Slovakia money. In June 1994, the debt was valued at $1.6 billion. By June 1997 half of that had been repaid. There was, therefore, a logic to Slovakia’s good relations with Russia. The frequent trips of Slovak politicians to Moscow, such as Finance Minister Sergej Kozlik’s in February 1997, can therefore be at least partly explained in terms of economics.

There was, however, a strategic dimension to the relationship as the five-year military agreement (which included the delivery to Slovakia of military equipment produced in Russia) Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev signed with his

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483 The Economist, 9 May 1998

484 Pravda, 15 February 1995

485 See interview with Mečiar in Slovenská republika, 13 May 1996, p7

486 Hopodarske Noviny, 6 September 1996

487 Wlachovský et al, ‘The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic’, pp. 81-101 (p95)
Slovak counterpart in August 1993 suggests. What is noticeable, however, is the degree of contact. In his farewell address in September 1996 the Russian Ambassador Sergei Yastrzhembsky noted that it was not 'every European state (that) can boast of visits by the Russian president, the Russian prime minister, and the Russian patriarch in the past three years.' (Although one should add that this is probably as much about Yastrzembsky boasting about his personal achievements as Russian ambassador as Slovakia's close ties with Russia.) Indeed just one month after becoming Russian Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, visited Bratislava on 29 February 1996. Whilst trips to Washington, Brussels, Beijing and New York are always likely to be high on the list of priorities of any modern day Russian foreign minister a trip to a small non-bordering nation in central Europe is not. During Yastrzembsky's three-year stint in Bratislava 80 agreements were signed. 'Not only is the number of Slovak-Russian bilateral agreements disproportionately large', argue Wlachovský et al, 'but it includes treaties involving energy supplies, military assistance and intelligence co-operation that complicate Slovakia's relations with the West.' Wlachovský et al also argue 'few knowledgeable observers saw a mere coincidence in the fact that Russia had sent the talented, well-trained Yastrzembsky to one of the smallest, weakest countries of Central and Eastern

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489 BBC Summary of World Broadcasts Central Europe, Slovakia EE/2709/c 5 September 1996. Cited in Goldman, Slovakia, p170

490 Wlachovský et al, ‘The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic’, pp. 81-101 (p94)
Europe. Slovakia was not central to Russia’s foreign policy in 1996; the main concern was getting Yeltsin re-elected everything else was secondary. Nevertheless, as the noises emanating from the West began to signal a cooling of the idea of Slovakia’s entry into NATO and the European Union in the first wave, Russia responded. It is not surprising that as West began to give Slovakia the cold shoulder treatment relations warmed with a country that laid out the red carpet.

(iii) The Input of Party, Coalition, Ministers and the Foreign Ministry

The input of party and coalition will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters, nevertheless a few points deserve to be mentioned here. HZDS politicians were divided over the issue of NATO membership. The technocratic reforming faction of HZDS most closely associated with Ol’ga Keltošová and Vojtech Tkáč have consistently argued in favour of NATO membership even at the expense of alienating actual and potential coalition partners. In contrast, the nationally orientated group, including Roman Hofbauer and Vladimír Hagara, see NATO as a threat to national sovereignty and an instrument of American power in Europe; a view identical with leading SNS politicians during the 1990s. The third and largest group, however, were time-servers, who were not prepared to stick their necks out on the NATO issue.

491 ibid p94. Yastrzembsky also had regular meetings with Slota
492 I am grateful for a conversation with Pete Duncan for clarifying my thoughts on this issue
493 Ol’ga Keltošová interview. Such opinions, however, are not exclusive to this group. See ‘Ziak naznačil problémy s podpisom opozíčnej zmluvy HZDS s SNS’, Sme, 25 February 2000 p1. Also Rudolf Žiak (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 21 March 2000)
494 Roman Hofbauer, ‘Slovensko a NATO nahlás’, Slovenská republika, 15 April 1997 reprinted in Hofbauer, Slovensko na krížovatke, pp. 85-93
495 Ján Sitek (interviewed by the author, Podbiel, 25 May 2000)
The 1994-8 government was not a HZDS government, but rather a HZDS-led government. Holding a comfortable majority in parliament the coalition was therefore not forced to be consultative, but as is the norm with minimum winning coalitions they tend to be hegemonic. Although members of HZDS held most of the key posts in government, ministers from two smaller parties, SNS and ZRS held important posts. Moreover, HZDS required the continuing support of these parties to remain in government. SNS, and in particular its leader Ján Slota, was virulently opposed to Slovakia’s entry into the North Atlantic alliance. In the spring of 1997, for example, Slota argued membership of the North Atlantic alliance was both economically disadvantageous and would force Slovakia to follow NATO’s whim. He added, in a television debate, that membership of NATO would ‘ruin’ the country. Slota knew that ‘without him neither HZDS, nor Mečiar could rule’. It would be an exaggeration, however, to suggest that Slota constantly held a metaphorical gun to Mečiar’s head and demanded x, y, and z as a price for staying in the coalition. Both Slota and Mečiar knew that no other party would jump into the political bed with SNS. If SNS wanted a continuing share of power it had to swallow (for them) unpalatable decisions from time to time. The Basic Treaty signed with Hungary in 1995 provides a neat example of this relationship. In the face of SNS opposition, Mečiar signed the treaty, albeit with some reluctance, in March 1995. Ratification took several months as SNS demanded a raft of

496 John Robertson, ‘Coalition Leadership, Government Stability and Macroeconomic Policy in European Democracies’ in Jones (ed.), *Leadership & Politics*, pp. 244-66 (p246)
497 Mesežníkov, ‘Postoje a činnost politických strán a hnutí’, pp. 111-36 (p132)
498 Leško, ‘Pribeh Sebadiskvalifikácie Favorita’, pp. 15-85 (p66)
concessions to buy their acquiescence. But whilst ratification was taking place HZDS flirted with SDL to warn SNS that HZDS could find another coalition partner if necessary.

SNS demanded the defence portfolio as a condition of entering a coalition with HZDS. SNS’s Ján Sitek, a trenchant critic of NATO, was appointed as defence minister. Sitek agreed his role would be to build a ‘modern and democratic armed forces in Slovakia, which will be compatible with the armies of member states of the North Atlantic Alliance.”

Modernization of the armed forces was a policy both sides of cabinet could agree on. Nationalists could point to the need to build a strong and modern military for national reasons and advocates of NATO entry could stress such reform was a prerequisite of entry. Sitek explained the incongruity between the government’s stated priority of NATO membership and SNS’ opposition to joining as a result of coalition bargaining. Central to the agreement was that any decision to enter NATO would be subject to a referendum. The relationship between HZDS and its coalition partners was, therefore, symbiotic. Both SNS and HZDS had to indulge in the usual bargaining and compromises of coalition government. It would, therefore, be incorrect to suggest SNS had no influence.

501 Interviews with the then (in 1994) deputy chairwoman of SNS and future minister, Eva Slavkovská, (Bratislava, 13 June 2000) and Sitek interview
503 Sitek interview
The input of the Slovak Foreign Ministry into the policy-making process appears limited. The ministry was hampered by numerous difficulties. Working out of an overcrowded former dormitory with few experienced diplomats bequeathed from the Czechoslovak foreign service, Slovakia's foreign ministry was hardly conducive to a dynamic foreign policy. Although supporters of Mečiar overemphasize the cost of building up a new state, it should not be ignored. The speed at which posts in the Slovak Foreign Ministry were filled was not helped by the Mečiar government's decision to create a new School of International Law and Diplomacy in Banská Bystrica and not send future employees to the established International Relations Institute in Bratislava. Slovakia, it should be remembered, was a new state in 1993. She was very much the junior partner in Czechoslovakia. Slovaks had had limited experience in policy-making and diplomacy prior to independence in 1993. In her first year the new state had some success, not least in becoming formally recognized by 123 other nation states. Moreover, by the end of 1993 Slovakia had 54 functioning embassies. Yet the country had only 26 accredited ambassadors. Posts yet to be filled included the top jobs in the embassies.

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504 This paragraph draws on off-the-record remarks by civil servants.
505 Wlachovský et al, 'The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic', pp. 81-101 (pp. 81-3)
506 ibid pp. 81-83
509 Wlachovský et al, 'The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic', pp. 81-101 (pp. 81-3)
Although one can understand the desire not to rush headlong into a raft of appointments and place someone—anyone—into these embassies, it was important to have someone in these positions arguing the case for Slovakia. It seems reasonable to draw the conclusion from these facts that foreign relations were not considered to be one of the most important areas of policy in 1993.

The 'most significant factor inhibiting the development of the Slovak foreign service', however, was 'frequent leadership change.' From 1993 to 1997 Slovak's Foreign Ministry was graced with six different bosses: Kňažko, Moravčík, Kukan, Schenk, Hamžík and Kramplová. Mečiar, however, cannot be blamed for all the changes. His meddling and personality clashes may help explain the departure of some of these people, but poor health and the Slovak electorate were responsible for one change each. In a similar vein to Klaus’s relationship with his foreign minister Zieleniec, Mečiar tended to concern himself only with foreign policy issues he considered important (NATO, EU and Russia), leaving the foreign minister to do the rest. Even within the realms of NATO and EU policy, however, the foreign minister was given latitude. Indeed, one official who had regular contact with many of Mečiar’s ministers argued Hamžík was the only government minister who was given any latitude at all.

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510 Williams, ‘The Foreign Relations of Independent Slovakia’, pp. 87-107 (p91)
511 Wlachovský et al, ‘The Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic’, pp. 81-101 (p82)
513 The author is drawing on communication with an official who, for personal and professional reasons, would prefer to remain anonymous.
(iv) Shift in Foreign Policy

Decision-making does not take place in one episode, but rather in a series of frames as Slovakia’s NATO policy illustrates. Although Hamžík believed Slovak membership of NATO in the first wave was still achievable when he became foreign minister in August 1996, the signs were not good. By then both the EU and the USA had taken the rare and diplomatically significant decision to issue démarches deploring the state of democracy in Slovakia. The European Parliament weighed in, berating Slovakia for failing to respect democratic norms particularly with regard to human and minority rights. The Law on the Defence of the Republic passed in March 1996 and the car bomb which killed Róbert Remiáš later that year added grist to the mill to the arguments for excluding Slovakia from West European structures. Mečiar likened the démarches to decisions ‘about us, but taken without us’ [o nás bez nás] in 1938, 1939, 1968 and played down the EU’s second démarche describing it as merely a ‘communiqué’.

Although participants and close observers of the government suggest the impact of the démarches on government policy was minimal, the language of the

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514 Allison, The Essence of Decision
515 See interviews with Hamžík in Slovenská republika 28 September 1996 p2 and Plus 7 Dni, (15 June 1998), pp. 18-21 (p20)
517 Leško, ‘Pribeh Sebadiskvalifikácie Favorita’, pp. 38-40
518 Pravda, 13 November 1995
519 Leško, ‘Pribeh Sebadiskvalifikácie Favorita’, pp. 15-85 (p38)
520 Interviews with Keltošová, Hudec, Baco, Tóth and high ranking officials who would rather remain anonymous
government began to change. As 1996 dragged on, Mečiar continued to articulate the government’s desire for Slovakia to become a member of NATO, but he was also at pains to talk of the need to avoid a ‘second iron curtain’.\textsuperscript{521} The clear implication being that Slovakia would be on the non-Western side. The language may have been a reflection of a new political reality, but Mečiar and HZDS’ reservations about the West, and in particular the Clinton administration, had begun in 1994 after Mečiar’s second prime ministerial term came to an end. In April 1994, for example, Strobe Talbott publicly congratulated the Slovak people on changing their government by democratic means.\textsuperscript{522} Mečiar’s government, however, had not been removed by the most democratic of means (i.e. by the electorate), but by the changing parliamentary arithmetic in the National Council, due to the splintering of parties and defections. Moreover, human rights was the most commonly cited reason why the West was considering excluding Slovakia from the first wave of NATO enlargement, but Turkey long lambasted for her human rights record, was a member of the Alliance. In the eyes of some Slovaks the West appeared to be operating double standards.\textsuperscript{523}

(v) What can be learnt from the 1997 NATO Referendum?

Why did the HZDS-led government instigate a referendum on NATO membership in May 1997? To demonstrate to the West the democratic credentials of the government? If HZDS’ concern, however, had been merely to project the democratic credentials of the government there were many other actions which would have pleased the human rights lobby in Washington or Brussels much more.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{521} Leško, ‘Pribeh Sebadiskvalifikácie Favorita’, pp. 15-85 (p55)
  \item \textsuperscript{522} \textit{ibid} pp. 30-1
  \item \textsuperscript{523} Goldman, \textit{Slovakia Since Independence}, pp. 158-60
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Besides, the objective of promoting a democratic image of Slovakia does not sit comfortably with the subsequent decision to remove the question on direct presidential elections. Was it rather that Mečiar wanted a referendum, because he thought the people would vote “no”? The attitude of the Slovak people towards NATO, however, was not clear-cut. A FOCUS poll in January 1997 suggested 39% would vote for NATO with 21% against, leaving a substantial number of Slovaks sitting on the fence. This poll was not a one off rogue. A FOCUS poll seven months earlier had yielded almost identical results. As all social scientists know, answers in polls or votes depend on the question(s) posed. The May referendum not only had the matter-of-fact first question ‘are you in favour of Slovakia entering NATO?’, but also two others: ‘are you in favour of nuclear weapons being placed on Slovak soil?’, and ‘are you in favour of NATO military bases in Slovakia?’

Grigorij Mesežnikov is in no doubt that the inclusion of the questions on nuclear weapons and military bases was a thinly disguised attempt to influence citizens into voting no. One of HZDS’s leading lights, Ol’ga Keltošová, however, is convinced a ‘yes’ vote would have been achieved had it not been for the interference of President Michal Kováč.

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524 Otto Šimko, ‘Echo referenda v zahraničí’ in Mesežnikov & Bútora (eds.), Slovenské Referendum ’97, pp. 223-37
526 38.6% for and 19.2% against. See Slovenská republika 21 May 1996 p2
528 Olga Keltošová, interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 18 April 2000. Katharina Tóthová articulated similar sentiments. See Slovenská republika, 10 July 1997
For the then President, Michal Kováč, HZDS’s aim was purely and simply to thwart the campaign (launched by six opposition parties) to change the constitution to institute direct presidential elections.\textsuperscript{529} It seems incorrect to suggest that the holding of a referendum on NATO membership was due simply to spoiling tactics. Not only had Mečiar stated earlier that year that the final decision on NATO and EU membership would be taken by Slovak citizens in a referendum,\textsuperscript{530} but the governing coalition’s foreign and defence policy was held together by the promise that the final decision would be the Slovak electorate’s.\textsuperscript{531} Mesežník and Kováč, however, are correct in terms of timing. By the spring of 1997, it was clear Slovakia had missed NATO’s first round enlargement bus.\textsuperscript{532} If the desire had been to demonstrate the Slovak people’s desire to join the North Atlantic alliance, and hence improve chances of entry, it would have made much more sense to have held the referendum earlier. Besides, the lack of any HZDS-led pro-NATO campaign and the seeming reluctance of leading party members to state their position suggests the desire for NATO membership was lukewarm at best.\textsuperscript{533} When Mečiar was asked how he had voted, he responded ‘what’s it to you?’\textsuperscript{534}

\textsuperscript{529} Michal Kováč (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 11 May 2000). This theme runs through Mesežník and Bútora’s edited volume particularly Michalič’s chapter: Sergej Michalič, ‘Referendum: od petičnej akcie cez zmarenie k rozhodnutiu prokurátora’ in Mesežník & Bútora (eds.), Slovenské referendum ’97, pp. 43-82

\textsuperscript{530} Leško, ‘Pribeh Sebadiskvalifikácie Favorita’, pp. 15-85 (p43)

\textsuperscript{531} Sitek interview

\textsuperscript{532} Mečiar had admitted as much at a HZDS meeting in Trnava in March 1997. See Leško, ‘Pribeh Sebadiskvalifikácie Favorita’, pp. 15-85 (p65)


\textsuperscript{534} Plus 7 Dni, (2 June 1997), p3
(vi) A Brief Summary: Mečiar and NATO policy

At the core of understanding the decision-making processes of independent Slovakia and Mečiar's role in determining Slovakia's Sonderweg lie the concepts of constraint, opportunity and the events matrix. The case study of NATO policy is instructive not just because it highlights these concepts, but because membership of NATO was a stated priority of the government.

As prime minister and the leader of the largest party in Slovakia, and thanks to an almost tabula rasa opinion of the new state in the international community, Mečiar was accorded a great deal of opportunity to formulate Slovakia’s NATO policy and yet, unlike her V4 partners, Slovakia was not invited at the Madrid summit to join NATO. Should we, therefore, infer the fault for failing to achieve this foreign policy aim should be laid at Mečiar’s door?

At the heart of the frameworks in this chapter is the idea that decisions are not taken in vacuums. Rather, decisions are taken in the light of other decisions and events taking place (what was dubbed the 'events matrix'). Decisions, as Janis's model outlined above demonstrated, involve trade-offs. Mečiar, however, wanted Slovakia to have her cake and eat it: to be able to exploit Russian markets but also to 'integrate into all European structures'.535 Failure to achieve the latter goal has much to do with two aspects of the models outlined earlier. Firstly, the 'prestige of the nation', Slovakia was not strategically or politically that important to NATO. This consideration only became important, however, because of the prevailing 'world opinion' of what was happening in the country. The concerns about

535 Slovenská republika, 19 October 1997
Slovakia’s nascent democracy, exemplified by the démarches, meant NATO was reluctant to open its doors to Slovakia. Although Mečiar led many foreign trips to NATO and EU countries in the first year of the 1994-8 government\textsuperscript{536}, the domestic policies of the Mečiar-led government led many West European leaders to refuse to extend invitations to their Slovak counterpart. It is a self-evident point, but worth stressing: the decision to exclude Slovakia from NATO’s first wave of post-communist was taken by NATO member states. This decision was taken partly on the basis of internal NATO concerns, but also in response to the policies pursued by the Mečiar-led governments.

In addition to the international factors, Meciar was constrained by the constitution, the configuration of the party system and the nature of coalition government. The degree of constraint exercised by these factors will be explored in greater detail in the following chapters. Nonetheless, the 1997 referendum appears to neatly sum up the 1994-8 government’s attitude to NATO. A laudable goal in itself, the referendum had much more to do with internal coalition politics, parliamentary arithmetic and government-opposition relations than the security interests of the nation. NATO membership was a priority HZDS was prepared to sacrifice on the altar of domestic politics.

\textsuperscript{536} See, for instance Pravda 24 January 1995, 4 March 1995 and 8 July 1995
Scholarly analysis suggests parties’ role in the democratization process in CEE ‘remains something of an open question.’ Nonetheless, in a parliamentary democracy parties perform (at least) one important function: politicians group together (for whatever reason) create a party apparatus and present to the electorate a policy programme. The electorate responds to this appeal by voting (or not) for the party thereby determining the number of parliamentary seats and, to some extent, what governmental or oppositional role the party will play.

In terms of explaining the Slovak Sonderweg and assessing Mečiar’s role in determining that path, and given the fact that the role(s) played by the coalition, institutions and public opinion are assessed elsewhere, this chapter will focus on three salient themes:

1. In electoral terms Mečiar’s party, HZDS, was Slovakia’s most successful party from its formation in 1991 to 1998 (see tables below), but how did the party project itself to the Slovak electorate? What was the party’s ideology and programme and what does that tell us about the party’s aims?

2. How powerful was Mečiar in the party? How can we best describe Mečiar’s positional context within HZDS? To what extent was the party a contextual constraint on his power?

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3. Above all, how does an understanding of HZDS help us understand Slovakia’s political trajectory?

4.1 Slovakia’s Election Results 1992-8 (% of vote)  

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<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>35.0*</td>
<td>27.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7.9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZRS</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDL' /SV/SDL'</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>10.4**</td>
<td>14.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7.4</td>
<td>10.2</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>DÚ</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* in 1994 HZDS was in electoral coalition with the Agrarian Party of Slovakia (RSS)  
** in 1994 SDL' joined forces with Green party of Slovakia (ZRS), Social Democratic Party of Slovakia (SDSS) and Farmers' Movement (HP) forming Common Choice (SV)

4.2 HZDS’ Election Results 1992-8  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Nationwide</th>
<th>% of vote</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>% of seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1 148 625</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994*</td>
<td>1 005 488</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>907 103</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28.7</td>
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* as for 4.1

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539 ibid
Ideology and Categorization

From its creation in March 1991, originally as a party platform with VPN\textsuperscript{540}, until its ‘transformation congress’ held in Trnava in March 2000, HZDS was officially a ‘movement’ rather than a ‘party’. HZDS hung on to the ‘movement’ label partly, because the very word ‘party’ was tainted with its association with 40 years of (Communist) Party rule, but also because HZDS was trying to project itself as not being narrow, divisive and scheming like a party, but rather inclusive and constructive. The new party platform, was according to Mečiar, simply a ‘return to the original roots of VPN [Public Against Violence, the anti-communist umbrella organization formed in autumn 1989]’, the core ideas of 1989 and to a ‘democratic Slovakia’\textsuperscript{541}

Given HZDS’ projection of itself as not the representative of a sectional interest, Kieran Williams, building on B. D. Graham’s study, postulated whether HZDS could be classified as a ‘rally party’\textsuperscript{542}. A rally party is characterized by a strong leader appealing to the broad mass of society, the use of plebiscite, the subordination of parliament, the pursuit of collective goals valued above sectional interests, and national solidarity. Such broad based movements are well suited to

\textsuperscript{540} HZDS was formally established on 19 May 1991

\textsuperscript{541} \textit{Národná obroda}, 7 March 1991, p3

the fluid times immediately after regime collapse with their appeals to 'abstract but powerful feelings of national well being and patriotic morality'.

Graham’s term, which he largely derived from the French experience, however does not fit HZDS. Few analysts would contest the attribution of the adjective strong to Mečiar, but did he appeal to a broad mass of society throughout the 1990s? The evidence suggests that initially HZDS cast its net widely in the electoral waters of the Slovak part of post-communist Czechoslovakia. From the inception of HZDS until the break-up of the common state, the dominant axis of competition was the national question. HZDS appealed to all Slovaks as the defender of Slovakia’s interests. After Slovak independence in 1993 and, in particular, from the 1994 election onwards, when cleavage patterns and voter bases became more clearly defined, HZDS directed its appeal to a more narrowly defined section of the electorate.

Concentration was placed on mobilizing the party’s core constituency rather than reaching out to newer voters, although the desire to represent and formulate policies for the benefit of all ‘ordinary Slovaks’ remained a key objective.

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544 Mečiar’s role in HZDS is discussed below
545 The pace of economic reform was also a critical, but throughout Czechoslovakia this was more of a cumulative rather than a cross-cutting cleavage.
546 Národná obroda, 7 March 1991
547 The support base of HZDS is analysed in chapter seven
548 Particularly, Peter Baco (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 15 March 2000) and Ivan Hudec (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 5 April 2000)
The rhetoric of inclusion is in evidence in the party's statutes (stanovy) adopted in March 1996. HZDS projected itself as a party for all citizens of the Slovak Republic. Although most other Slovak parties such as the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK), Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), and the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK) projected themselves in a similar way, ZRS projected itself specifically as a party of workers, peasants and other socially weak groups in society, whilst HZDS' other 1994-8 coalition partner, SNS, projected itself as the party of ethnic Slovaks. SDL fell short of claiming to represent all Slovak citizens, preferring instead to describe itself as a party that articulates and defends the interests of working people, although SDL fits under this label all citizens except big businessmen. HZDS' official language was therefore not as exclusionary as other parties in Slovakia, but neither was it unique in claiming to be a party for all Slovaks.

In order to assess HZDS ideology, three aspects will be examined: where should HZDS be placed on the left-right spectrum? What role(s) do nationalism and Catholicism play in HZDS ideology?

549 Stanovy Hnutia za demokraticke Slovensko, Prva Hlava, article one, March 1996
550 Stanovy SOP, adopted 26 June 1999; Stanovy SDK, adopted with amendments 15 June 1998; Stanovy KDH, adopted 10 April 1999; Stanovy SMK, adopted 13 November 1999
551 Stanovy a organizačná struktura ZRS, 1996, Stanovy SNS, adopted 30 May 1998
552 Organizačný poriadok SDL', approved 24 October 1998
(a) HZDS and the left-right spectrum

Analysts have found it difficult to categorize HZDS. Soňa Szomolányi argued HZDS does not fit neatly on a left-right continuum. Comparing Slovakia to her erstwhile federative partner, she wrote in 1994 that whilst in the Czech Republic parties with ‘ambiguous’ or ‘fuzzy’ programmes were marginalized, in Slovakia they took centre stage. Indeed Bútorová and Bútora described HZDS in January 1993 as an ‘umbrella organization’ incorporating anti-Communists, reform Communists, separatists, federalists, pro-Western, anti-Western, pro-Europeans and nationalist xenophobes. HZDS, argues Mesežníkov, has had from its inception an ‘unclear ideological profile’ without a discernible hint of evolution towards a known ideological paradigm. Indeed, HZDS does not appear to fit neatly into von Beyme’s typology (familles spirituelles) of political parties. The analyst,

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however, should be wary of assuming post-Communist countries can be fitted neatly into Western models. Just as post-Communist party systems are different\(^{557}\), so political parties in these countries are not carbon copies of Western European types.

Some Slovak academics have argued that Slovak politics is divided into two camps of ‘standard’ and ‘non-standard’ parties, with HZDS and its partners in the 1994-8 governing coalition as non-standard\(^{558}\). ‘Standard’ parties were those that could be placed on the standard left-right spectrum of West European politics. ‘Non-standard’ parties, in contrast, due to their populism, authoritarianism and anti-democratic nature could not be placed on the spectrum. Use of the terms standard and non-standard, however, has tended to be value-laden, (with standard parties as the good guys and non-standard parties as the bad guys), a manifestation of domestic political debate, with little heuristic value to the political scientist. Indeed if one were to assess ideology, structure, organization and programme, perhaps only KDH could be described as ‘standard’ in a West European sense.\(^{559}\)

The left-right distinction is problematic for examining CEE, partly because of the use of ‘nationalist tendencies’. Whilst an emphasis on community, culture and traditional values might place them on the right, nationalism can also involve


\(^{558}\) See, for example, Grigorij Mesežníkov, ‘Vývoj stranickeho systému na Slovensku’, *Politologické revue*, 2, 1, (1996), pp. 27-49

economic protectionism which would lead us to put them on the left.\textsuperscript{560} Moreover, as Markowski noted, the left tends to be associated with change and equality, but in the post-communist reality most of the impulses for change are associated with reducing equality.\textsuperscript{561} Nevertheless, the word centre often appears in relation to HZDS. Indeed, that is where many of the leading players locate the party\textsuperscript{562} and have done since its inception\textsuperscript{563}. HZDS was created in the spring of 1991 purportedly in response to the rightward drift of VPN.

After years of neglect, Reuven Hazan rescued the concept of the ‘centre’ from the heuristic dustbin. Hazan made a clear distinction between ‘centre’ and ‘middle’. ‘In the simplest terms, the centre party is a fixed, party-inferred concept, whereas the middle is an intermediate, party-defined term.’ A centre party can exist without another party to the left or right, but a middle party requires a party to both left and right. The centre party is an ‘ideologically positioned party which occupies the metrical centre of an ideological continuum’ applicable to all polities, ‘or is near it’.\textsuperscript{564} Hazan, however, does not spell out what ‘the metrical centre of an ideological continuum’ actually means. He relies heavily on the placement by experts of parties


\textsuperscript{561} Radoslaw Markowski, ‘Political Parties and Ideological Spaces in East Central Europe’, \textit{Communist and Post-Communist Studies}, 30, 3, (1997), pp. 221-54 (p223)

\textsuperscript{562} Miroslav Maxon (interviewed by the author Bratislava 3 April 2000) and Rudolf Žiak (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 21 March 2000).

\textsuperscript{563} See for example, \textit{Národná obroda}, 6 and 7 March 1991 p.1; and Húška’s comments in \textit{Slovenská republika}, 1 April 1996, p2.

on the ideological spectrum. The analyst is left to assume that a centre party is one which, in the words of Williams, 'endorses a policy package akin to that of the West German social market in its heyday'. Such a policy package is based on a belief in competition and the prosperity generating properties of the market, but balanced by a belief the state should provide a comprehensive system of social security.

In the early 1990s, the Independent Association of Economists of Slovakia (NEZES) had the ear of the highest ranks of HZDS. In addition to noises referring to low-inflation growth and competitiveness, NEZES emphasized the importance of the social aspect of the market. Stress was laid on an integrated state administrative centre, privatized enterprises formulating strategy in response to both the market and the state, and banks existing primarily to service enterprises in accordance with government policy and objectives. The ideas of NEZES were developed in the writings of Peter Staněk and Jana Čemáň. For Staněk (who became deputy finance minister in 1994-8 government) and Čemáň, the role of the state was to act both as a facilitator and protector. Finance Minister and HZDS politician, Sergej Kozlik, expressed similar sentiments during his trip to London in 1996. He told officials he was aiming for 80% of industry to be privatized by the end of 1997. He reiterated the party's expressed desire to keep the commanding heights of the economy

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567 Augustín Marián Húška, ‘Formovanie strategických predností’, Slovenská republika, 2 April 1996, p4
(energy, rail and telecom) in state hands\textsuperscript{568}, although he gave officials the impression he was persuaded by the arguments of leading British ministers, Michael Heseltine and Malcolm Rifkind, to extend privatization into these areas.\textsuperscript{569}

The government, in the Staněk and Černá model, was to provide advice, information, credit guarantees and energy-price controls. The state is not an economic safety blanket, but as an enabler. The 1994 HZDS manifesto, for instance, declares its support for all those who \textit{can} and \textit{want} to work. Those who do not wish to work were condemned and described as being to the detriment of honourable people.\textsuperscript{570} Central to the facilitator role of the state was the need to build infrastructure, particularly roads, not only to encourage east-west trade to travel through Slovakia, but also to create a network designed for the needs of Slovakia, not Czechoslovakia, or indeed the Austro-Hungarian empire.\textsuperscript{571} ‘Our economic advancement, the development of our economy, rising living standards and a fall in unemployment are not possible’, argued leading HZDS politician Roman Hofbauer in January 1997, ‘without a fundamental modernization of Slovakia’s infrastructure.’\textsuperscript{572}

At the heart of HZDS economic policy in the 1990s was a desire to construct and to safeguard a Slovak economic identity for the newly independent state. The 1994

\textsuperscript{568} HZDS, \textit{Programové tézy HZDS na VOLBY 1994} (1994) p26

\textsuperscript{569} For personal and professional reasons this source prefers to remain anonymous

\textsuperscript{570} HZDS, \textit{Programové tézy}, pp. 7, 10

\textsuperscript{571} \textit{ibid} pp. 37-42

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manifesto emphasized the benefits of privatization, but stressed the need to see the emergence of strong domestic industry.\textsuperscript{573} Foreign capital was welcomed, but it needed to be regulated and should be concentrated in new technologies, modernization and reconstruction of industries.\textsuperscript{574} Foreign participation was encouraged, therefore, ‘where it was necessary to further Slovak economic development’.\textsuperscript{575} The reality, however, was that only five out of 367 in 1995, dropping to two out of 400 in 1996, privatization decisions went the way of foreign applicants.\textsuperscript{576} HZDS politicians attacked foreign firms for not having the interests of Slovakia at heart. Roman Hofbauer, for example, used a column in Slovenská republika to criticize the sale of the state-run Prior department stores during the Čarnogurský government (1991-2). Originally sold to K-MART, the stores were subsequently bought by Tesco. The British firm had not promised low prices or to sell Slovak products, but then, argued Hofbauer, it was the owner and it could do as it wished even if that displayed indifference towards the interests of Slovakia.\textsuperscript{577}

Party manifestoes may not be sparkling works of literature (although they might be described as great works of fiction), but ‘...the official policy programme of a party is much closer to being an independent and authoritative source of its policy than is

\textsuperscript{573} HZDS, Programové tézy, pp. 23-4
\textsuperscript{574} ibid pp. 23-4
\textsuperscript{575} PROGRAMOVÉ VYHLÁSENIE vlády Slovenskej republiky (12 January 1995) p8, reprinted in supplement to Slovenská republika, 13 January 1995
\textsuperscript{577} Roman Hofbauer, 'Obchodné domy Prior-Kmart-Tesco ....?', Slovenská republika, 17 January 1997 reprinted in Hofbauer, Slovensko na križovatke pp. 26-7

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 anything else on offer’. HZDS’ 1994 manifesto is instructive for a number of reasons. The manifesto is divided into two sections. The first half lists ‘what Slovakia needs’ on the left-hand pages and ‘what HZDS will do’ on the right. The second half has quasi-religious overtones, outlining the desatoro (‘The Ten Commandments’) in each policy area. The long-term strategy of HZDS economic policy is to build a prosperous market economy and to integrate the Slovak economy into European structures.

It is not an ideological manifesto of the left or right, rather it is eclectic pick and mix of policies, at times lauding the merits of the free market and expressing a desire to achieve a fully functioning free market as soon as possible. Such enthusiasm sits uncomfortably alongside the expressed desire for an active sectoral industrial policy, an expansive and more generous fiscal policy and the importance ascribed to corporatist bodies such as the tripartite body of government, unions and business. Such eclecticism has not been unique in CEE. The leftist and rightist elements do balance out to leave HZDS in the centre, but its centrism has been laced with a dose of national protectionism. National protectionism was not a new element in 1994. The 1992 manifesto had declared the party’s aim to ‘defend’ domestic production.

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579 HZDS, *Programové tézy* 
580 *ibid* p14
581 HZDS, *Tézy volebného programu HZDS*, reprinted in supplement *Národná obroda*, 29 April 1992, pA
Many critics of HZDS suggest the party’s economic policy post-1994 has less to do with placement on the left-right placement and more to do with the underlying reality that HZDS is a party which systematically rewards its financial backers. Political alliances were ‘cemented by giveaway privatization’, argued Tetreault and Teske, in a similar way to Henry VIII’s method of amassing support in the sixteenth century by dissolving the monasteries. Szomolányi and Gould suggested HZDS derived much support from the ‘loose networks of industrial managers and former nomenklatura members who did extraordinary well in the privatization process.’

Until the 1994 election Slovakia continued to use Czechoslovakia’s preferred method of voucher privatization, but after the election direct sales became the norm. Authority over privatization decisions was transferred from a government ministry to the National Property Fund (FNM), a body which was controlled by the coalition. Milan Rehák, chair of HZDS in Trenčín, for instance, was FNM vice-president and president of its advisory board. The FNM sold off state-owned enterprises often for symbolic prices to people closely associated with the government. After 1994, argued Gould ‘privatization benefits were distributed through a coherent political and economic state-society network of patronage and political influence.’

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582 Peter Weiss (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 25 February 2000)
The evidence for the hidden (or at least obscured) agenda of HZDS to construct a political and economic state-society network of patronage and political influence can be gleaned from the numerous privatization scandals between 1994 and 1998. These scandals arguably highlight the real aims of HZDS' economic policy were not preparing Slovakia for membership of Western clubs such as the EU and the OECD, but rather designed to feather the nests of leading HZDS politicians and supporters. The *cause célèbre* was the privatization of Nafta Gbely, which *Plus 7 Dni* called 'the crime of the century'. On 1 August 1996 FNM decided on a direct sale of the entire non-privatized part (45.9%) of the company to a previously unknown concern, Druhá obchodna. Despite the interest of other potential investors such as Ruhrgas and OMV, FNM president and vice-chairman of ZRS, Štefan Gavorník, announced that price and credibility had been FNM's main criteria. Although the portion of Nafta Gbely's shares was estimated to be worth 3.2 billion crowns, the shares were sold for 500 million crowns to a company represented suspiciously by their lawyers at all meetings. It subsequently came to light one of the owners of Druhá Obchodna was Vladimír Poór chair of HZDS's regional board.

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586 This section is based largely on information in Gould, *Winners, Losers and the Institutional Effects of Privatization in the Czech and Slovak Republics*, and Viktor Nižňanský & Ol'ga Reptová (eds.), *10 Years of Privatisation in Slovakia*, Bratislava: MESA (2000) posted at www.mesa10.sk. This chapter will be restricted to the scandals involving HZDS.

587 'Štedrý tatko', *Plus 7 Dni*, (28 May 2001), pp. 46-8 (p46)

in Trnava. Other alleged owners include two leading HZDS figures, Ivan Gašparovič and Augustín Marián Húška.

The Nafta Gbely case, however, was not unique. Turčianské Papierne shares, for example, were sold to a company Slovak Hanco for 352 Sk per share, but Hanco immediately sold them on to an Austrian investor for 1000 Sk per share. The net profit for Hanco and the net loss for FNM was more than $1.13bn, which suggests either staggering incompetence or corruption. Moreover, in October 1996 a controlling stake in the mining concern, Baňa Záhorie, was sold to a company, Baňa Záhorie 1, which had been created just two days before the completion of the tender and run by two HZDS officials Miroslav Zachar and Ratislav Zbořil, for the nominal sum of one crown despite other bids running at 100-270 million crowns being lodged. Through the subsequent sale of their shares 18 months later, Zachar and Zbořil made a staggering 55 527 748 crowns profit; suggesting either remarkable management skills or the cheap price of the initial sale. At the very least the government’s action showed scant regard for the need for transparency in the privatization process. Such murky events proved a fertile ground for speculation even extending to how Mečiar had managed to fund his new house Elektra in Trenčianské Teplice. Slovakia’s privatization process, however, was not uniquely

591 See Narodná obroda, 27 March 2000 p11; ‘Imperium Vladimíra Mečiara sa rozrastá’, Sme Ľudia supplement, 30 April 2001, pp. 1, 2; ‘Boháč’, Plus 7 Dni, (28 May 2001), pp. 8-
plagued by scandals and tales of kick-backs. In the Czech Republic, for example, Milan Srejbar gave 7.5 million Czech crowns to Klaus’s ODS and was awarded control of one of the country’s large steel-makers soon afterwards.\footnote{592}

There is no question that enterprises were sold off cheaply in an opaque manner which favoured domestic buyers close to the government. Former economy minister Ján Ducký admitted ‘each government in the world gives to those who co-operate with it.’\footnote{593} Nevertheless, to see the entire process as corrupt would be incorrect. The desire to build a strong domestic economy and not lose all economic autonomy was a central concern to the HZDS-led government and has economic logic.\footnote{594} Mečiar attacked the notion a country has to privatize to foreign firms. For him that is not privatization, it is the transfer of ownership from one state to another.\footnote{595} The criticism levelled at the 1994-8 government should not, therefore, be that domestic firms were favoured, rather that the process was not transparent and that companies were sold off for fractions of their book value depriving Slovakia’s coffers of much needed cash. Mečiar justified the low prices on the basis that the companies would not be saddled with debts, but rather more money could be invested to promote the development of the company. He claimed this policy had ensured growth of 5-7%
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Such an explanation might be convincing if the process had been transparent, but the opaque nature of the privatization process makes such arguments sound like feeble after-the-event excuses. Nonetheless, selling off at below book value was not just a habit of the Mečiar-led government. Calculations made by Reptová and Valentovič have shown that purchase price as a percentage of book value was running at 96.80% and 95.55% in 1992 and 1993 respectively. The percentage began to slip in the first few months of 1994 during the second Mečiar-led government. Under the stewardship of Moravčík the percentage plumeted to 37.21%. This trend continued under the 1994-8 government. Between 1995 and 1998 purchase price as a percentage of book value slumped to a mere 28.15%. Equally, the Mečiar-led government was not acting uniquely in selling off state industries cheaply. Even the doyen of the free-market right, Margaret Thatcher, sold off large swathes of British industry cheaply. What distinguishes the two processes, however, is the lack of transparency in the Slovak example. For that alone the Mečiar-led government’s privatization policy deserves to be denounced. Since leaving office in 1998 leading HZDS politicians have acknowledged some mistakes, including the Nafta Gbely privatization, although the justification given is often encapsulated in one phrase: ‘Kto robi, ten robi aj chyby’ [He who does also makes mistakes].

It would be incorrect, however, to see the privatization process as purely

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596 ibid p171
597 Olga Reptová & Martin Valentovič, ‘Large Scale Privatisation’ in Nižňanský & Reptová (eds.), 10 Years of Privatisation in Slovakia
598 Criticism could also be leveled for other failings such as not committing new owners to injecting significant amounts of capital to transform Slovak enterprises.
599 See, for example, interview with Vojtěch Tkáč, Pravda, 16 March 2000, pp. 1, 6
government-led. An important role was played by the employers’ organization, AZZZ. ‘Initially wary of privatization, the industrialists embraced it once they were in a position to dictate conditions, so that foreigners and ordinary citizens would be excluded and management would be able to acquire firms for a fraction of their book value.’ AZZZ openly promoted the abolition of voucher privatization and expressed a belief that domestic applicants should be preferred. The organization’s president, Michal Lach, declared that the government’s privatization philosophy was ‘formulated jointly’ with AZZZ. The intimate connection between HZDS (and more generally Slovak government) and the employers’ organization is also demonstrated by the fact that every holder of the economics ministry from June 1992 to October was a member of either AZZZ or the Union of Industry (ZP) which dissolved into AZZZ in 1994.

A good sense of where a party sees itself can be discerned from the list of foreign political parties with which links have been formed. Representatives from a number of foreign parties attended the sixth annual HZDS congress in 1996. The list, however, was made up of parties such as Forza Italia, Our Home – Russia, the Polish People’s Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Moravian National Party. These links were not strong and had more to do with personal contacts between individuals than as part of a grand strategy. Nonetheless, the roll-call

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600 Williams, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-16 (p7)


602 Mikloš, ‘Pripojenie politickej a ekonomickej moci’, pp. 47-84 (p55); Williams, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-16 (p 7)

603 Slovenská republika, 25 March 1996, p1

604 Žiak interview, Hůska interview
highlights HZDS’s inability to join any of the large international party groupings. HZDS tried to join all three of the major groupings (Socialist, Liberal and Christian Democrat) in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe within a short space of time, but was rejected by all. Applying for three different groupings fostered the impression that HZDS was desperate to join a group, any grouping, rather than one representing deeply held convictions, and would tailor its policies accordingly. Other Slovak parties, in contrast, have formed international links. The Slovak Social Democratic Party (SDSS), for instance, was accepted into Socialist International before the 1992 elections. KDH has full membership of the European Democratic Union and the European Union of Christian Democrats. DÚ established links with the Liberal International (becoming a full member in 1996) and SDL became a member of the Socialist International in 1996.

(b) Nationalism and Its Place in the Ideology of HZDS

Nationalism, often with a juicy adjective tagged on the front is often attributed to HZDS and its leader. The place of nationalism, or what former agriculture minister and leading HZDS politician Peter Baco prefers to describe as ‘the national accent’, in HZDS ideology can be explained with reference to three issues: nationalism’s role in the break-up of Czechoslovakia, attitudes towards the Slovak wartime puppet state under Tiso, and attitude towards non-ethnic Slovaks. In all


three of these cases the intensity of the HZDS’ ‘national accent’ can be discerned by comparing the party to the Slovak National Party (SNS).

The *national question* i.e. the constitutional place of Slovakia within Czechoslovakia was at the heart of political debate when HZDS was formed in 1991. Indeed many who joined HZDS disagreed with the policies based on strict federal principles advocated by Fedor Gál’s wing of VPN. They wanted greater Slovak autonomy. In contrast to SNS, HZDS did not advocate Slovak independence in the 1992 elections, rather Slovak equality was championed. A purely functional power-driven view of Mečiar’s nationalism, such as Abby Innes’s, or that expressed by HZDS’ opponents is unhelpful. Political entrepreneurs seek to maximize political power and would do anything to achieve it. It is hard to image HZDS advocating the reverse position i.e. less Slovak autonomy if opinion polls had suggested that option was more popular. Nonetheless, the language of Mečiar and HZDS on the national question positioned the party’s sails in such a way as to catch the strong nationalist winds and carry the party on towards power. Since Slovak independence Mečiar has been more than happy to project himself as the father of the nation.

The wartime Slovak state (1939–45) under the leadership of Jozef Tiso has been roundly condemned both within Slovakia and abroad thanks to its complicity in the

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607 Jozef Moravčík (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 7 May 2001)
608 discussed in the previous chapter
609 SDL and SDSS attacked HZDS for being purely and simply ‘eager for power’ see Jozef Migaš and Jaroslav Wolf, ‘Common Information about the Political Situation in Slovakia’, statement sent to the Socialist Group in the European Parliament (9 October 1997)
Nonetheless, the Tiso regime, for some Slovaks, is to be celebrated because it was the only time prior to 1993 in the last thousand years that Slovaks had their own state. In response to Ján Slota’s proposal in February 2000 for the erection of a commemorative plaque to Tiso in Žilina, HZDS seemed reluctant to express a party line (although its local representatives along with one member of SDL backed Slota’s suggestion), preferring to use the issue to attack Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda. Ten years earlier (before the creation of HZDS), Mečiar had been outspoken in his criticism of a Tiso plaque in Bánovce-nad-Bebravou in July 1990. Supporters of the plaque included SNS politicians and many from KDH. ‘Everyone who is serious about the protection of civil rights and liberties’, he declared during his weekly TV address, ‘must therefore stand up and resist this wave [of Tiso’s retaliation] in the name of our democracy.’ Of the usable events of Slovak history, HZDS politicians have been keener to emphasize the Slovak National Rising (SNP) against the Nazis in 1944. (There would be a logical inconsistency in elevating the 1944 rising to the status of a heroic event and simultaneously glorifying the wartime puppet state.) Although the SNP was used extensively by the Communists, the 1944 rising remains the historical event of which Slovaks are most proud. A cynical popularity/power driven view might suggest this fact explains HZDS’ enthusiasm for the SNP, but there is no evidence to back-up such an assertion.

610 see chapter 2
611 Sme, 4 March 2000, p1
612 Národná obroda, 16 July 1990, p1
613 See, for example, Hofbauer, Slovensko na križovatke, p11
In its 1994 manifesto HZDS devotes an entire section to the national minority question. Whilst stating its desire to uphold European standards in this field, the manifesto continues by stressing that collective rights for national minorities are 'not just for Slovakia, but for Europe as a whole.' Moreover, the manifesto is keen to emphasize the principle of reciprocity in neighbouring countries where ethnic Slovaks live. Slovakia's largest ethnic minority, accounting for approximately 11% of the Slovak population, is the ethnic Hungarian population concentrated largely on Slovakia's southern border. The most vehement anti-Hungarian language tends to emanate from the mouths of SNS politicians (former SNS leader Ján Slota notoriously called for tanks to be sent to Budapest), but HZDS politicians have not been averse to tapping into anti-Hungarian sentiment, although their anti-Hungarian rhetoric was toned down after the ethnic Hungarians backed away from demands for territorial autonomy and following the election victory of Gyula Horn (who was seen to be more moderate) in Hungary in May 1994. Nevertheless, during the 1994 election campaign a HZDS leaflet declared unambiguously: 'Who does not vote for HZDS is voting for Hungarian autonomy.' Such rhetoric went down well with HZDS supporters. According to Wyman et al's research conducted in 1993 around 40% of HZDS supporters 'would ban ethnic Hungarian parties...' The feeling, however, was mutual: 'around a third of Hungarian party supporters' in

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615 HZDS, Programové tézy, p83
616 Sharon Fisher, 'The Rise and Fall of National Movements in Slovakia and Croatia', Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs, 1, 2, (Fall 2000), pp. 12-23 (p20)
617 Zuzana Hud'ová (ed.), 5 rokov HZDS v tlací, Odbor verejnej mienky kancelarie HZDS (1996) p79
Slovakia would ban HZDS.\textsuperscript{618} HZDS has not been alone in using the Hungarian issue to bolster popularity, as the recent examples of Róbert Fico\textsuperscript{619} and the spat between Pavol Koncoš and Béla Búgar demonstrate.\textsuperscript{620}

Dislike of the Romany population is widespread in Slovakia, even amongst those who would be classified as liberals. It is a disdain ingrained into the Slovak language. One of the Slovak words for to lie/cheat (\textit{cigánit}) is even derived from the common (and derogatory) noun for a gypsy (\textit{Cigán}). Some HZDS politicians have been open in their hostility. Health minister Lubomír Javorský, for example, told a party rally in October 1995 that the government ‘will do everything to ensure’ more white than Romany children are born.\textsuperscript{621} As with treatment of the ethnic Hungarians, the language of HZDS’ politicians never reached the venom of SNS. Ján Slota, for instance, once remarked that the solution to the ‘gypsy problem’ was a ‘long whip and a small yard’.\textsuperscript{622} Indeed interviews conducted by Peter Vermeersch suggests Romany politicians look upon SNS politicians in a much more negative light than those from HZDS. Roma activists are, and have been, divided on political strategy, ‘but they are more or less united on one thing: SNS is anti-Roma.’\textsuperscript{623} HZDS should be credited with the fact that two Roma, Ján Kompus


\textsuperscript{620} For a fuller account see Marian Leško, ‘Čo SDL žiadá od koalície, potrebuje koalícia od SDL’, \textit{Sme}, 24 March 2000, p3


\textsuperscript{622} Quoted in \textit{The Economist}, 7 November 1998, (web edition)

\textsuperscript{623} The author is grateful to Peter Vermeersch for sharing the fruits of his research
and Jozef Ravasz, were on its candidate list for the 1998 elections. The agreement was, for both sides, little more a marriage of convenience. For Kompus and Ravaszs, who were active in small Romany parties, the decision to run on the HZDS ticket was motivated primarily by money. For HZDS, allowing the two well-known Romany politicians to benefit from the financial resources of the party was more than offset by the perceived electoral advantage.

(c) Christianity and its place in HZDS Ideology

Although not a specifically religious party, HZDS invokes Christianity on occasions. In the introduction to the 1994 HZDS manifesto, for example, Vladimir Mečiar lauds the ‘Christian value system’, before he writes of a desire to provide ‘work, prosperity, peace, security and opportunity for all’. A loose Christian grouping centred around HZDS vice chairman Augustín Marián Húška laced many of its pronouncements with references to Catholicism or more commonly the tradition of Cyril and Methodius (who brought Christianity to Slovakia and much of central Europe). Whilst HZDS is described as an association of citizens from all nationalities and religious denominations in the first article of the party’s stanovy adopted in March 1996, for example, the article continues invoking the spirit of Cyril and Methodius as one of the movement’s building blocks. The emphasis throughout the party’s literature is on Christianity rather than Catholicism. The 1994 manifesto, for example, declares not only the party’s support for the creation of Roman Catholic archbishoprics in Bratislava and Košice, but also a Greco-Catholic archbishopric in Prešov.

624 HZDS, Programové tézy, p1
625 Stanovy Hnutia za demokratické Slovensko, adopted March 1996; also SNS stanovy
626 HZDS, Programové tézy, p87
Christianity has never, however, been systematically incorporated into the party's ideology. For HZDS Catholicism appears to be little more than a popular ideological relish. Given the number of electors who declare themselves to be believers\textsuperscript{627}, it would be distinctly odd for a party proclaiming to represent the interests of ordinary Slovaks not to put Catholicism somewhere into its proclamations. There are numerous genuine Christians within HZDS, not least Húška himself, and it would be incorrect to suggest the rhetoric of Catholicism was adopted purely for functional reasons. Nonetheless, HZDS has not been averse to tapping into the popularity of strong Christian symbols for political ends most notably during the papal visit to Slovakia in 1995.

A measure of the fervency of HZDS's Catholicism can be made if we compare HZDS to another of Slovakia's parties, the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH). Examining the speeches of Mečiar\textsuperscript{628} and the KDH's Ján Čarnogurský, who led their respective parties throughout the 1990s, it is clear that the difference in the degree of their beliefs is more than just a superficial difference of names. From the founding congress of KDH in Nitra in February 1990 onwards, Čarnogurský began


\textsuperscript{628} A good collection of Mečiar's speeches can be found in the pages of HZDS' official newspaper, Slovensko do toho!
his conference speeches with a few minutes on a religious theme. Although stopping short of declaring KDH to be a party purely for Catholics, he left the party faithful in no doubt what was the importance of Christianity. Moreover, he told his collected troops at a congress in Žilina in November 1991 that Christianity is the ‘source of our internal stability, the inspiration for our decisions and the source of our supporters.’

Organization

(a) Mečiar

Since its formation in 1991 the party has become, in the eyes of many, synonymous with its founder and leader, Vladimír Mečiar. One journalist declared unambiguously, ‘...his movement for a democratic Slovakia will break up the moment he leaves politics’. There is a tendency to view HZDS as little more than a band of Mečiar-loving devotees and the leader as omnipotent. Fish, for example, portrayed other HZDS politicians, including the party’s cabinet ministers, as little more than hapless and obedient lap dogs. Mečiar’s absolute control of his party appeared to be confirmed at the Trnava congress in March 2000. HZDS adopted new stanovy which give the chairman (i.e. Mečiar himself) the exclusive right to nominate vice-chairmen, a power he utilized to get the virtually unknown Jozef Božík elected as the party’s vice-chairman for media at the congress in

631 See for example Juraj Marušiak, ‘Verte strane, aj keby išlo o hnutie’, Pravda, 31 March 2000, p4
Trnava. Mečiar himself was re-elected almost unanimously, just a single delegate abstained, one Vladimír Mečiar.

To a high-ranking official who had frequent contact with the former Prime Minister, 'Mečiar controlled his party totally.' It is undeniably true that many rank-and-file HZDS members could be categorized as slavish supporters of their leader, but it would be incorrect to tar all HZDS members with the same brush. HZDS is not a monolithic organization, although the party has become less diverse since its inception, most notably after the two waves of defectors left in March 1993 and February 1994.

What is undeniable is that HZDS has increasingly (but not uniformly) become Mečiar’s party. Given Mečiar’s role as founder of the party, the history of HZDS appears to conform with Angelo Panebianco’s thesis that the founding moments and the formative phase of a party are central to understanding how a party functions. Indeed, HZDS accords well with Panebianco’s notion of a ‘charismatic party’. In such a party the leader is the fount of policy and patronage and party power relations are unequivocally skewed towards him or her. Mečiar led the defectors from VPN and was the focal point of the movement in those crucial founding moments of HZDS.

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633 For personal and professional reasons this source prefers to remain anonymous.
635 *ibid* pp. 143-62
A sense of where a particular politician figures in a party can be discerned from a party’s publications. In a commemorative publication celebrating HZDS’ fifth birthday in 1996 the largest section is a montage of photos of Mečiar with a wide variety of notables ranging from The Pope to Margaret Thatcher. His face also dominates throughout the remainder of the publication. No other HZDS member gets even a tenth of the coverage, although the former chairman of parliament and HZDS bigwig, Ivan Gašparovič, gets a significant amount. Other politicians such as Tibor Cabaj, Ján Ducký, Ol'ga Keltošová, Augustín Marián Húška and Katarina Tóthova also feature, but nowhere near the extent of HZDS’ leader. A publication full of ‘truths about Slovakia’ given to this author by the Head of HZDS’ International Section contained no less than 13 photographs of Mečiar in the first 23 pages. Only one HZDS minister appears, Zdenka Kramplová, and her face graces the magazine, just once.

Rivals to the party leadership in HZDS and many other Slovak parties have often taken the ‘exit’ option and formed new parties. The Democratic Union (DÚ), for instance, was formed in the spring of 1994 by defectors from both HZDS and SNS. Moravčík and his group were concerned about the ‘deformation of executive power’ in Slovakia. Moravčík suggested that he and his group of defectors were considering leaving the party even before independence. It was not just a case of

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637 Europa Vincet, 5-6, (1998)
Mečiar’s political style, but also the content of his policies in general, including foreign affairs and privatization.639

(b) the party in parliament- the Gaulieder Affair

Although the role of parliament will be discussed in the chapter on institutions an understanding of party cohesion requires an examination of the Gaulieder affair. Despite the ‘letters of commitment’, similar to those used by parties during the First Republic640, which HZDS had asked all its candidates in the June 1992 elections to sign in order to maintain cohesion, the second Mečiar-led government fell in February/March 1994 thanks to defections from both HZDS and its coalition partner, SNS. In response to the inability of HZDS to maintain cohesion in its parliamentary party641, the HZDS leadership imposed a requirement that all candidates sign a document pledging to pay five million crowns (equivalent to ten times an deputy’s salary) in the event they wanted to leave HZDS and remain in parliament for the duration of their mandate. This requirement was brought starkly into focus during the Gaulieder affair in October 1996 when deputy František Gaulieder announced his intention to resign from HZDS, but remain an MP. The HZDS leadership, however, blocked his attempt to sit in parliament on the basis of a letter allegedly written by Gaulieder resigning as a member of parliament. Gaulieder denied writing the letter.642 Although the chairman of parliament’s Mandate and Immunity Committee Anton Poliak (a member of HZDS’ coalition

639 Jozef Moravčík (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 7 May 2001)
641 Darina Malová, ‘Neľahká inštitucionálizácia parlamentnej demokracie na Slovensku’, Politologický revue, 1, (June 1998), pp. 47-9
642 František Gaulieder (interviewed by the author, Galanta, 21 June 2000)
partner ZRS) agreed the letter was a fake, 77 of the 136 deputies present voted in early December to accept the resignation of Gaulieder and replace him with Ján Belan. The case was referred to the Constitutional Court, which found in Gaulieder’s favour, ruling that the decision to strip him of his seat was unconstitutional. In the subsequent months Parliament’s Mandate and Immunity Committee dominated by the coalition parties refused to restore his seat. To high-ranking members of HZDS, such as the then deputy chairman of both parliament and HZDS, Augustín Marián Húska, however, the Gaulieder case boiled down purely and simply to the importance of maintaining party cohesion. In terms of party cohesion, the importance of the Gaulieder affair was that it ‘sent a strong warning to any other HZDS member who might wish to follow suit’. No other HZDS deputy tried to follow in Gaulieder’s footsteps. Not only did the decision not to restore Gaulieder’s mandate harden the position of West, (the US Department of State, for instance, described the action as a ‘serious step backward in Slovakia’s democratic development.’), some commentators saw the decision as the moment Slovakia crossed the rubicon and torpedoed the legal state in Slovakia.

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643 Húska interview
645 There was much discussion in the media about possible defectors. See, for example, ‘Gauliedera nasledovaf nemieni’, *Plus 7 Dni*, (10 December 1996) pp. 12-3; ‘Nie zradca, iba kritik?’, *Plus 7 Dni*, (11 May 1998)
647 Samuel Abrahám, ‘Pripad Gaulieder a právne vedomie na Slovensku’, *Sme*, 7 March 2000, p4
It would be incorrect to single out HZDS for criticism for running a top down parliamentary party. Not only did other parties ask their candidates to sign letters of commitment in the 1992 elections, but many of the larger parties such as SDL and KDH established procedures for overseeing deputies and monitoring their performance in parliament on issues which result in party-line voting, general participation, work on committees and activity on the floor. The results of these reviews can serve as a social pressure mechanism and can be used as a clear internal standard influencing the future placement of a deputy on a party list with a high or low location on that list. Nevertheless, HZDS did differ from other parties in one important respect: whilst other parties allowed deputies to leave whilst retaining their mandates, HZDS violated the constitution.

(c) The party outside parliament

Throughout the 1990s outside parliament, HZDS had a formal structure similar to most other parties in the country, only better developed. The structure and organization of political parties and movements in Slovakia are subject to one main law and three subsequent amendments. All parties are required by law to have stanovy (statues). For most of the period under consideration in this thesis HZDS was governed by stanovy which were adopted by the republic level congress in March 1994 with modifications in March 1996 to conform with the re-organization of public administration in Slovakia.

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648 Malová, ‘Slovakia’, pp. 413-21
The vertical structures of Slovak parties, with the exception of SDK, are remarkably similar, built formally on the principle of building from below. There are four levels: (a) miestná (local) or mestská (town); (b) okresná (district, of which there are 79); (c) krajská (region, of which there are eight); and (d) a national level. At each level, there are constituent organs (meetings, conferences etc.), executive organs (committees, councils etc.), and organs of control and revision. HZDS' republic level constituent organ meets once every two years (as does SDSS, SDL and DÚ) compared to SMK's and KDH's annual meetings.

Many parties in Slovakia, such as The Democratic Party (DS) had poorly developed regional structures in the 1990s, in some cases they hardly existed at all. Many of these parties were internally created 'top-down parties' which originated from parliament or at the elite level. Statistics from 1999 show the majority of Slovakia's parliamentary parties in 1999, including HZDS, had at least one full-time official in each region. In addition, figures show HZDS has one official with use of a party car in every one of Slovakia's 79 districts. HZDS also has the largest number of paid employees. The two other Slovak parties with well developed structures are SDL and KDH. The latter's well-developed structure has much to do with its links to the Catholic Church and the former benefited from the organizational structure built up during SDL's previous incarnation, the Communist Party.

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650 Marika Ondruchová, ‘Faktory formovania organizácie politických strán a hnutí v SR’, unpublished diplomová práca, Department of Political Science, Philosophical Faculty, Comenius University, Bratislava (2000) pp. 55-63

651 Mair, What is Different About Post-Communist Party Systems?, p12
4.3 Number of Paid Employees of Slovak Parties 1998-9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HZDS</th>
<th>SDL’</th>
<th>SNS</th>
<th>KDH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party HQ</td>
<td>50-80</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>136-166</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45-65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even the weekly *grémium*, which was constituted of a handful of politicians holding executive posts in the party (chair, vice-chairs etc.) and in theory the most powerful executive party organ, was in practice by its own members’ admission, ‘basically a debating club’. Although Húşka was keen to deny the idea that Mečiar was omnipotent in *grémium* discussions, he conceded the party chair was a very powerful force. Húška paints a picture of the *grémium* where debate could take place. When the decision was made to depart from the second wave of coupon privatization, for example, Húška proposed two alternative strategies which were discussed in the *grémium*. The *grémium* was often in Húška’s words a ‘pre-debating club’ where policy alternatives were raised, but decisions were not taken. Moravčík suggested even Húška’s debating club portrayal exaggerates its power. The *grémium* according to him did not even play an important role in 1992-4 government, because it ‘defended Mečiar’ and offered no criticism and no debate. Only when Mečiar did not offer an opinion did the *grémium* have anything approaching an open debate.

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652 Ondruchová, ‘Faktory formovania organizácie politických strán a hnutí v SR’, pp. 65-7
653 Húška interview
654 ibid
655 ibid
656 ibid
The extensive formal structure of the party belies the fact that the leader and founder of HZDS appears to have played more than just the leadership role played by other party leaders such as Peter Weiss and Jozef Migaš in SDL, or Ján Slota in SNS. Mečiar has become in many respects the physical embodiment of his party and all it stands for; a position similar to Václav Klaus, Mečiar's partner in the division of Czechoslovakia and head of the Czech Civic Democratic Party. Perhaps the only Slovak party leader who has played a similar role in his party during the 1990s was Ján Čarnogurský. KDH, however, has shown it can survive without Čarnogurský at the helm, but it is a moot point whether HZDS could continue without Mečiar at the helm.

(e) party finance

Since independence HZDS has been amongst the wealthiest political parties in Slovakia. In 1998, for example, HZDS owned property worth 96 970 000 Slovak crowns, almost twice as much as second placed SDL (53 236 000 crowns). The value of other parties' property, such as SDK, SOP, SMK and KDH amounted to less than a tenth of the figure for HZDS. Equally, HZDS' income in 1998 far exceeded other political parties in Slovakia. HZDS received 111 104 000 crowns in 1998, compared to SDL's 58 772 000, SDK's 58 279 000 and SOP's 31 028 000 crowns.657

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657 Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, 256 Informácia o predložené výročných finančných správ politických strán a politických hnutí za rok 1998, supplement 7, Bratislava, (May 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>199 000</td>
<td>2 392 000</td>
<td>2 274 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DÚ</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6 003 000</td>
<td>9 649 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>10 505 000</td>
<td>10 541 000</td>
<td>6 855 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>20 215 000</td>
<td>66 355 000</td>
<td>111 104 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDK</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>58 279 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDL</td>
<td>15 017 000</td>
<td>18 481 000</td>
<td>58 772 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMK</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>27 079 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>3 915 000</td>
<td>5 328 000</td>
<td>24 171 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOP</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>31 028 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZRS</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>7 025 000</td>
<td>1 814 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Money pours into the coffers of Slovak political parties from four sources: state subvention, membership dues, individual donations and receipts from the party’s own activity. Out of 52 registered parties in 1998, HZDS was one of eight parties (including SMK, KDH, DS, SNS, SDSS) to register anonymous contributions. HZDS anonymous contributions totalled 39 807 000 crowns far higher than any other party (the next highest was SDSS with 4 005 000 crowns).\(^{659}\)


\(^{659}\) Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, 256 Informácia o predložené výročných finančných správ politických strán a politických hnutí za rok 1998, supplement 6
4.5 Parties in Receipt of Anonymous Contributions in 1998\textsuperscript{660}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Anonymous Contributions (Sk)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>2 119 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDSS</td>
<td>4 005 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>168 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>2 420 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMK</td>
<td>729 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>39 807 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Béčko – revolučná robotnicka strana</td>
<td>10 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDK</td>
<td>540 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The identity and motivations of anonymous contributors to various Slovak political parties, including HZDS, remain unclear, although a fertile ground for barroom speculation. The relationships between numerous Slovak political parties, including HZDS, and powerful interest groups, businesses and organized crime have been the subject of much discussion in the media.\textsuperscript{661} Many close to, or associated with, HZDS have been involved in dirty dealings.\textsuperscript{662} Former party member and minister, Milan Kňažko, now a trenchant critic of the party described HZDS as a ‘semi-mafia and terrorist organization’.\textsuperscript{663} Rather than accuse Slovak parties of being controlled by undisclosed forces, for which there is no irrefutable (although plenty of circumstantial) evidence, this chapter will merely state that many Slovak parties,

\textsuperscript{660} ibid

\textsuperscript{661} See, for example, Marián Leško, ‘Zaujem štátu a strany alebo zaujmovej skupinovy?’, \textit{Sme}, 9 May 2000, p5 On alleged HZDS links with the underworld see, for instance, Marián Leško, ‘Čo robil Gustav Krajčí v kauze M. Černák’, \textit{Sme}, 28 January 2000, p9.

\textsuperscript{662} See, for example, ‘Boss košického HZDS František C. je obvinený, že s Milanom B. poškodil VSŽ o 125 miliónov’, \textit{Sme}, 2 March 2000, p2

\textsuperscript{663} \textit{Sme}, 29 February 2000
including HZDS, have failed to provide a sufficiently open and transparent account of their finances to remove the cloud of suspicion from over their heads.

(d) Membership

Since 1994, HZDS has had the largest membership of any political party in Slovakia.

4.6 Membership of Four of Slovakia’s Most Popular Parties Since Independence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>30 000</td>
<td>40 000</td>
<td>28 320</td>
<td>40 000</td>
<td>50 000</td>
<td>70 000</td>
<td>73 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDL</td>
<td>48 000</td>
<td>27 600</td>
<td>24 000</td>
<td>27 600</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>22 200</td>
<td>21 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>7 000</td>
<td>2 000</td>
<td>3 800</td>
<td>4 900</td>
<td>8 900</td>
<td>11 500</td>
<td>13 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>26 352</td>
<td>27 888</td>
<td>26 386</td>
<td>28 265</td>
<td>30 106</td>
<td>29 541</td>
<td>27 348</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*figure unavailable*

Party membership is important for a number of reasons. For many European parties, membership fees are still an important source of revenue. In 1998, however, membership contributions accounted for less than one percent of HZDS’ income, in comparison with 45% of KDH’s and 5% of SDL’s revenue. State subventions, in contrast, accounted for 63% of HZDS’ income as opposed to 47% for KDH and

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58% for SDL due to each party’s success at the ballot box. Membership, therefore, does not raise relatively that much money for HZDS. One could suggest that because of state subventions membership is degraded, because the central organs of the party are not dependent on membership, rather the local bodies are dependent on handouts from the centre providing another nail in the coffin of influence of ordinary member. An overemphasis on the pecuniary, however, is unhelpful. Members are important for parties in organizational and political terms. The fact that former HZDS vice-chairman, Rudolf Žiak, stressed that ‘the number of members is not that important, what we want is active members’ seems to bear that out. Members are important for the ‘image of a mass party, and as proof that they are seen as viable channels for political representation. Members in this sense are also legitimizers.’ Indeed, the fact that in the 1990s the basic annual HZDS membership fee was a mere 20 crowns ($0.45) and some low-income groups such as students and the retired were often exempt, suggests that members were not seen as a financial resource. Parties like to boast of large and expanding memberships, particularly those such as HZDS which dabble in populism. A party projecting itself as the party of the people needs to have a large membership to distinguish it from the elite-run parties. Such a desire was part of the motivation for the membership drive within the workforce of Slovak steel giant, VSŽ, in the run-up to the 1998

666 Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, 256 Informácia, supplement 7
667 Žiak interview
668 Mair, ‘Party Organization’, p15
669 Contrast to Wyman et al’s view that thanks to television the ‘the priority for newly established parties becomes the search for votes rather than the attempt to construct a mass membership base.’ See Wyman, White, Miller & Heywood, ‘The Place of “Party” in Post-Communist Europe’, pp. 535-48 (p536)
election, to get membership of HZDS up to 100 000. Subscriptions appear to be low, therefore, mainly to foster an expansion of membership. HZDS politicians are very proud to inform all who care to listen of the size of their membership, as a sign of the party’s political virility.

**HZDS and Mečiar’s Role in Determining the Slovak Sonderweg**

The questions posed at the beginning of this chapter were intended to focus attention on aspects of HZDS which need to be taken into consideration in order to understand Slovakia’s political trajectory and Mečiar’s role in determining that path. Employing the concepts of ‘constraint’ and ‘opportunity’, it appears clear the party provided Mečiar with more of an opportunity than a constraint. The extensive party apparatus and the centrist political appeal helped HZDS connect with a wide section of the Slovak electorate (the reception of HZDS’ appeal will be examined in chapter seven). Within the party, Mečiar was a dominant figure. Almost all of those who disagreed with him either remained quiet or left to form new parties. Some dissenting voices, most notably Keltošová’s, remained after 1994, but she was more of an exception than the rule.

HZDS’ programme, with its emphasis on the Slovak national interest, Christianity and managed economic reform was designed to appeal to a wide spectrum of voters. As this chapter has suggested, however, talk of placing Slovakia on a particular path of economic reform based on a newly privatized strong domestic

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670 HZDS politicians had long before bandied about the 100 000 figure. See, for example, Slovenská republika, 25 March 1996, p 2.

671 Olga Keltošová (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 18 April 2000)
sector appears, in some respects, to be a mask to cover another agenda motivated by the financial self-interest of leading HZDS politicians and their associates. HZDS’ electoral success placed the party and its leader at the centre of Slovak politics and accorded Mečiar a powerful position from which he could steer Slovakia along his chosen path. His power base, however, was limited by the constraints imposed by his coalition partners, to which this thesis now turns.
The start of Slovakia’s deviation from the central European variant of transition, argues Szomolányi, was the creation of the 1994-8 government. Although Szomolányi does not use the term, she sees a clear example of a ‘critical juncture’ to borrow the path dependency terminology discussed in chapter one. Although concern had been expressed by international bodies prior to autumn 1994, it was the policies enacted after the 1994 elections which provoked the diplomatically unusual step of the issuing of dernarches by the EU and the USA and Slovakia’s subsequent exclusion from joining the first wave of NATO and EU applicants. Although it would be foolish to suggest everything was rosy in independent Slovakia prior to October 1994, the policies and style of the 1994-8 government marked a clear change in Slovak politics. In order to assess Mečiar’s role in determining the Slovak Sonderweg, it is therefore incumbent on those who wish to understand the path taken by Slovakia to examine three themes in some detail:

1. Why did the HZDS/SNS/ZRS government come into existence? What compromises did Mečiar have to make in order to form the government?

2. How did the coalition function? Who made the decisions and where were these decisions taken? Was Mečiar the dominant or omnipotent player in decision-making?

3. How does an understanding of the formation and functioning of the 1994-8 coalition help us to understand Slovakia’s political trajectory?

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672 Soňa Szomolányi, Kľučatá cesta Slovenska k demokracii, Bratislava: STIMUL (1999) p57
The Formation of the 1994-8 Government

Political scientists have attempted to explain how and why particular coalitions come into existence by focussing on either ‘policy’ or ‘office’ as the actors’ motivating force.\(^{673}\) William Riker’s pioneering study employed game theory to analyse coalition formation.\(^{674}\) He saw the politics of coalition as a constant sum game played for the fixed prize of holding office. In true game theory style, he saw the payoffs between the parties as being denominated in cabinet seats. Riker’s account, however, took no account of the policy preferences of those involved in bargaining. Rather, he followed Anthony Downs’ line of thinking. ‘Parties formulate policies’, argued Downs, ‘in order to win elections.’\(^{675}\) Politics, in contrast to debating societies, is all about gaining, retaining and exercising power. Few politicians enter the world of politics without at least the intention of holding office. Whilst one could make a strong case some politicians are interested in office \textit{per se}, however, and one \textit{could} make a case to suggest the formation of the current (1998-) Slovak governing coalition (SDK, SDL, SMK, SOP) was to a great extent driven by what the parties now constituting the opposition (at the time of coalition formation they were the government) might have done had they remained in power, one would be standing on very shaky ground. Policy does matter; at least to some


extent. Even Austen-Smith and Jeffrey Banks, who forward an office-seeking model, assume politicians cannot ignore policy, because they will have to defend their policies at subsequent elections. 676

'[T]he parliamentary game', argued Abram de Swaan 'is, in fact, about the determination of major policy.' 677 Laver and Shepsle attacked such policy-seeking theories by maintaining: 'in practice it is not policy agreements that come into being, but government.' 678 Babies, however, should not be thrown out with the bathwater. Governments cannot come into existence without a common platform of policies. Even the government coalition formed in Slovakia in the aftermath of the September 1998 elections, had a common policy programme, despite the fact that it was formed mainly to provide the country with an alternative government.

In essence, it seems reasonable to concur with an approach that attempts to combine the two elements, such as the one forwarded by Axelrod. He sees policy compatibility between parties in the coalition formation process as a significant element in the bargaining process, but he retains the belief that office seeking is the overriding motivation of politicians. 679 'In reality, of course, parties if not

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677 Abram de Swaan, *Coalition Theories and Cabinet Formation*, Amsterdam: Elsevier (1973) p88

678 Laver & Schofield, *Multiparty Government*, p112

individual politicians may be multi-dimensional in their motivation with a complex mix of office-seeking and policy drive.\textsuperscript{680}

Laver and Shepsle place portfolio distribution at the heart of their account of the ‘making and breaking of governments’.\textsuperscript{681} They argue ‘the defining characteristic of a government’ is the ‘allocation of cabinet portfolios between political parties.’\textsuperscript{682} In their eyes, the salient features of their model of government formation are: policy-motivated parties; a lattice of feasible governments; a status quo government; a sequential process by which status quo government may be replaced; common knowledge permitting each actor to exercise rational foresight; and no exogenous enforcement of deals between parties.\textsuperscript{683}

The notion of the ‘equilibrium cabinet’ is central to Laver and Shepsle’s conception of politics. Once an equilibrium cabinet is formed it ‘stays formed because no political actor with the ability to act in such a way as to bring down the cabinet and replace it with some alternative has the incentive to do so.’\textsuperscript{684} A further distinction is made between ‘attractive’ (which comes into being even when not the status quo) and ‘retentive’ equilibrium.\textsuperscript{685}

\textsuperscript{680} Geoffrey Pridham, ‘Coalitional Behaviour in New Democracies of Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Slovakia’, unpublished paper, Bristol University (2001)
\textsuperscript{682} \textit{ibid} p49
\textsuperscript{683} \textit{ibid} p112
\textsuperscript{684} \textit{ibid} p61
\textsuperscript{685} \textit{ibid} p61
The notion of equilibrium in Laver and Shepsle’s model is problematic. Warwick’s extensive statistical test showed an equilibrium government was only formed in 30.8% of situations where one could be formed. Laver and Shepsle attacked this number. They noted that if there were only one alternative to the equilibrium prediction, 31% would be a very poor figure, but if there are over a thousand other alternatives a 31% hit-rate ‘is little short of brilliant’. Their own calculation suggest there was a 5% probability of their model getting a prediction right by chance, but the actual success of the very strong party was 70%.

Portfolio allocation theory suffers from other drawbacks. Laver and Shepsle’s model is built up on a policy preference lattice of finance and foreign policy. Although in most polities these may be the most important policy areas for all parties, it is a large leap to assume they will be the most important for all. Moreover, as Warwick noted, the defining role of portfolio allocation rests on the assumptions that each dimension of the policy space is governed by a particular portfolio and the policy position proposed for each dimension must correspond with party assigned relevant portfolio. Portfolios, however, rarely constitute water-tight containers. The economics and finance portfolios, for example, frequently overlap. A more damning criticism, however, is Laver and Shepsle’s downplaying of the role of the prime minister. Laver and Shepsle, virtually ignore the

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688 Warwick, ‘Ministerial Autonomy or Ministerial Accommodation?’, pp. 369-94 (p370)
prime minister leads the government. (S)he can dabble
and meddle in other ministers’ activities, slow down or speed up the pace of policy-
making, and may have exclusive control over sensitive areas of policy. All
contracting parties in coalition formation know this reality. Moreover, although
their model focuses on the making of governments, Laver and Shepsle do not take
sufficient consideration of the common policy programme hammered out by the
parties during the coalition negotiations. These formal programmes are ‘negotiated
line by line just like a major party manifesto’ and can, as in the case of NATO
and Sitek, commit the government to a policy at odds with the party policy of the
minister who holds the post. The view of ministers as departmental barons also fails
to appreciate the role of state secretaries (in effect deputy ministers), particularly if
they have a different party allegiance.

Although Laver and Shepsle’s model is problematic their approach brought a much
needed sophistication to coalition formation theory and raises important themes.
Their stress on ‘strong parties’ rather than centre parties, for example, is helpful

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689 Jean Blondel, ‘Introduction’ in Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (eds.),
(p10)
690 Patrick Dunleavy with Simon Bastow, ‘Modelling Coalitions that Cannot Coalesce: A
Critique of the Laver-Shepsle Approach’, West European Politics, 24, 1, (January 2001),
pp. 1-26 (p13)
691 See Wolfgang Müller, ‘Österreich: Festgefügte Koalitionen und stabile Regierungen’
and Andreas Timmermans and Rudy Andeweg, ‘Die Niederlande: Immer noch Politik der
gültlichen Einigung?’ in Wolfgang C. Muller and Kaare Strom (eds.),
Koalitionsregierungen in Westeuropa – Bildung, Arbeitsweise und Beendigung, Vienna:
Signum (1997) pp. 109-60 and pp. 443-500 respectively
because they deflect attention away from the idea of a uni-dimensional policy continuum. The strong party is not strong just because of the number of its parliamentary seats or its share of the popular vote, but rather ‘by the configuration of party weights and policy positions.’\(^{692}\) (There is clear link here to Cole’s notion of the positional context of the leader.) Moreover, their six salient features of coalition formation, particularly the lattice of feasible governments, the existence and role of the status quo government and the sequential process by which status quo government may be replaced are important elements in any comprehensive account of coalition formation.

(a) The 1994 Slovak Election\(^{693}\)

The 1994 Slovak Parliamentary elections took place on 31 September and 1 October 1994 with the following results:

5.1 The 1994 Slovak Election Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>%vote</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>%seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS/RSS</td>
<td>34.96</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>40.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZRS</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1994-8 Government coalition total</strong></td>
<td><strong>47.72</strong></td>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
<td><strong>55.33</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV (SDL’/Green Party/SDSS/HP)</td>
<td>10.41</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MKDH/Coexistence/MOS</td>
<td>10.18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH plus Standing Conference of the Civic Institute</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13.02</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{692}\) Laver & Shepsle, *Making and Breaking Governments*, p73

\(^{693}\) Based on Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, *Volby do Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky konané 30.9 a 1.10.94*, Bratislava (1994)
(b) The Contracting Parties

The Slovak National Party (SNS) is a party with a long heritage stretching back to 1871, whose ultimate goal of independence for Slovakia was fulfilled in January 1993. With independence achieved, SNS was a party in search of a big idea. Pulled in different directions by two factions, SNS split in February 1994. The more radical nationalist faction led by Ján Slota remained under the SNS banner. Vehement anti-Hungarian and anti-Romany sentiment was the core of the SNS’s programme with a dollup of anti-Western rhetoric thrown in for good measure. The departing faction was noted for its economic liberalism/pragmatism and was associated with the managers of large enterprises.

ZRS (The Slovak Workers’ Association) was formed by discontented members of the party of former communists (SDĽ), who felt SDĽ had become too intellectual and had lost its class base. Peter Učení portrays ZRS as a party instilled with ‘class egoism’ and infused with the ‘rage of the victims of democratic transformation.’ Although the lyrical language may be over the top, the salience of class, economics and those whose lost out was central to ZRS. The charisma of ZRS’ leader, Ján

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694 Given the fact that chapter 4 was devoted to HZDS, the section only deals with SNS and ZRS.


696 Slota denied he was a ‘nacionalista [nationalist]’ (the Slovak word is stronger than the English translation). See ‘Národniar na Yamahe’, Plus 7 Dni, (24 August 1998) pp. 20-4

Ľupták, according to Šimečka, was based on a naïve anti-intellectualism and the conviction that the 1989 revolution had stolen from the workers property which belonged to the state.\textsuperscript{698} It should also be borne in mind that Ľupták was the most trusted politician in the country in October 1994.\textsuperscript{699}

\textit{(c)The bargaining process}

The formation of a HZDS/SNS/ZRS coalition was by no means a foregone conclusion.\textsuperscript{700} Certain options, however, were off all agendas. Hungarians were not going to sit around the cabinet table with SNS. Given HZDS' (admittedly milder) anti-Hungarian rhetoric, any proposal of cooperation between the Hungarian coalition and HZDS was unlikely to be a runner. In the aftermath of the election it was not clear with whom or indeed whether HZDS could form a government. Other parties were in play, but virtually all realistic coalition formations involved HZDS. In Laver and Shepsle's terminology, therefore, HZDS was the 'strong party'.

HZDS was interested in a having a dominant role in shaping the policy agenda. The party's objective in the coalition discussions could be categorised as a desire to form a 'minimum winning'\textsuperscript{701} coalition rather than a minority or oversized coalition which would have entailed a consultative or consensual \textit{modus operandi} and where the legislature has control over the distribution of critical resources.\textsuperscript{702} HZDS,

\textsuperscript{698} Milan M. Šimečka, \textit{Hladanie obav}, Bratislava: Kalligram (1998) p133
\textsuperscript{699} \textit{Sme}, 14 October 1994, p1
\textsuperscript{700} For a good flavour of the protracted discussion and debate over possible coalition configurations see \textit{Sme} and \textit{Slovenskà republika} from 3 October until 11 December 1994
\textsuperscript{701} Riker, \textit{Theory of Political Coalitions}
\textsuperscript{702} John D. Robertson, 'Coalition Leadership, Government Stability and Macroeconomic Performance in European Democracies' in Bryan D Jones (ed.) \textit{Leadership and Politics}:
however, wanted to dominate any coalition, but also wanted a constitutional majority (three-fifths) to change the role of the president. This desire helps explain HZDS’ attempts to bring KDH and SDL into government and HZDS’ attempt to induce a split in SDL and incorporate the less liberal faction of the post-communist party. HZDS, therefore, was interested in a minimum winning coalition at two levels: the minimum winning to change the constitution and the minimum winning to pursue a governmental programme. This distinction is important and one which obscures the office versus policy-seeking divide. Constitutional change was a policy preference, but linked to revenge politics.

It seemed clear as soon as the results were announced that any coalition involving HZDS was likely to include SNS. Nationalist sentiment lay at the core of SNS’ policies. HZDS had not been averse to tapping into anti-Hungarian sentiment itself during the election campaign. In addition to tapping into anti-Hungarian sentiment, Mečiar often made disparaging references to the powers that be in Prague and Budapest and stressed the importance of solving ‘our own problems’, words the SNS leader would have happily and enthusiastically mouthed. HZDS stalwart and future Finance Minister, Sergej Kozlík, was openly declaring that HZDS ‘rata’ [is counting on] SNS joining HZDS in a coalition government. Even Mečiar announced in early October that he was counting on SNS participation.

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703 See previous chapter

704 See for example, Zuzana Huďová (ed.), 5 rokov HZDS v tlači, Odbor verejnej mienky kancelarie HZDS (1996) p80

705 Slovenská republika, 6 October 1994
in any HZDS-led government. Cooperation between HZDS and SNS was virtually cemented by mid-October. Kozlík, Lexa and Rehák (from HZDS) and Slota, Moric, Prokeš and Slavkovská (from SNS) issued a communiqué stressing the closeness of their programmes. Significantly, they did not meet at a neutral venue, but at HZDS HQ. The symbolism and significance of the junior partner meeting the senior at the latter’s HQ should not be overlooked. Stability was one of the leitmotifs of so many HZDS politicians’ comments. Slota’s words on 11 November as he left a meeting with KDH leader Ján Čarnogurský, were therefore music to HZDS ears: ‘we must’ establish a coalition government which will last four years ‘at any price.’

The question on everyone’s lips was ‘kto treti do mariáša?’ [who will be the third player to join the game of mariáš: a popular card game requiring at least three players]. Viliam Soboňa, head of the HZDS election team, told Slovenský rozhlas’s Radiožurnál that HZDS wanted a strong government. To achieve that aim, he postulated a minimum of three members was necessary. Both SDL and KDH were involved in discussions with HZDS. HZDS had previous experience of working with SDL when they joined forces in the run-up to the 1992 Czechoslovak general election to oppose Klausite economic reform and lustration and had worked together on the local level. It was not a relationship without its spats, but it indicated HZDS and SDL politicians were not (in the early 1990s at least) averse to sitting around the cabinet table with each other. There was also much flirtation in 1993,

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706 Slovenská republika, 6 October 1994
707 Slovenská republika, 19 October 1994
708 Sme, 12 October 1994
709 TASR quoted in Huďová (ed.), 5 rokov HZDS v tlači, pp. 87, 89
when HZDS was in effect running a minority government, and discussions between the two parties took place in the run-up to the 1994 elections.\textsuperscript{710}

After the autumn 1994 general election served up hugely disappointing results for SV, debate raged within SDL. Speculation, at times wild and unwarranted, was rife that the top players in SDL would be changed. Slovenská republika, building on the comments made by Pavol Kanis that SDL should not have entered the Moravčík government in March, made great play of the Kanis/Weiss spat.\textsuperscript{711} (Weiss, it should be remembered was unpopular with the HZDS-supporting newspaper for his role in the former prime minister’s downfall in March 1994.) Soon after all the votes had been counted Milan Ftačník, a deputy chairman of the party, told Slovenská republika, that he did not rule out the possibility of cooperation with HZDS. Given its success at the ballot box, he recognised that it would be difficult to form any coalition which excluded HZDS. Any inclination to jump into the coalition bed with HZDS, however, was tempered by HZDS’ election manifesto pledges. Ftačník listed HZDS’ promises, including those to double wages, cut taxes, remove the president and change the parliamentary system to a presidential one, and said they were ‘probably not a platform on which we could cooperate.’\textsuperscript{712} Sections of SDL were unhappy with the prospect of joining a HZDS/SNS coalition. Those keen to see SDL modulate from a former Communist party into a party singing in the same key as the social democrats of Western Europe were influenced by the September visit of Pierre Mauroy, chair of the Socialist International (an organization SDL had

\textsuperscript{710} Karol Wolf, ’Môžu zostati vzdialení, ak sú si blizki?, Domino efekt, 3, 33, (19-25 August 1994), p2

\textsuperscript{711} Slovenská republika, 17 and 22 October 1994

\textsuperscript{712} Interview with Milan Ftačník in Slovenská republika, 3 October 1994

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aspirations to join). The SI, Mauroy declared, would not support SDL in any cooperation with HZDS.\textsuperscript{713} The SI appears to have played an important role in restraining SDL. Nevertheless, representatives of SV’s constituent parties met HZDS officials on 8 October to discuss possible cooperation.\textsuperscript{714} SDL’s position was further complicated by the existence of the SV pre-coalition agreement. Weiss was at pains to stress that SDL would coordinate its decisions with the other parties who contested the elections under the SV banner.\textsuperscript{715} To what extent Weiss was using such talk as a bargaining chip, rather than a sincere desire to move as a common bloc is debatable, but one should not be too cynical. Politicians do sometimes stick to their pre-election promises. Discussions between HZDS and SDL continued throughout October. Kanis and Kozlik had a three-hour meeting on 21 October, but as Sme noted, a government incorporating both SDL and HZDS would require a great compromise.\textsuperscript{716} HZDS’s plans to modify the constitution and to dismiss President Kováč were too much for SDL to swallow and HZDS was not prepared to budge.

In the aftermath of the election, HZDS also had discussions with KDH. Ján Čarnogurský, leader of KDH, saw the optimum cabinet as a HZDS/KDH/SDL/DÚ configuration. DÚ, however, presented problems. Slovenská republika, admittedly not a likely candidate for the accolade of the world’s most objective newspaper, retorted that ‘the arguments between HZDS and DÚ are so great that if a coalition

\textsuperscript{713} Slovenská republika, 6 October 1994
\textsuperscript{714} Slovenská republika and Sme, 6 October 1994
\textsuperscript{715} Slovenská republika, 26 October 1994
\textsuperscript{716} Sme, 22 October 1994
were to be formed it would not last for long.\textsuperscript{717} There was bad blood between HZDS and DÚ politicians (many DÚ politicians were former members of HZDS) which threatened the stability HZDS craved. As Kozlík put it: ‘it is difficult to go on holiday with one’s former wife.’\textsuperscript{718} Besides, as Húška commented, HZDS would not be able to find a common policy programme with DÚ.\textsuperscript{719}

The existence of SNS in any coalition configuration posed difficulties for KDH. Ivan Šimko, deputy chairman of KDH, declared that KDH would enter any government, which ‘would not worsen’ Slovakia’s position abroad\textsuperscript{720}, which meant specifically SNS.\textsuperscript{721} A combination of SNS, HZDS’s plans for the presidency and an all round inability to even approach agreement on a number of questions led to discussions with HZDS coming to an end in mid-October.\textsuperscript{722} Although, it may sound rather personal, it is worth stressing that Čarnogurský, a former dissident, is a man who finds compromise very difficult, as evidenced by his actions in December 1999 and January 2000 when he refused to dissolve KDH into a new political entity SDKÚ. He considers himself the standard bearer of Christian Democracy and does not want to see the principles of KDH diluted.

\textsuperscript{717} Slovenská republika, 12 October 1994
\textsuperscript{718} Sme, 3 October 1994
\textsuperscript{719} Slovenská republika, 13 October 1994
\textsuperscript{720} Sme, 3 October 1994
\textsuperscript{721} Sme, 12 October 1994
\textsuperscript{722} See Slovenská republika and Sme, 19 October 1994. See also Čarnogurský’s speech during the Long Night. Stenografická správa o 2 schôdzi Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky (4 November 1994) p31
Doubts within HZDS ranks existed as to the feasibility of opening a coalition agreement with ZRS. Soon after the results had been announced the big players in ZRS, like their counterparts in all the other parties, met to discuss the results.\footnote{Top officials of ZRS met on 4 October. HZDS’s political grémium met the previous day. See \textit{Slovenská republika} and \textit{Sme}, 4 October 1994} ZRS seemed reluctant to enter a coalition\footnote{\textit{Sme}, 3 October 1994}, issuing thirteen demands including the resignation of all deputies who had insulted the working class and revoking all legislation which was anti-worker.\footnote{Pridham, ‘Coalitional Behaviour in New Democracies of Central and Eastern Europe’} Although the party had campaigned on a promise not to enter government, Eupták was declaring openly how content he would be if a HZDS/RSS/SNS/ZRS coalition were formed with the possible inclusion of KDH.\footnote{TASR, 7 October 1994 and \textit{Sme}, 8 October 1994} The view of ZRS appeared not to have changed by mid-October when the chief players in ZRS met in Banská Bystrica, or indeed when Eupták was interviewed by \textit{Slovenská republika} towards the end of the month.\footnote{TASR, 15 and 16 October 1994; \textit{Slovenská republika}, 29 October 1994} At times, Sergej Kozlik argued it was not possible to create a HZDS/SNS/ZRS coalition because of ZRS. Their reluctance to go into government unsettled Kozlik and sat uncomfortably with HZDS’s desire to lead a stable government. In an interview towards the end of October, however, Kozlik depicted relations between HZDS and ZRS as good. He even began to float openly the suggestion of a parliamentary rather than a governing coalition.\footnote{\textit{Slovenská republika}, 24 October 1994} Although, in West European
terms one could describe all Slovak parties as being new, ZRS was a very new entity. For HZDS, as for almost everyone else, ZRS was a great unknown.  

Ľupták made it crystal clear that the issue of privatization was central to ZRS. Any agreement would, therefore, have had to address this concern. Indeed, the process of privatization appears to have been very high on the agenda of all the contracting parties. One of the first decisions of the government was to transfer responsibility for executing privatization decisions from the Ministry of Privatization to the National Property Fund (FNM) and to halt the second wave of voucher privatization and proceed with an expanded programme of direct sales.

(d) The Long Night

Between the general election on 30 September and 1 October and the signing of the coalition agreement on 11 December what has been dubbed The Long Parliamentary Night took place on 3 to 4 November 1994. The session lasted 22 hours and 50 minutes. Among the legislation passed was a bill cancelling the privatization decisions made by the previous government led by Jozef Moravčík, the dismissal of all members of FNM’s Presidium, voting out of office the members of the ruling council of state radio and TV and the replacement of the director of

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729 Daniel Veselský, ‘Nespokojnosť z účinkovania vo vládnej koalícií’, Praca, 12 December 1995, p10
730 See, for example, Sme, 3 October 1994
731 Mikloš, ‘Prepojene Politickej a Ekonomickej Moci’, pp. 47-84 (p53)
732 There was a hint of what was in store during the two-day marathon parliamentary session in February 1993. Mečiar was accused of pushing through nearly thirty privatization projects for the pecuniary benefit of his friends. See Sme, 18 February 1994
733 See Leško, ‘Pribeh Sebadiskvalifikácie Favorita’, pp. 15-80
Slovak radio, Vladimír Štefka, with Ján Tuzinský, a HZDS MP. When the deputy chairman of parliament at the time, Húska, was interviewed in April 2000, however, he complained outsiders had condemned HZDS for that one night, but since October 1998 the government had instigated 19 all-night sessions.\(^{734}\)

What seems clear is that HZDS, SNS and ZRS were working together as a team\(^ {735}\), which begs the question when was agreement actually struck between the parties? Was the Long Night part of the coalition-building process i.e. was there an agreement that as long as x, y and z can be pushed through onto the statute book then the parties would sit down together as a government? Or, was agreement reached on every point before the long night and HZDS, SNS and ZRS merely wanted certain personnel doing the deeds in parliament? (It should be stressed that politicians are not permitted under article 77 of the Slovak constitution to be members of parliament and ministers simultaneously. If a government had been formed before the Long Night, therefore, the HZDS, SNS and ZRS personnel as well as the personnel from those parties in the caretaker government who were sitting in parliament during the Long Night would have been different.) The personnel argument is given some credence by the fact that HZDS had difficulty maintaining cohesion and discipline within its ranks from independence to the fall of Mečiar’s second government in March 1994.\(^ {736}\) Indeed, during the Long Night, the number of parliamentarians who actually spoke was very limited. Those, from

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\(^{734}\) Húska interview

\(^{735}\) As Wolf suggested blame cannot be solely laid at HZDS’ door. See Karol Wolf, ‘Nie za všetko je Vladimír Mečiar vinný: Janko Šupták a koryto’, *Domino efekt*, 3, 45, (11–17 November 1994), p2

\(^{736}\) Darina Malová, ‘Neďahlká institucionalizácia parlamentnej demokracie na Slovensku’, *Politologická revue*, 1, (June 1998), pp. 43-59
HZDS who did speak, were the big guns, most of whom went into the government formed after the Long Night. Ordinary members of HZDS’ parliamentary party were not informed beforehand what was going to happen and were just given instructions as to how they should vote, suggesting the top-down nature of the parliamentary party. Of those parties which did not form part of the 1994-governing coalition, most of the big names (such as Jozef Moravčík, Pavol Kanis, Roman Kováč, Eduard Kukan and Ladislav Pittner) were still officially ministers and hence not parliamentarians at the time. The importance of personnel is given even greater credence by the fact that Deputy Prime Minister, Roman Kováč, came to speak at the beginning of the second session (when all the major decisions were made) and announced to parliament the decision of the government to tender its resignation and that Prime Minister Moravčík was at that moment meeting with president Michal Kováč (no relation). HZDS, SNS and ZRS deputies pushed on regardless with the motions of no confidence in Interior Minister, Ladislav Pittner, and Privatization Minister Milan Janičín.

Reading the parliamentary transcripts one is struck by the speed that bills were passed. Little if any debate took place after the bills were introduced. A number of different parliamentarians proposed motions. Most were from HZDS, although Eva Slavkovská (from SNS) put forward the motion to remove the chairman and the deputy chairman of the National Controlling Office (NKÚ) and Marián Andel, an

737 Stenografická správa o ustanovujúcej /1/ schôdzi Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky, 3 November 1994; Stenografická správa o 2 schôdži Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky
738 František Gaulieder (interviewed by the author, Galanta, 26 June 2000)
739 Stenografická správa o 2 schôdži Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky p2
740 ibid
SNS deputy and the chairman of the committee for education, science, culture and sport, made the supporting speech for the motions of no confidence in the boards of Slovak television and radio. Miroslav Pacola, a ZRS deputy, proposed the bill to cancel the decisions of the government in the realm of privatization. That fact raises the question: was this window dressing or the result of a deal struck with HZDS? Pacola does let the cat out of the bag somewhat by declaring in parliament: ‘...náš klub po dohode s klubom HZDS...’ [‘our parliamentary grouping, following agreement with HZDS’ parliamentary group.’] Indeed after Pacola, and a supporting speech from HZDS deputy Roman Hofbauer (the chairman of the committee for economics, privatization and enterprise), interspersed only by criticizing speeches from SDL deputy Róbert Fico, the list of speakers includes such HZDS luminaries as Katarína Tóthová, Augustin Marián Húska, Ivan Lexa and Ján Ducký. On this issue SNS did get a look in, but Jozef Prokeš was amongst the last to speak.

For virtually all the votes the government vote numbered around 80. Nevertheless, we should not get carried away with ideas of perfect unity and faceless masses of parliamentarians voting en mass. When Róbert Fico (at that time virtually the only non HZDS/(RSS)/SNS/ZRS deputy in parliament), suggested the chairman of the overseeing body the National Controlling Office (NKÚ) should be summoned to parliament and given a chance to account for his actions, before the dismissal motion was put to a vote, two deputies supported Fico’s motion, 58 opposed him,

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741 *ibid* pp. 89, 97, 129
742 *ibid* p110
743 *ibid* pp. 109-27
12 abstained and four parliamentarians did not vote.\textsuperscript{744} If nothing else, it probably highlights that agreement had been reached on the parliamentary programme, but how to react to opposition suggestions had not been hammered out. Nevertheless, it seems fair to agree with Slovenská republika columnist Viera Urbanová, that by that time HZDS-RSS had found 'spoločnú reč' (common voice) with SNS and ZRS.\textsuperscript{745}

\textbf{(e) Why did SNS, ZRS and HZDS get the cabinet posts they did?}

Which party gets which portfolio, as Laver and Sheplese suggested in their theory, is an important part of coalition formation. Although SNS got the post of education and science which had the largest governmental share of spending in the 1995 budget\textsuperscript{746}, it seems the motivation for control of the education portfolio had less to do with the size of a department's budget or of a concern for prestige. The reason lay in the importance SNS attributed to education. The party had an instrumental desire to control government policy in the field of education wanting to control education and ensure schools did not become breeding grounds for Hungarian interests. Indeed the three priorities for SNS were the defence, education and culture portfolios as they were central to the defence of the Slovak 'national interest'.\textsuperscript{747}

Intuitively, one would expect a pecking order of portfolios. Browne and Feste's research seems to bear out this expectation. They found that the prime minister's office was almost always controlled by the largest party. After that defence, finance,

\textsuperscript{744} ibid pp. 132-3
\textsuperscript{745} Slovenská republika, 5 November 1994
\textsuperscript{746} Príloha k uznesenie NR SR z 22 Decembra 1994 č 64 tabulka č 2
\textsuperscript{747} Eva Slavkovská (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 13 June 2000)
economy, education and foreign affairs in that order were usually controlled by the largest party. In the Slovak case, HZDS, as the largest party, took the prime ministership, finance, economy and foreign affairs portfolios (amongst other ministries). SNS took defence and education. Privatization was an important issue in Slovakia in the 1990s. ZRS, with its programme of working class politics and representation of the interests of those who lost out, put the issue of privatization at the top of its list of priorities. Peter Bisák of ZRS was given control of the privatization ministry.

There was also a concern for the number of posts, not least because of votes in cabinet. Browne and Franklin undertook a statistical analysis of the numerical distribution of cabinet portfolios in a number of countries. They tested the relationship between the percentage share of ministries and percentage of that party's total coalition seats. They found a very strong proportionality norm governing the distribution of portfolios: proportionality was related to legislative weight. It is worth stressing they found that smaller parties tend on balance to get slightly more than a proportionate share of portfolios, while the larger parties tend to get slightly less. Schofield and Laver undertook research looking at the proportionality norm and bargaining power as the basis for allocating seat distribution. They found that 'one model or the other fits very well for most


countries. They found that the proportionality norm holds in countries with stable cabinets such as Luxembourg, Austria, Ireland, Germany and Norway, whereas those with the least stable cabinets such as Italy, Finland, Belgium and Denmark, can best be explained by the bargaining norm. In certain countries, therefore, smaller parties appear to have greater blackmail power.

In contrast to its 1998 equivalent, the December 1994 coalition agreement deals with the division of seats in a matter of a couple of sentences. ZRS was allocated one deputy prime minister, three ministers and three state secretaries (deputy ministers), SNS got two ministers and two state secretaries, RSS one state secretary, with HZDS scooping up the rest: the prime Ministership, the other deputy prime Ministerships and cabinet posts.

5.2 Votes and Cabinet Posts in the 1994-8 Coalition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% Share of the combined HZDS/(RSS)/SNS/ZRS/vote in the 1994 election</th>
<th>CabinetSeats</th>
<th>% Share of the government seats, including prime ministership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZRS</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tbody>
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751 Zmluva o vytvoreni vládnej koalice, Bratislava, 11 December 1994. For the 1998 agreement see SDL’s website www.sdl.sk
The above table is striking. Almost perfect proportionality was achieved, with the largest party, HZDS, getting slightly fewer cabinet seats than its legislative weight would suggest. Following on from Schofield and Laver’s research, however, few would describe Slovakia as a country with ‘stable cabinets’. The election produced the third government in the two years since independence. Bargaining appears to be important in terms of the allocation of specific portfolios.

(f) Why did it take so long to sign an agreement?

Theoretical accounts of coalition formation, although an aid to understanding, tend to underestimate the fact that the process of coalition formation does not begin from a tabula rasa. Egos, rivalries, and previous allies who proved unreliable, obstreperous and uncooperative play their parts. Equally, snapshot analyses of coalition formation have a tendency to ignore the terrain on which the game is played.

SNS and HZDS had cooperated before, but it had not been a trouble or spat-free relationship. By March 1993 the informal coalition between HZDS and SNS broke down due to (at least) two factors. Mečiar’s insistence on appointing the former Communist Lieutenant-General Imrich Andrejčák as defence minister stung the nationalists into withdrawing their sole representative Ľudovíť Černák from the government. Relations were also strained by the forced resignation of Milan Kňažko. Nevertheless, after the idea had been mooted for many months, on 13...
June 1993 Mečiar accepted the SNS offer and agreed to start talking soon. 'In an apparent move to prepare for coalition' the HZDS Republican Council (HZDS’s highest policy/making body) voted to remove Ľubomír Dolgoš and Matúš Kučera from their posts of privatization and education ministers respectively. Coalition talks drifted on through the summer. An agreement was finally signed on 19 October 1993. Cooperation between the two parties was not a completely happy experience. Both HZDS and SNS appeared to pay a high political price for the accord. The agreement did much to engender both dissatisfaction amongst high ranking members of HZDS and the February 1994 split in SNS. Although sharing what might be described as a natural affinity, the leaderships of SNS and HZDS in October 1994, were not going to jump straight into the coalition bed.

Perception matters in coalition formation as it does in politics in general. Luebbert has argued that policy bargaining can be interpreted as a means to hold on to the party leadership. '[W]hat makes the talks so long, difficult and complex is generally not the lack of goodwill among the elites, but the fact that negotiations must appear the way they do in order to satisfy the members.' The case is probably overstated. Coalition bargaining tends to involve numerous bulging egos sitting around the negotiating table. Nevertheless, the relationship between party elites and the party

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base is important. Luebbert contends that 'most negotiation in cases of protracted
government formation takes place between leaders and followers and among rival
factions within parties.\textsuperscript{757} The only word in any real dispute is 'most'. It is
probably best replaced with the admittedly more nebulous - but by the fact it is
nebulous ironically makes it more accurate - a significant amount. Luebbert's
concern for the intraparty politics of coalition is an essential element in coalition
analysis and may help explain the long period of discussions between SNS, HZDS
and ZRS. The February 1994 split within SNS still had resonance in October and
November 1994. Moreover, ZRS was created by discontented elements within SDL, who felt the former Communist party had lost touch with its class base and had
become too remote and intellectual. Most significantly for the autumn 1994
coalition discussions, local elections were due to take place in Slovakia on 18-19
November. Although, one should not get carried away with their significance, it is
worth noting that even in elite driven parties concerned primarily with national
policy and power, the success and failure of one’s party at the local level is not
irrelevant.

\textbf{(g) The Coalition Agreement}\textsuperscript{758}

Before making a few comments on the coalition agreement we would be well
advised to bear in mind the words of Laver and Schofield: '[w]hile such a document
[a coalition agreement] is unambiguously the immediate output of the coalition
bargaining over policy, we must nonetheless be wary about its real political

\textsuperscript{757} \textit{ibid} p52

\textsuperscript{758} Zmluva o vytvorení vládnej koalície
significance. It might, after all, be little more than window dressing.\textsuperscript{759} At the signing of the agreement Ján Slota, however, was in no doubts as to the significance of the event. He paraphrased Neil Armstrong, seeing the agreement as a small step for him, but a ‘giant leap’ for mankind.\textsuperscript{760}

The first section outlines the five aims of the coalition: prosperity for Slovakia, political stability, fulfil ‘občianske princípy’ (civic principles), Slovakia’s internal and external security, and ‘zapajaniu’ [connect] Slovakia into international institutions, particularly European and transatlantic organizations. Section II part 3 outlines the relations between the contracting parties. The stress is on regular meetings and contacts between the contracting parties. Interestingly, the agreement ends by declaring itself to be a ‘open agreement’ which other parties may enter (‘pristúpiť’) with the agreement of all the contracting parties. Were the coalition partners attempting to entice other parties into their gang? The use of the word pristúpiť, however, suggests that another party would have had to have swallowed the coalition agreement full. That phrase is almost certainly included merely for show.

(h) A Brief Recapitulation: Coalition Formation and the Slovak Sonderweg

The above account of the formation of the 1994-8 government demonstrates clearly certain points central to an explanation of Slovakia’s transition path. HZDS was the strong party in the process of coalition formation, but in the post-election game the party did not hold all the winning cards. The long delay between the autumn

\textsuperscript{759} Laver & Schofield, \textit{Multiparty Government}, p189

\textsuperscript{760} Slovenskà republika, 12 November 1994
elections and the signing of the coalition agreement had much to do with HZDS’ failure to entice the parties such as SDL and KDH into a coalition with the three-fifths majority necessary to change the constitutional position of the president and hence strengthen the position of the prime minister, leaving Mečiar in a weaker constitutional position than he would have liked. Unable to form a government with these parties, HZDS entered an agreement with SNS and ZRS. Before the coalition agreement was officially signed, the three parties collaborated in a notorious parliamentary session to cancel the Moravčík government’s privatization programme and put political allies into important public posts. As part of the process of coalition formation HZDS, SNS and ZRS divided the cabinet seats amongst themselves. As will be seen below, the portfolios gained by ZRS did not prove to be a major restriction on HZDS’ desire to take Slovakia in a particular direction. The decision to enter a coalition with SNS and give the nationalists control of the education and defence ministries, however, was significant. As the case study on NATO policy in chapter three and the following section show, SNS participation in the 1994-8 government played an important role in policy formation which affected Slovakia’s political path.

**The Functioning of the 1994-8 Coalition Government in Slovakia**

Having assessed the government’s formation, this chapter now turns its attention to how it functioned. The discussion in chapters one and two identified agency as central to any adequate explanation of the political path Slovakia followed. But who was/were making the decisions which caused international bodies such as the EU to condemn Slovakia? Can the blame for these decisions be levelled solely on the
shoulders of Mečiar? As previous chapters have analysed leadership theory, Mečiar’s role vis-à-vis his own party (HZDS) and decision-making theory, this chapter will focus on two questions. Firstly, how extensive was the input of the two smaller parties, ZRS and SNS, into the decision-making process? Secondly, how much autonomy in policy formulation and implementation did Mečiar allow individual ministers? The intention here is to discuss briefly the theories of coalition functioning and termination and then analyse the Slovak example.

(a) Models of coalition behaviour

The HZDS/SNS/ZRS government lasted for the duration of parliamentary term. The fact the coalition did not collapse and was not replaced by a government of a different political complexion, which could have altered Slovakia’s political trajectory, is important. Although it may at first glance seem perverse to begin a discussion of a coalition government that survived until the end of its electoral term with a theoretical discussion of the causes of coalition termination, an explanation of why the coalition survived and did not succumb to collapse is instructive.

In attempting to explain the causes of coalition termination political scientists have emphasized various factors. One approach tends to focus its attention on the context of the coalition, analysing attributes of the country and its political system, including electoral and parliamentary institutions, party polarization and

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fragmentation, the societal and ideological bases of party support and voter preferences.\textsuperscript{762} An alternative approach casts its gaze towards critical events, such as economic and political crises that can lead to government termination. Such accounts usually involve the concept of the hazard rate\textsuperscript{763}. Whilst the former theories tend to highlight external factors and the latter internal, many political scientists have wisely tried to combine the two. To ignore the wider political context within which a coalition functions would be unhelpful to say the least. If nothing else any account which failed to appreciate parliamentary arithmetic, particularly concerning the minority or majority status of the government, and the role of parliamentary votes of confidence would treat the coalition as an autonomous being impervious to the machinations of the country’s politics and would fail to ground the theory in political reality.\textsuperscript{764} An approach, however, which treated the coalition as a rudderless ship at the mercy of the political storms would


seem to downplay the coalition’s impact so much that the analyst would be forced to explain why any party would ever want to join a coalition.

Lupia and Strom posit a third theory incorporating aspects of the internalists and externalists. They produced a model that concentrated on the strategies adopted by parties both within the government and the opposition in response to outside events. These strategies determine whether the government terminates or merely reorganizes. Both institutions and events matter, but only in an interactive sense. Events, in the Lupia and Strom model, can be critical but only ‘through their effects on parliamentary bargaining. Thus what makes an event critical is the behavioural response it occasions among the bargaining parties. Whether an event leads to the fall of a government depends on the relations between the expected electoral net benefits and the benefits and costs from a non-electoral redistribution of power. Lupia and Strøm’s important contribution is to recognize that not all shocks will become critical events which destabilize the government. Coalition terminations, for them, are not automatic responses to external events. Rather the causes and consequences of coalition terminations are reasoned and negotiated responses to a variety of changing circumstances.

Although it does suffer from many of the criticisms game-theoretic theories invite, particularly the assumed rationality of the politicians, Lupia and Strøm’s model is

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766 *ibid* pp. 651-2
767 *ibid* pp. 648-69
768 *ibid* p649
enlightening. It recognises the costs of coalition termination and a possible general election. The anticipation of success at the ballot box for one (or more) of the coalition parties vis-à-vis their partners is an important bargaining chip which a party can ‘exploit by either renegotiating the balance of power within an existing coalition, forging a more attractive coalition with new partners, forcing dissolution and new elections, or protecting the existing cabinet.

Whilst one runs the risk of slipping into a kitchen sink theory, any satisfactory account of coalition termination must incorporate factors stressed by different political scientists: the structural attributes of the coalition; the larger regime in which coalition politics is played out; and the strategic interaction between (and possibly within) parties as the key to coalition dynamics. One question which merits being singled out asks whether cabinets are more likely to terminate the

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69 ibid p654
70 ibid p649
72 ibid p534

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longer they are in office? Warwick suggests termination becomes more likely\textsuperscript{774}, whereas James Alt and Gary King suggest a constant hazard rate over the life-time of a cabinet.\textsuperscript{775} It is possible to draw a distinction between Warwick's and Lupia and Strøm's views of the increasing likelihood of termination. Warwick couches his analysis in terms of elapsed time, whereas the stochastic version of the Lupia-Strøm model implies increasing hazard rates in the time remaining until the next regularly scheduled election. That is, the less time left until an election must be called, the more likely it is that the government terminates.\textsuperscript{776} Whether we opt for Lupia and Strøm's or Warwick's perspective, the notion of increased hazard rates seems to have greater plausibility. As McLean identified two overlapping games are being played. The first game involves coalition-building on the basis of the results of the last election, whereas the second focuses on the anticipation of the unknown (but partially predictable thanks to opinion polls etc.) results of the next one. 'Immediately after an election, the first swamps the second, which gradually increases in relative importance until just before the next election'.\textsuperscript{777}

Figuring into the equation the fact that the 1994-8 coalition government lasted the duration of the parliamentary term\textsuperscript{778}, from the brief survey of coalition termination

\textsuperscript{775} James Alt and Gary King, 'Transfers of Governmental Power: The Meaning of Time Dependence', \emph{Comparative Political Studies}, 27, (1994), pp. 190-210
\textsuperscript{776} Daniel Diermeier and Randolph T Stevenson, 'Cabinet Terminations and Critical Events', \emph{American Political Science Review}, 94, 3, (2000), pp. 627-40 (p628)
\textsuperscript{778} To be precise the coalition government lagged behind the parliamentary term, because in both 1994 and 1998 the process of forming a government took several weeks. Until a new government was sworn in the previous government remained in a caretaker capacity
theories four questions immediately spring to mind. What role did the coalition play in decision-making? How much impact did the smaller coalition partners have? How powerful were the individual ministers? Why did the critical events experienced by the government not put pay to the coalition?

(b) What role did the coalition play in decision-making?

In an interview in 1999 Mečiar complained that ‘hardly anybody distinguished the government as a group of coalition partners. It was always referred to as the ‘Mečiar’ government.’ But what role did cabinet, individual ministers and the coalition partners play?

Whilst the Slovak Constitution could be accused of ambiguities elsewhere, is clear on the formal role of Cabinet. Article 108 states that the cabinet is the central policy-making institution of the Republic. It is treated constitutionally as a collegium. There has to be a quorum at its meetings – the majority of members and any decision must have the consent of an absolute majority.

Although the government (working through the cabinet) has the right to set up various councils, committees and commissions, these bodies have no decision-making authority. They are merely advisory. Because certain decisions have to be made in cabinet, the weekly meetings tend to last several hours. Dzurinda’s cabinet meets for about six hours per week, Moravčík’s started in the morning (around

779 Interview with Mečiar in The Slovak Spectator, (6-12 December 1999)
780 Ústava Slovenskej republiky, Bratislava: Remedium pp. 43-6

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9am) and finished at three, but Mečiar’s lasted between 12 and 14. In order to submit a proposal to cabinet two formal requirements have to be fulfilled. Firstly, all items are subjected to inter-ministerial examination, usually organized by the deputy prime ministers. Second, all proposed items for cabinet meeting must contain an estimate of the financial implications, which must have been agreed with the finance minister.

All political scientists worth their salt know that form and content have to be distinguished. The Constitutional position of the cabinet may be crystal clear, but is it in reality merely a rubber stamp to decisions made elsewhere?

In his taxonomy of decision-making models Robert Elgie labels one model ‘monocratic decision-making’. Under a polity governed according to the monocratic style of decision-making ‘the cabinet is mainly a residual organization in all policy areas, where individual ministers are generally agents of a president’s or prime minister’s will’ and where bureaucrats are largely confined to the implementation rather than the making of policy. Fish has described Mečiar’s

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781 Jozef Moravčík (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 7 May 2001)
782 Peter Baco, Agriculture Minister 1994-8 (interviewed by the author, Bratislava 15 March 2000); Ján Sitek, Defence Minister 1994-8, (interviewed by the author, Podbiel, 25 May 2000); and Oľga Keltošová, Employment Minister 1992-4 and 1994-8 (interviewed by the author Bratislava, 18 April 2000). This was by no means unique to the 1994-8 government, when asked if cabinets had lasted for 12 hours during the 1992-4 government Moravčík answered ‘many times even longer’, Jozef Moravčík (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 7 May 2001)
cabinet in monocratic terms. He portrays ministers as little more than 'hapless lapdogs'. Mečiar's omnipotence, according to Fish, was demonstrated during the monthly televised parliamentary hour, when the prime minister frequently elbowed ministers out of the way to answer questions himself. Moreover, Mečiar's dominating style of government was backed up by the armoury of government. The Úrad vlády (Office of the Government) was to all intents and purposes the prime minister's department. Although numbers of staff cannot per se prove anything, as some were only part-time, the figures are illuminating. In 1998 Úrad vlády had a staff of 269; larger than the numbers of civil servants at the departments of privatization (135), education (266), health (205), culture (175) and construction (186). In addition to the institutional framework, any analysis needs to accept the role of personality. The tone of a cabinet can be greatly influenced by the personal style of the prime minister. Mečiar is a man who likes to talk. When Mečiar got onto his hobby horse topics, such as NATO, he could and, frequently would, give a long lecture.

An indication of the centrality of cabinet in the decision-making process can be gleaned from the fact that under both the Moravčík and Mečiar governments many of the party leaders (in the 1994-8 government's case both Slota and Župták)

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784 M. Steven Fish, 'The End of Meciarism', East European Constitutional Review, 8, 1/2, (Winter/Spring 1999), pp. 47-55
785 ibid p48
786 Ratislav Tóth, chair of the government's Office for the Strategic Development of Society during Mečiar's third government (interviewed by the author, 10 February 2000, Banská Bystrica)
787 Darina Malová, 'The Slovak Cabinet', unpublished paper, Department of Political Science, Comenius University (1999)
788 Sitek interview
decided not to become cabinet ministers. Such a fact could be used to suggest cabinet may, in reality, not be the crucible of power described in the constitution, but it probably has much to do with the importance of ministers having the correct educational background. In Slovakia, as in the Czech Republic, personnel who fill posts are expected to be ‘qualified’ (vzdelaný). Economics ministers, for example, are expected to be trained economists.\footnote{As noted in the previous chapter this ministry was headed by an AZZZ member throughout most of the 1990s}

Even though cabinet met for 12-14 hours during its regular weekly session and occasionally at weekends it was unable to discuss all matters of government. Discussion within the 1994-8 government was focussed overwhelmingly on economic matters, but cabinet was not the only focal point for economic discussion.\footnote{Keltosová, Baco and Slavkovská interviews. Baco suggested approximately 90% of the discussion focussed on economic and financial matters; a figure with which Keltosová concurred. Slavkovská preferred to put it in more general terms stating the ‘majority’ of time was taken up with economic themes.} Over the weekend a Committee of Economic Ministers, chaired by Finance Minister, Sergej Kozlík, met to discuss economic matters prior to Tuesday’s cabinet. All the ministers with economic portfolios participated, including the ministers for finance, economy, agriculture and transport. These ministers would agree a common line before the main cabinet meeting.\footnote{Keltosová interview. Such a committee was by no means unique to Slovakia. A similar committee existed contemporaneously in the Czech Republic. See Mitchell A. Orenstein, Out of the Red: Building Capitalism and Democracy in Postcommunist Europe, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press (2001) p86} Once a common line had been agreed by the ‘Committee of Economic Ministers’, cabinet was more often than not likely to endorse the committee’s decision. Nonetheless,
proposals on major areas of policy, including economic policy, were brought before
the cabinet, discussed and decided upon by a secret vote.\textsuperscript{792} Party groupings also
met prior to the main cabinet to discuss executive business. HZDS’ main party
committee, the politické grémium, met on Mondays partly to discuss party business,
but also to agree a common stance for the following day’s cabinet\textsuperscript{793}. When an issue
was raised in cabinet, the HZDS politician with ministerial responsibility for that
policy area would introduce the matter to the cabinet.\textsuperscript{794} Other HZDS politicians
were expected to follow the previously agreed party line. SNS followed a similar
procedure. After the weekly meetings on Monday mornings between the three party
leaders, Slota, Sitek, Slavkovská and the remainder of SNS’s presidium met to
discuss what had been agreed in the coalition council and the agenda for the
following day’s cabinet.\textsuperscript{795} Pre-meetings, whether due to partisan affiliation or
ministerial responsibility, are of course, nothing unique to the Slovak example as
Anderweg and Bakema’s study of the Netherlands and Müller-Rommel’s study of
Germany show.\textsuperscript{796}

\textsuperscript{792} \textit{Ibid.} Mečiar was allegedly able to see how everybody voted, although this remains
unclear.

\textsuperscript{793} see discussion in previous chapter

\textsuperscript{794} Keltošová inteview

\textsuperscript{795} Slavkovská and Sitek inteviews

\textsuperscript{796} Rudy B. Anderweg and Wilma Bakema, ‘The Netherlands: Ministers and Cabinet
Policy’ in Michael Laver and Kenneth A Shepsle (eds.), \textit{Cabinet Minister and
Parliamentary Government}, Cambridge, New York & Melbourne: Cambridge University
Press (1994) pp. 56-72 (p64); Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, ‘The Role of German Ministers
in Cabinet Decision Making’ in Laver & Shepsle (eds.), \textit{Cabinet Minister and
Parliamentary Government}, pp. 150-68 (p154)
A flavour of the *modus operandi* of government can be gleaned from Olga Keltošová’s description of her week as employment minister.\(^{797}\)

### 5.3 Weekly Schedule of Employment Minister

- **Weekend:** Committee of Economic Ministers
- **Monday:** HZDS *grémium*
- **Tuesday:** Cabinet
- **Wednesday:** Government’s Legislative Council
- **Thursday:** Ministry Day
- **Friday:** Meeting of Tripartite: Council for Economic and Social Accord (RHSD)

Mečiar appears not to have concerned himself with the intricacies of economic and financial policy. Controlling all aspects of policy are beyond any human being,

\(^{797}\) Keltošová interview
even one who claimed to work non-stop, often sleeping in his office\footnote{Mečiar, Slovenské tabu, p60} and whose supporters at times regarded him as someone akin to a demigod. Close observers of the prime minister suggest he gave finance minister Kozlik more latitude than most.\footnote{Tóth interview} On economic matters, he played the chairman to Kozlik’s chief executive. Those ministers holding economic briefs tended to deal mainly with Kozlik. As a member of the government and HZDS’ politické grémium, Keltošová, for example, met Mečiar twice a week and whenever their paths crossed on party business, but rarely discussed policy face-to-face.\footnote{Keltošová interview}

Central to any government’s business is the budget. The process for the next budget began the day after the previous budget had been accepted. Finance Minister Kozlik led the process. He met with many of the interested parties, unions, employers etc. and worked closely with the head of the parliamentary budget committee, Miroslav Maxon.\footnote{Miroslav Maxon (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 3 April 2000)} He presented to the cabinet two or three variations in September. After consideration by the ministers and discussions in cabinet, ministers voted on the proposed budget. Unlike the Austrian case\footnote{Peter Gerlich and Wolfgang C. Müller, ‘Austria’ in Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (eds.), Cabinets in Western Europe, second edition, Basingstoke: MacMillan, (1997) pp. 157-70 (p159)} , unanimity was not required. In 1997, for example, Keltošová, Sitek and Slavkovská all voted against the budget, but were outvoted. Indeed Slavkovská admitted candidly that over economic matters she and her party colleague, Sitek, had ‘absolutely no chance to influence’ decisions taken by the committee of economic ministers in cabinet. Although cabinet was run on
the principle of each member's vote carrying the same weight, it was run on a 'collective' basis and sometimes Slavkovská and Sitek - such as on thorny issue of the reform of the state administration - just had to lump it.\footnote{Slavkovská interview}

Keltošová and Finance Minister, Sergej Kozlík, left the government in February 1998. (The former to pursue her interests in international politics, the latter to concentrate on preparing HZDS for the autumn elections.) Kozlík’s replacement, Miroslav Maxon, describes a similar, but not identical coordination of the economics portfolios. The deputy prime minister for economics, minister of finance, along with the ministers for economics, agriculture, construction, transport, post and telecommunications met to discuss economic matters. According to Maxon they did not meet regularly, but when the need arose - usually every fortnight.\footnote{Maxon interview} Maxon’s account of budget formation is also slightly different to Keltošová’s. Maxon paints a picture of a long process, starting in earnest somewhere between the second half of April and early May, full of consultations with all concerned.\footnote{ibid}

In contrast to economic matters, Mečiar seemed to have taken a hands-on approach in foreign affairs.\footnote{Moravčík interview} The rapid turnover of foreign ministers between 1993 and 1998, particularly the resignation of Hamžík discussed in chapter 3, had much to do with Mečiar wishing to control the agenda.

\footnote{Slavkovská interview}
\footnote{Maxon interview}
\footnote{ibid}
\footnote{Moravčík interview}
(c) **How much impact did the smaller coalition partners have?**

The ruling coalition, argued Malová and Rybář, performed in most cases as a ‘single-party cabinet’.\(^{807}\) Other well-informed observers have suggested ZRS and SNS were weak coalition partners exerting very little influence.\(^{808}\) Miroslav Kusý took the argument one step further by arguing the relationship between Mečiar and the other party leaders in the coalition, Slota and Šupták, was one of ‘blind obedience’\(^{809}\). While current Slovak President, Rudolf Schuster, does not paint as stark a portrait as Kusý, he does paint a similar picture. The meetings of the three leaders, Mečiar, Šupták and Slota, ‘were for the chairmen of the smaller parties just a formality’. Mečiar decided ‘everything he wanted to’. At the beginning of the coalition government, Šupták and Slota, according to Schuster, wanted to defend at least some of their own interests, but thanks to Mečiar’s style of government, they ‘had no chance’.\(^{810}\) Eva Slavkovská conceded that in comparison to the current coalition government, the 1994-8 government was very unified.\(^{811}\)

The second strongest partner in terms of cabinet seats, ZRS suffered from significant weaknesses. ZRS was a new party formed by discontented members of the party of former communists (SDL), a matter of months before the 1994 elections. They left SDL because in their eyes it had become too intellectual and

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808 Marián Leško (Sme’s chief political commentator, interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 9 November 2000) and Tóth interview


811 Slavkovská interview
had lost its working class base. After the almost interminable procrastinations over whether to enter a coalition or not, ZRS eventually decided to join the government. No sooner had ZRS entered government than cracks began to appear. At the ZRS congress in April 1995, when the party’s statutes were changed, leading ZRS politician Miroslav Kočnar left the party’s parliamentary group. He was initially followed by Terézia Chlebová and Marián Polák, although both decided to return to the ZRS camp. Polák decided to stay because of the issue of the railways and his desire to keep them in state hands.\textsuperscript{812} Equally ZRS was dogged by accusations implicating Kočnar, Otilia Karaszová and Magdalena Kiszelicová in a scandal that signatures on the party’s petition for entry into parliamentary elections were false.\textsuperscript{813} In 1996 ZRS unity was dealt another blow by the decision of the party’s spokesman and adviser to Ľupták, Jozef Masár, and two others, Tatiana Purdeková and Marián Sisák, to form their own new party the Unified Workers’ party of Slovakia (ZRSS).\textsuperscript{814}

Ľupták himself gave out conflicting signals about ZRS’ power and influence in the coalition. At times, particularly when addressing his own troops, as one would expect, Ľupták was upbeat. In April 1995 he told the party faithful in Banská Bystrica that thanks to entry into government ZRS was able to ‘exert maximum strength’ with the aim of uncovering the crimes associated with privatization and could stand as a bulwark against future attempts by criminals to benefit from the process of privatization.\textsuperscript{815} In response to criticisms that ZRS was a weak member

\textsuperscript{812} Pravda, 3 April 1995 and 4 May 1995
\textsuperscript{813} Pravda, 2 June 1995
\textsuperscript{814} Sme, 5 September 1996
\textsuperscript{815} Pravda, 3 April 1995
of the government, Ľupták reacted by denying the suggestion, but emphasising that whilst not everything was perfect within the government and differences of opinion existed over 20% of the policies, 'we [ZRS] are not a weak member of the coalition'. ZRS, was for Ľupták, an equal player in the government. He betrayed what charitably might be described as his over-enthusiasm or uncharitably his lack of a sense of reality later in the same interview when he predicted electoral success for ZRS. At other times he played down ZRS' power. When questioned in July 1995 about the influence of ZRS in parliament, Ľupták emphasized ZRS' limitations. ZRS, he lamented, 'can only do what it has in its power [12 MPs]' At other times he appeared keen to distance himself from the government. Even in February 1995, just two months after the coalition agreement had been signed, he offered a less than ringing endorsement of the government. 'We supported the government's programme and the foreign policy orientation', he told Pravda, 'because for us 85% is acceptable' and the other 15% 'cannot be separated.'

Although Ľupták continued to suggest ZRS played an important role in the process of privatization, many of those nominated by ZRS to positions of power told a different story. When ZRS vice-chair and president of the presidium of the National Property Fund (FNM), Štefan Gavornik, was asked 'what kind of influence does the president of FNM have over privatization decisions?', he replied 'Like no other

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816 Slovenská republika, 2 May 1996
817 Slovenská republika, 2 May 1996. For almost the entire 1995-8 period ZRS scored well below the 5% parliamentary threshold in the opinion polls.
818 Pravda, 31 July 1995
819 Pravda, 17 February 1995
820 Pravda, 31 July 1995
president. In the presidium [of FNM] I have only one vote like everyone else. In the nine man presidium, Gavorník complained that although there were two ZRS members and one from SNS the remainder were from the main employers organization (AZZZ) and all of them, whilst not members of HZDS, were 'inclined to that movement'. Indeed, it seems fair to conclude that Ľupták and ZRS failed to exploit their position even in the early days. Ľupták agonized about entering a coalition after the 1994 elections. He had two options: to support a minority government from the outside or to enter the government and try to influence policy from the inside. The latter option was chosen. As a reward ZRS gained a deputy prime ministership with responsibility over the main tripartite body of government, unions and business, the Council for Economic and Social Accord (RHSD), and the ministries of privatization, justice, and construction.

These goodies were, however, on closer inspection not as sweet as one might want. One of the first decisions of the government was to transfer responsibility for the central decision-making power of the ministry of privatization (who gets to buy the enterprises) to the FNM. The role of Bisák, as privatization minister was limited to preparing the lists of state enterprises which were to be privatized. It could be argued, therefore, that ZRS retained some control over the input of privatization decision-making, but not over the output. Equally, the RHSD, which initially had an important role in the decision-making process, particularly with regard to labour

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821 Pravda, 31 August 1995
822 Pravda, 31 August 1995
823 Milan Stanislav, ‘Premárnéná šanca ZRS’, Pravda, 19 July 1995
824 Mikloš, ‘Prepojene politickej a ekonomickej moci’, pp. 47-84 (p53)
law and working conditions, began to lose its role in part because of the government’s increasingly entrenched position, but also due to the main trade union body (KOZ) under the leadership of Ivan Saktor becoming, in the government’s eyes at least, heavily politicised. It is also worth stressing that the chair of RHSD, Jozef Kalman, nominated by ZRS joined HZDS’ list for the 1998 elections and was subsequently elected a vice-chairman of the party. He was keen to emphasize that throughout his time as deputy prime minister he was not a member of a political party.

Where ZRS was badly organized and poorly coordinated, HZDS’ other coalition partner, SNS, was well organized and cohesive. As noted above, SNS was driven by a desire to defend the integrity of the Slovak state, promote Slovak culture and ensure Slovak schools did not become breeding grounds for Hungarian interests. Their national priorities were, therefore, the defence, education and culture portfolios. The party was awarded the first two, but not the last.

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826 A good example would be the discussions over travel compensation payments for workers in 1995. The RHSD did not agree, but government pressed ahead regardless. See ‘Odborári na vedľajšej koľaji’, *Pravda*, 25 October 1995
828 Kalman interview
The leader of SNS, perhaps because of his mayoral responsibilities in Žilina, did not have extensive contact with his ministers. Education Minister, Eva Slavkovská, for example, did not meet Slota on a one-to-one basis very often. Their contact was usually reserved to discussion within the framework of the regular party meeting on Mondays, when Slota, SNS ministers and state secretaries and the remainder of the party’s presidium congregated at party HQ. Whenever they had personal meetings to discuss policy, Slavkovská suggests Slota asked questions, voiced his opinions and discussed education matters, but was prepared to follow the line proposed by the minister.\textsuperscript{829} The Monday morning meetings were, however, significant. Agreement was reached collectively on what line the SNS ministers should take in the following day’s cabinet and how Sitek and Slavkovská would vote.\textsuperscript{830} Sitek draws a favourable comparison between SNS’ coordinated preparation and ZRS’ shambles and confusion. ZRS ministers would often ask Sitek what was agreed at the coalition council. The SNS defence minister would inform the ZRS ministers not only how Slota and Mečiar voted, but how the party leader who had nominated them for ministerial office had cast his vote.\textsuperscript{831}

Relations between HZDS and its smaller coalition partners were not always harmonious. Asked how he would characterise relations between SNS and HZDS, Sitek preferred to say merely that the two parties ‘worked together’.\textsuperscript{832} Sitek was keen to portray himself as a man both wishing to implement SNS policy and fighting for the army. In response to news that the army was not going to receive

\textsuperscript{829} Slavkovská interview
\textsuperscript{830} Sitek interview
\textsuperscript{831} ibid
\textsuperscript{832} ibid
the increase agreed from the beginning of 1998, for example, Sitek confronted Mečiar, ‘Mr. Premier, when the government has already agreed the increase, why is there now no money for the soldiers?’ Mečiar responded by stating that although the minister was right ‘what was he expected to do?’ Close hospitals or break-up some schools? In the end the government kept to its promises, but Sitek himself does not explain whether this tetchy exchange with Mečiar was the cause of the change or not. Nonetheless, he confirmed elsewhere his position as one who ‘inclined to the position of the army’ during cabinet discussions.

Although the defence portfolio was held by Sitek, HZDS politicians were not prepared to leave all defence matters to SNS. The rising tension between Sitek and his HZDS deputy at the defence ministry, state secretary Jozef Gajdoš, culminated in August 1998, when Gajdoš in the absence of the minister revoked Sitek’s orders. Whilst Sitek was in Mexico, and ignoring the defence minister’s recommendation chair of parliament, Ivan Gašparovič, sought to use the presidential power vested in him to appoint Marián Mikuš, a colonel in the defence ministry’s logistics department as the new chief of staff of the Slovak armed forces to replace colonel-general Jozef Tuchýňa, who was standing as an SDL candidate in the forthcoming elections. Although these two matters were not insignificant, the

833 Ján Sitek, Minister z Podbiela, Bratislava: AKTRAKT (1998) p90
834 Sitek interview
835 Grijorij Meseznikov, ‘Domestic Politics’ in Meseznikov, Ivantyšyn & Nicholson (eds.), Slovakia 1998-1999, pp. 13-64 (p22). A similar disregard for the posts held by the smaller coalition partners was demonstrated when the ZRS nominated Olga Šalagová left her post as state secretary at the ministry of culture. She complained she had never had a one-to-one discussion with the culture minister Ivan Hudec. See Sme, 6 September 1996
central questions of defence policy were Slovakia’s relations with her neighbours and NATO membership.

Good relations with Hungary were important not just because of geographical proximity and the Hungarian minority living in southern Slovakia, but because good relations between the two nations was a prerequisite for joining the prestigious and lucrative international clubs of NATO and the EU. To that end, Mečiar met with his Hungarian counterpart, Gyula Horn and hammered out the Slovak-Hungarian Basic Treaty which was signed in March 1995. Foreign Minister Juraj Schenk tried to sell the Basic Treaty to the Slovak electorate as a necessary agreement; a important and concrete step for the government to fulfil its stated aims of membership of the EU and NATO. Slota, however, was openly critical. It was not, for him, a ‘prize’ for Slovakia. In response to a question highlighting the fact that SNS was a part of the government whose prime minister signed the agreement, Slota complained, HZDS has the greatest number of members, but SNS only has two. Those two cannot ‘reverse the view of the whole government. Nevertheless SNS used the issue of the ratification to squeeze concessions out of HZDS, including a raft of legislation including the law on the protection of the republic, a state of emergency act, a new education act, and a local

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836 As outlined in the ‘PROGRAMOVÉ VYHLASENNIE vlády Slovenskej republiky’ reprinted in Slovenská republika, 13 January 1995
837 Slovenská republika, 21 December 1995
838 Pravda, 20 March 1995
839 Pravda, 21 March 1995
elections administration act.\textsuperscript{840} Even with all the concessions made, Slota still lamented the treaty’s ratification in 1996.\textsuperscript{841}

When Lupták was asked about the Basic Treaty, in contrast, he often gave the expression of being out of the loop. In early June when asked whether he would support the ratification of the Basic Treaty he responded by claiming that so far they (ZRS) had not analysed it closely.\textsuperscript{842} For the leader of the second largest party in the Slovak government to suggest that three months after the signing of such an important treaty he had not studied the treaty’s text closely seems staggering and may indicate Lupták’s role in key decision-making. More significantly, however, it raises the question of the ZRS ministers in cabinet. Kalman, Liščák, Mraz and Bisák must have analysed it closely in March when the government met to discuss it. If ZRS did not have a position on the treaty whose position did the four ministers defend, their own?\textsuperscript{843}

As both Schenk’s words above and the Government’s ‘Programme Declaration’ suggest, NATO membership was one of the government’s central goals. In its 1994 manifesto HZDS had been unambiguous about its desire to join NATO.\textsuperscript{844} ZRS’

\textsuperscript{841} See the interview with Slota in \textit{Slovenská republika}, 1 April 1996
\textsuperscript{843} ibid
\textsuperscript{844} \textit{Programové tézy HZDS na Volby 1994}, p122
position on NATO was nebulous. At a meeting in Zvolen ZRS declared it was not in reality against the European Union and NATO, but is consistently 'against geopolitics' [proti geopolitike], but called for a nationwide discussion and stressed decisions on entry into European structures should be taken by the electorate not by individual politicians. SNS, however, had never hidden its opposition to NATO membership.

NATO membership was not an insignificant side-issue and it was a policy on which both sides had clearly stated aims. At the beginning of the government’s working life, Mečiar made it clear to the new SNS Defence Minister, Ján Sitek, what his views were when the new minister was ushered into his new post. Mečiar stressed that no new member of the government would change the basic orientation of Slovakia to participate in ‘West European structures’, entry into NATO would, according to Mečiar, be preceded by a referendum. When asked how he could square the circle of a party programme declaring opposition to NATO membership and a government policy of seeking membership of the North Atlantic Treaty, Sitek responded by arguing that Meciar’s party had won the election and new elections would not have been in the country’s interests. An agreement was reached that the government would advocate entry into NATO, but that the final decision would be decided by a referendum in which SNS would be free to argue its case against membership. According to Keltošová, the question of the 1997 NATO

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845 On ZRS and SNS hostility to NATO membership see Leško, ‘Pribeh sebadiskvalifikácie favorita’, pp. 15-85
846 Pravda, 30 January 1995
847 Sitek, Minister z Podbiela, p27
848 Sitek interview
referendum was discussed extensively in cabinet\textsuperscript{849}, but Sitek suggests the discussion was more of a HZDS than a governmental debate\textsuperscript{850}. Sitek thought a single question, ‘Do you support Slovakia’s entry into NATO?’ would suffice, but debate within the HZDS parliamentary club led to the three questions on the ballot paper.

Given the apparent divergence between the three parties’ positions on NATO membership and the place HZDS politicians gave to membership of the North Atlantic Alliance in its hierarchy of decisions, it seems at face value scarcely credible the government could survive its parliamentary term. Although Paul Warwick is concerned primarily with the left-right dimension, he argued ideology matters. ‘[N]otwithstanding the collegiality, adaptability and ambition of party leaders, governments that are seriously polarized on major issues tend to be relatively short-lived’.\textsuperscript{851} Why therefore did the coalition remain intact? Warwick offers an answer: ‘In an ideologically diverse coalition, the coalition’s policy point cannot be close to the ideal points of all member parties (by definition). For the leaders of a party whose policies on one or more salient dimensions are relatively distant from the coalition’s, the argument for continuing in the coalition must be that there is no other parliamentary strategy that would reap a superior reward.’\textsuperscript{852} To that one should add the disposition of contracting parties to collaborate.\textsuperscript{853}

\textsuperscript{849} Keltosová interview

\textsuperscript{850} Sitek interview

\textsuperscript{851} Warwick, \textit{Governmental Survival in Parliamentary Democracies}, p135

\textsuperscript{852} \textit{ibid} p144

Although Laver and Shepsle use the concept in a more precise (portfolio allocation) and problematic form\textsuperscript{854}, the notion of an ‘equilibrium’ cabinet could be employed here\textsuperscript{855}. Once an equilibrium cabinet has been formed, it ‘stays formed because no political actor, with the ability to act in such a way as to bring down the cabinet and replace it with some alternative, has the incentive to do so.’\textsuperscript{856} SNS might have opposed NATO membership, but no other government configuration would further their cause more.

Counterfactual analysis is fraught with difficult and based on little more than supposition. Nevertheless, two scenarios are worth floating. How would a HZDS government (without coalition partners) and a HZDS/SDL government have done things differently? The first is relatively easy to answer. A minority HZDS government would have been constrained by parliamentary arithmetic. From the Long Night onwards HZDS would have had to change its tactics. Other parties might have been enticed to join a coalition, or a pseudo coalition similar to the one agreed between Miloš Zeman and Václav Klaus in the Czech Republic in 1998, or to have agreed an \textit{ad hoc} coalition on a measure by measure basis. In each case, the government’s programme is likely to have been different. Moreover, a mixture of comparative analysis and supposition suggests the government probably would not

\textsuperscript{854} See above
\textsuperscript{856} Laver & Shepsle, \textit{Making and Breaking Governments}, p61
have lasted the full parliamentary term. The second scenario (a HZDS/SDL) coalition would have been a very different animal. SDL’s ability to extract the maximum benefits from any coalition is clear both from the discussions surrounding the 1998 coalition agreement and their subsequent activities in the government. Although one would expect a HZDS/SDL coalition to have been fraught with tensions thanks to the desire of both parties to get the most out of the agreement, both partners would have reasoned in the sense portrayed by Lupia and Strøm that the costs of leaving the coalition would have been greater than the benefits derived from it. Besides, SDL would have been under enormous international pressure from other social democratic parties.

It appears clear that the smaller coalition partners played an important, albeit limited role in the decision-making process. A distinction needs to be made between ZRS and SNS. Despite fewer cabinet seats and a smaller electoral mandate, but thanks to its better cohesion and organizational structure, SNS seems to have had a much greater influence than ZRS. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests a simplistic monocratic view whilst appealing to headline writers and oppositions suffers from the Procrustean problem: too many inconvenient facts are ignored. If Mečiar was so dominant, for example, why was he unable to institute the electoral reform he favoured (moving from proportional representation to a more plurality system)? Both ZRS and SNS were likely to lose out under electoral reform and rejected the

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857 See Warwick’s work on majority status in Warwick, ‘Ministerial Autonomy or Ministerial Accommodation?’, pp. 369-94 (pp. 390-1); Taagerpera and Shugart’s inverse square law on coalition duration is discussed below
Like turkeys, or in the Slovak case carp, they were not prepared to vote for Christmas.

(d) How powerful were the individual ministers?

In their ground-breaking study of the ‘making and breaking’ of governments, Laver and Shepsle forward a departmental view of policy formation. They view ministers as actors endowed with considerable discretion and ‘agenda power’. In the words of Burch, ministers are ‘the key agents for the preparation and development of policy coming to the cabinet are in the departments.’ Laver and Shepsle quote Burch further: ‘[t]hose within government who originate a decision proposal and who provide the information and advice attached to it are in a strong position to influence the final outcome since it is they who establish the framework of ideas and assumptions within which discussions take place.’

For Laver and Shepsle the ‘defining characteristic of a government’, is the ‘allocation of cabinet portfolios between political parties.’ Laver and Shepsle’s strong version of departmentalism argues ministers’ power is based on three factors: the inescapable division of labour in a modern complex government, large amount of preparatory

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858 Soňa Szomolányi, ‘Slovakia Between Eastern and Central European Ways of Transition’ in Dvořáková (ed.), Success or Failure?, pp. 24-38 (p31)
859 Laver & Shepsle, Making and Breaking Governments
861 ibid
862 Laver & Shepsle, Making and Breaking Governments, p49
work done before issues can be processed at cabinet level, and the power ministers have over policy implementation after a cabinet decision.\textsuperscript{863}

Some of the weaknesses of Laver and Shepsle’s model were discussed above, but one extra criticism is worth raising here: departmentalism downplays the role of the finance minister. As Warwick argues, ministries cannot be the autonomous preserves of the parties that control them, if the ministry of finance has to be involved in many of the policies undertaken by the spending ministries.\textsuperscript{864} Furthermore, Breton suggests a strong finance minister working closely with a prime minister can be a formidable force in budget formation.\textsuperscript{865}

Philip Norton provides a more measured departmentalist approach.\textsuperscript{866} His working hypothesis is that ‘ministers as ministers are important in government but that this power is exercised within a particular policy space. Ministers can determine outcomes. They are able, in pluralist terms, to exercise power, both coercive and persuasive. That is in coercive terms, they can ensure that a particular body does that which it would otherwise not do. In persuasive terms, they get a body to choose to do that which otherwise it may not have done.’\textsuperscript{867} Norton’s theory is premised on

\textsuperscript{863} ibid pp. 31-32, 281. Also see Patrick Dunleavy with Simon Bastow, ‘Modelling Coalitions that Cannot Coalesce: A Critique of the Laver-Shepsle Approach’, \textit{West European Politics}, 24, 1, (January 2001), pp. 1-26

\textsuperscript{864} Warwick, ‘Ministerial Autonomy or Ministerial Accommodation?’, pp. 369-394


\textsuperscript{867} ibid pp. 90-1
his tripartite division of policy spheres: high, low and medium. ‘High’ policy (i.e. policy that is fundamental to the peace and economic well-being of the country) is the preserve of the prime minister and of a small coterie of ministers. ‘Low’ policy (i.e. incremental policy adjustments usually affecting only particular interests) is the preserve of policy communities. ‘Middle-level’ policy is the preserve mainly of ministers and accounts for most of the principal public policies announced by the government.

Norton’s thesis seems to be borne out in the Slovak example. According to Ol’ga Keltošová middle-ranking decisions were made outside cabinet by relevant ministers. It was for Keltošová ‘effective government’ and ensured the cabinet discussions were not ‘about everything and nothing’.\(^868\) Baco’s analysis accords with Keltošová’s. Government functioned according to both the plans drawn up at the beginning of its term of office that were outlined in the programme declaration in early 1995, and its yearly plan. (Mečiar was the dominant figure in the drawing up of these plans.) These plans although containing details, however, tended to be broad. The detail of policy was left to the minister and his ministry. Any policy outside the government’s original plans was discussed in cabinet. In those cases Mečiar received briefs from the úrad vlády.\(^869\) Nonetheless, Baco suggests the agricultural ministry under his leadership consulted widely over many decisions. In addition, to the other ministries which would be affected by a proposal, such as

\(^{868}\) Keltošová interview

\(^{869}\) Baco interview
finance, environment, economy, foreign affairs (particularly with regard to EU law), employers, unions and academic institutes were consulted.\textsuperscript{870}

Ministers in the 1994-8 government did suffer from what Gerald Kaufman called ‘departmentalitis’\textsuperscript{871} (a desire to get the most for his or her ministry)\textsuperscript{872}, but their bout of the disease was mild. Ministers guarded their patch, argued their corner, but they followed a tacit rule of non-intervention, similar to that drawn by Anderweg and Bakema in their study of Dutch cabinets,\textsuperscript{873} unless they felt strongly on a particular issue.

Many departmentalists suggest the political colour of the incumbent minister in a department does matter. Kaare Strøm, for example, concluded his study of the political role of Norwegian cabinet ministers, by maintaining: ‘In coalition cabinets ... we can safely say that it \textit{does} [emphasis in the original] matter which party controls which ministry. Prime ministers in such governments have been more constrained in their ability to check ministers representing a different party.’\textsuperscript{874} The Slovak experience, however, suggests this view may not be universally applicable. Both Keltošová and Slavkovská argued that non-HZDS ministers were not given any extra ministerial freedom because of their party affiliation.\textsuperscript{875}

\textsuperscript{870} \textit{ibid}

\textsuperscript{871} Gerald Kaufman, \textit{How to Be a Minister}, London & Boston: Faber and Faber (1997) p10

\textsuperscript{872} Keltošová interview; Sitek interview

\textsuperscript{873} Anderweg & Bakema, ‘The Netherlands’, pp. 56-72 (p64)

\textsuperscript{874} Kaare Strøm, ‘The Political Role of Norwegian Cabinet Ministers’ in Laver & Shepsle (eds.), \textit{Cabinet Minister and Parliamentary Government}, pp. 35-55 (p54)

\textsuperscript{875} Keltošová interview; Slavkovská interview
(e) Why did the critical events experienced by the government not put pay to the coalition? Why did the coalition last so long?

Before embarking on a discussion of the tensions and critical events which beset the 1994-8 government, it is instructive to run Slovak election data through a statistical test derived from an extensive study of electoral systems. In their seminal study Taagepera and Shugart developed the inverse square law of coalition durability, which can be used to predict a coalition’s duration.\footnote{Taagepera & Shugart, Seats and Votes, pp. 78-101 (especially pp. 99-101)}

\[
C (\text{months}) = \frac{400}{N_s^2}
\]

(Where \(N_s\) represents the effective number of parties based on the parties’ relative share of seats in the legislature).

Data from the 1994 elections provides the following result (for the workings, please see the statistical appendix):

\[
C (\text{months}) = \frac{400}{4.417^2} = 20.96 \text{ months}
\]

Although at first glance Taagepera and Shugart’s theory appears not to explain the much longer duration of the HZDS/ZRS/SNS government, the suggestion of a coalition lasting 21 months ties in neatly (but not precisely) with the timing of the
main crisis (Slavkovská describes it as the ‘only crisis’\textsuperscript{877} to hit the government during its four year term in July 1996.

An explanation can be found, however, if we take the suggestion that the coalition functioned more or less as a single party government and re-run the inverse square law of coalition durability, the theory predicts the length of the government.

\[ C \text{ (months)} = \frac{400}{2.890^2} = 47.89 \text{ months} \]

Statistical analyses aside what requires explanation is why the coalition did not collapse during the entire 1994-8 period? Even adopting the coalition acting as a single party argument is not \textit{per se} enough. After all a single party in power can fracture. So why were the tensions and spats not enough to break up the coalition? The answer appears to lie in a mixture of Lupia and Strøm’s idea that a coalition termination is only likely if the outside option is more attractive to the coalition parties than the pay off they derived from the status quo and in the intrinsic stability of minimum winning coalitions.

Both SNS and ZRS derived benefits from membership of the government. All members of the ruling coalition benefited from privatization. It may be exaggerating matters to agree with Mikloš who suggested privatization was the

\textsuperscript{877} Slavkovská interview
force that was keeping the coalition together\textsuperscript{878}, but there seems little doubt it may not have been the only glue, but it was a powerful one. Both the then Economy Minister, Ján Ducky, (a HZDS politician) and the erstwhile leader of SNS, Vít'azoslav Móric, hinted at the self-serving nature of privatization.\textsuperscript{879} Móric stressed that 'fair privatization does not exist'. For the SNS boss, '[t]he only criterion is loyalty'.\textsuperscript{880} There appeared to be a 'privatization fee' for support for the passage of selected privatization projects. For instance, an employee joint-stock company in Bučany, Selekt, promised to pay ZRS Trnava chapter 500 000 Slovak crowns in return for a privatization proposal prepared by the company.\textsuperscript{881} A leading critic of the coalition, Mikuláš Dzurinda, went as far as claim he had uncovered the 'Model 34' by which 34\% of any privatized company would go to persons close to the governing coalition.\textsuperscript{882} Whether Dzurinda was correct or not, it appears clear that leaving the coalition would have 'cost' ZRS and SNS both in the game-theoretic terms of the Lupia-Strøm model and in the common understanding of the term. It would be wrong, however, to suggest the policy of privatization was one of disagreement-free harmony. The issue of the privatization of four banks (VÚB, Slovenská sporiteľňa, IRB and Slovenská Poistovňa) caused tensions between ZRS and HZDS in February 1997. ZRS initially rejected HZDS' attempts to privatize


\textsuperscript{879} For Ducky's comments see the previous chapter

\textsuperscript{880} Sme, 29 February 1997

\textsuperscript{881} Grigorij Mesežnikov, 'Domestic Politics' in Bútora & Skladony (eds.), Slovakia 1996-1997, pp. 11-25 (p20)

\textsuperscript{882} ibid pp. 20-1
key financial institutions\textsuperscript{883} and its ZRS deputies sided with KDH and members from the Hungarian coalition.

Leaving the coalition would have also have deprived SNS and ZRS of some of the other clientelistic benefits of office. Mikloš attacked Sitek for changing the rules governing the payment of army salaries to the benefit of Slota. Soon after taking office Sitek decided salaries were henceforth to be paid directly into the account of employees using the services of \textit{Prvá Komunálna Banka} (PKB). The chair of PKB was none other that the chair of SNS, i.e. Slota\textsuperscript{884}. Employees were allowed to select another bank, but payment went first into a PKB bank account from where it is then distributed to individual employee accounts. PKB customers benefited from being able to get hold of their money quicker.\textsuperscript{885} Sitek defended his decision by arguing it was stupid that soldiers were still paid in cash, particularly given the frequency of pick-pocketing. He approached a number of leading commercial banks in the country including \textit{Slovenská sporitelňa}. After assessing the merits of each bank, he concluded PKB was the best.\textsuperscript{886}

Part of the answer for the coalition’s continuation lies in examining why SNS and ZRS joined the government in the first place. As Müller and Strøm suggest, at the heart of many of the tough decisions facing political parties, are three factors:


\textsuperscript{884} The origins of Slota’s personal fortune had long been a source of much speculation. See ‘Zbohatlík Ján Slota’, \textit{Plus 7 Dni}, (16 June 1997), pp. 5-8

\textsuperscript{885} \textit{Pravda}, 20 February 1997

\textsuperscript{886} Sitek interview
It would be incorrect however to treat these as three water-tight categories with little or no seepage between them. Austen and Smith, for instance, stress that office is the overriding aim, but politicians must keep an eye on the policy position they would be forced to defend at a subsequent election. Office may have been an important consideration for the leaders of SNS and ZRS, but office was never sought purely to park the leading figures of the party ‘on a seat at the cabinet table’. Indeed although ZRS’ long procrastination over whether to join HZDS and SNS in a coalition or not after the 1994 elections could be interpreted as a brilliantly conceived hard to get strategy, it seems more plausible to argue it demonstrated office was not sought as an end in itself. Kalman said ZRS hadn’t got the qualified personnel amongst its membership to run the departments; hence the need to look outside the confines of the party members to find suitable men to take on ministerial office. As mentioned above, ZRS was a very new political entity and a great unknown. One of the few things that was clear in autumn 1994 was the issue of privatization was central to ZRS. As noted above, the priorities for SNS were the defence, education and culture portfolios as they were central to the defence of the Slovak ‘national interest’. There is therefore an element of both a policy or an office in SNS’ motivation. SNS wanted to be part of

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888 Austen-Smith & Banks, ‘Elections, Coalitions and Legislative Outcomes’, pp. 405-22
889 Laver & Schofield, Multiparty Government, p39
890 Kalman interview (Kalman kept using the word ‘kader’)
891 See, for example, Sme, 3 October 1994
892 Slavkovská interview
government, not just to have the pleasure of sitting in ministerial cars, but to ensure Slovak national interests were protected in education, defence and culture.

The coalition crisis of June 1996 was caused by a combination of a headline event and months of political tension. The underlying issue was the Slovak-Hungarian Treaty. HZDS had wanted speedy ratification, but accommodating SNS demands (see above) had delayed the process. In order to keep SNS in line during the ratification process HZDS made it clear it would be prepared to dump SNS. Chairman of parliament and influential HZDS member Ivan Gašparovič flirted with SDL, whilst HZDS was declaring the party was prepared to negotiate to expand the governing coalition.\(^{893}\) Nevertheless, HZDS’ own newspaper was keen to emphasize that links still existed between SNS and HZDS and the movement wanted the coalition to continue.\(^{894}\) The problems appeared to have been resolved in May, when Mečiar met Slota and others and agreed the coalition would continue.\(^{895}\) Mečiar knew, however, that political advantage could be gained from continuing to raise the prospect of a reconfiguration of the coalition. Indeed, even as SNS and ZRS were expressing their willingness to continue in the coalition providing co-operation was ‘constructive’, Mečiar expressed HZDS’ willingness to meet with all political parties.\(^{896}\)

The proximate cause of the crisis was the issue of the Slovak Insurance Company (Slovenská Poistovňa). HZDS dismissed several members of the presidium of

\(^{893}\) Slovenská republika, 25 March 1996
\(^{894}\) Slovensko do toho!, 21 March 1996
\(^{895}\) Slovenská republika, 6 June 1996
\(^{896}\) Slovenská republika, 24 June 1996
Slovenská Poistovňa who were close to the SNS leadership. Slota was understandably upset. Due to illness Mečiar was absent from his office, but when he returned to office he accused the SNS men of covering up an unlawful transaction amounting to hundreds of millions of crowns. Slota responded by claiming: ‘Vladimír Mečiar should sweep his own front porch first.’ Controversy within a coalition can, at times, be advantageous to members of a government. A stance on an issue contrary to the other coalition partners can demonstrate strength and virility to their respective party faithful. SNS (and ZRS) flexed their parliamentary muscles in June 1996 by deciding to side with the opposition in placing two items which Mečiar opposed on the parliamentary agenda: (i) to name opposition members to the committee which oversees the Slovak Intelligence Service (SIS); and (ii) the Democratic Union’s proposal to replace three HZDS members of FNM with representatives of the opposition. SNS also opposed plans to privatize the main state television channel, STV. HZDS responded by intensifying its flirtation with SDL.

Although HZDS was, in Laver and Sheplse’s terminology, the ‘strong party’ i.e. all likely coalition configurations would involve HZDS, the party’s room for maneuver was limited. As noted above, even in 1994, SDL, KDH and others had expressed severe reservations about joining HZDS. By 1996, thanks to the

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897 Cited in Mesežníkov, ‘Domestic Politics’, pp. 11-25 (p15)
898 Luebbert suggested such a strategy in helping to explain the length and difficulty of coalition formation discussions but it seems plausible and logical to extend that to argument to the duration of the life of the coalition. See Gregory Luebbert, Comparative Democracy: Policy Making and Governing Coalitions in Europe and Israel, New York: Columbia University Press (1986)
899 Laver & Shepsle, Making and Breaking Governments, p73
privatization scandals, headline grabbing events such as the kidnapping of President Michal Kováč’s son and the attitudes of international bodies such as the European Union, HZDS was even more unlikely to form a new government with different parties. Only one party offered anything close to a realistic option: SDL’. After Peter Weiss stepped down from the party leadership in 1996, the SDL’ party faithful elected Jozef Migaš as their new chairman. He was quick to dampen down expectations that SDL’ would want to join the government as unrealistic, but was at pains to highlight his desire not to burn any bridges.\footnote{Slovenská republika, 29 April 1996}

Throughout the lifetime of the 1994-8 government, SDL played a dual strategy. At times it played hard to get, but at other times it flirted back, couching its advances in terms of Slovakia’s national interest. Peter Weiss told a HZDS conference in March 1995 relations between government and opposition need not be conflictual. SDL’, according to Weiss, recognized the responsibility of the opposition in ensuring the proper functioning of a democracy. SDL’ is ‘ready for dialogue with all parliamentary parties’ to find solutions to the economic and social problems facing the nation. SDL’, Weiss proclaimed, was prepared to collaborate in the long-term national and state [‘národný-štátny’] interests of Slovakia.\footnote{Pravda, 27 March 1995} Equally Migaš expressed his willingness to negotiate with HZDS in the interests of preventing

\footnote{Slovenská republika, 29 April 1996}
\footnote{Pravda, 27 March 1995}
political destabilization.\textsuperscript{(902)} (In part probably a reflection of reasonably good working relations between HZDS and SDĽ at the local level.\textsuperscript{(903)})

The sincerity of HZDS' flirting is at issue. SNS was on the whole a reliable and often docile coalition partner. The extent that HZDS would have seriously considered dumping the existing coalition and creating a new one is open to discussion. Nonetheless, all talk of coalition reconfiguration had the affect of forcing SNS and ZRS to peer into the powerless world of opposition and contributed to the curbing of criticism from HZDS' existing coalition partners. The other possible outcome of an end to the coalition, early elections, was particularly worrying for ZRS. Early elections would, if polls were to have been believed, have terminated all ZRS' electoral mandates. (SNS' poll figure was high enough to ensure parliamentary representation.)\textsuperscript{(904)} The Slota-Mečiar relationship, however, cannot be characterized as a one-way power relationship. Both Slota and Mečiar were aware of two facts. Firstly, unless HZDS could form a coalition with SDĽ it would be dependent on SNS for it to govern; but also SNS' influence would end the moment they left government.\textsuperscript{(905)} In order to maximize SNS influence in the government Slota had to stretch the elastic band as far as possible, but be sure not to break it. Leading HZDS politicians, from all sections of the party, bemoaned SNS' influence. For Keltošová, SNS' inclusion in the government had been detrimental,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[(902)] Mesežníkov, ‘Domestic Politics’, pp. 11-25 (p21)
\item[(904)] By 1996 ZRS were scoring consistently less than the five percentage threshold. See for example, Slovenská republika, 30 April 1996
\item[(905)] Marián Leško, ‘Ak bude podľa Slota’, Pravda, 5 October 1995
\end{footnotes}
particularly for the image of the government.\textsuperscript{906} Equally, Roman Hofbauer believed HZDS’ coalition partners were well aware of their position, knowing their cooperation was essential for HZDS to rule. At times they used, on other occasions they ‘misused’ their position.\textsuperscript{907}

After the resolution of the coalition crisis, the coalition remained remarkably cohesive for the remainder of its term in office.\textsuperscript{908} Slovak politics became increasingly polarized. Events such as the Gaulieder affair, the NATO referendum and a procession of privatization scandals consolidated the forces of Slovak politics into two camps. Even those who might be expected to have contemplated co-operation, such as SDL and Rudolf Schuster, ruled it out in the second half of the parliament.\textsuperscript{909} At the first press conference of Rudolf Schuster’s Party of Civic Understanding (SOP) in early 1998 he complained about the polarization of Slovak politics. SOP, according to Schuster, was created to provide a ‘solution’ to the ‘cold war’ which had broken out between the two sides of Slovak politics and which had led Slovakia down a ‘blind alley’.\textsuperscript{910} But even Schuster was not prepared to consider entering a coalition with HZDS, with or without Mečiar at the helm\textsuperscript{911}.

\textsuperscript{906} Keltosová interview
\textsuperscript{907} Hofbauer, \textit{Slovensko na krížovatke}, p64
\textsuperscript{908} Although in the run-up to the election the smaller parties tried to distance themselves from certain government policies. See, for example, Miloš Luknár, ‘Noví disidenti’, \textit{Plus 7 Dňí}, (24 August 1998), p78
\textsuperscript{909} After the thwarting of the 1997 referendum SDL declared it would not cooperate with Mečiar and Gašparovič either before or after the election. See ‘SDL and SDSS Common Information about the Political Situation in Slovakia’ statement sent to the Socialist Group in the European Parliament (9 October 1997)
\textsuperscript{910} Schuster, \textit{Návrat do velkej politiky}, p87
\textsuperscript{911} \textit{Ibid} pp. 129-30
For the remainder of its time in office, the 1994-8 coalition government continued in the cohesive vein which had marked much of the first two years of its existence. The cabinet was in ‘retentive equilibrium’: the cabinet remained intact because no political actor with the ability to act in such a way as to bring down the cabinet and replace it with some alternative, had the incentive to do so.\(^{912}\)

Building on the explanation forwarded in the Lupia-Strøm model, an important component explaining the coalition’s durability lies in the inherent stability of minimum-winning coalitions based on ideological compactness.\(^{913}\) Lupia and Strøm’s approach appears to account for ZRS’ behaviour, but the relationship between SNS and HZDS was not simply about costs and benefits. Although the relationship between SNS and HZDS was not at times a happy one, there was some degree of ideological affinity, even if in the realm of education and defence SNS promoted a stronger version of protecting Slovakia’s interests. As Warwick’s statistical tests have shown, government survival hinges on ‘the degree of policy or ideological differences among coalition partners’.\(^{914}\) Ministerial accommodation rather than ministerial autonomy appears to be at least one of the keys to explaining government survival. Nonetheless, in order to explain government survival we ‘need to incorporate the larger environment of supporters and voters, who ultimately determine the partisan shape of parliaments’,\(^{915}\) to which this thesis will turn after examining the institutional framework of Slovak politics.

\(^{912}\) Laver & Shepsle, *Making and Breaking Governments*, p61  
\(^{913}\) Warwick, *Government Survival in Parliamentary Democracies*  
\(^{914}\) Warwick, ‘Ministerial Autonomy or Ministerial Accommodation?’, pp. 369-94 (p389)  
\(^{915}\) Warwick, *Governmental Survival in Parliamentary Democracies*, p147
(f) A Brief Recapitulation: the Functioning of the 1994-8 Government and the Slovak Sonderweg

For most of the period under consideration in this thesis Slovakia was governed by a HZDS/SNS/ZRS coalition government. Under this government’s watch Slovakia went from being a front-runner to join NATO and the European Union into the black sheep of Central Europe. Using political science theory, therefore, this chapter asked why that coalition came into being, why it survived until the end of the parliamentary term and how a coalition with a different complexion might have produced a different outcome. The analysis suggests HZDS’ attempts to woo SDE and KDH into the political bed failed partly because of HZDS policy programme (particularly its constitutional proposals), but also thanks to HZDS’ willingness to join forces with SNS. Although ideologically disparate, the coalition stayed together thanks to the clientelistic benefits of office and the unattractive consequences of coalition termination. Throughout the course of the coalition’s life, particularly after 1996, thanks to the flouting of democratic norms in such headline grabbing events such as the Gaulieder affair and the 1997 referendum and the resultant international criticism, a reconfiguration appeared more unlikely as opposition parties expressed their unwillingness to co-operate with the parties in the governing coalition.

At the heart of this thesis is an assessment of the role played by Mečiar in explaining Slovakia’s Sonderweg. The discussions in chapters one and two argued that, although constrained by such factors as the institutional framework and public opinion, central to an understanding of Slovakia’s political trajectory is agency.
Agency as an explanatory variable, however, raises further questions, particularly whether agency can be equated with Mečiar or whether other political actors were taking important decisions. This chapter has assessed both the power of individual ministers and of HZDS' coalition partners in decision-making. The evidence suggests a simple monocratic view of decision-making is wide of the mark. Individual ministers were accorded latitude to make decisions themselves. Moreover, HZDS' coalition partners, particularly SNS, acted as a break on HZDS' aims, such as over the question of electoral reform and the ratification of the Slovak-Hungarian Treaty. In the latter case, although HZDS got its way, SNS managed to squeeze out of HZDS a raft of concessions. Nonetheless, the influence of SNS and ZRS should not be overstated. In the realm of economic policy, for instance, the pre-cabinet body, the Committee of Economic Ministers, ensured HZDS controlled the economic agenda.
The Institutional Framework of Slovak Politics

In previous chapters this thesis has argued that simplistic explanations of Slovak political development, particularly those which find an explanation for the country’s political trajectory in two words, Vladimir Mečiar, fail to give sufficient weight to the importance of factors such as the nature of coalition government and fail to appreciate the decision-making processes in the 1994-8 administration. A rounded-out explanation of Slovakia’s klukatá cesta (zigzag path)\textsuperscript{916}, however, also requires an understanding of the wider context of politics. The following two chapters, on the institutional framework and Slovak public opinion, seek to flesh out some points alluded to in earlier chapters. Given that full treatment of even one of these themes would demand a thesis-length account, the following two chapters do not intend to provide a comprehensive description and analysis of the role institutions and public opinion have played in Slovak politics. Rather, the focus is more limited. This chapter, for example, will attempt to identify the limiting and facilitating role(s) played in the decision-making process by the electoral system, the presidency, parliament and the constitutional court. Central to the analysis are the notions of ‘veto players’\textsuperscript{917} and ‘veto points’\textsuperscript{918} i.e. those actors and institutions which can act to limit the power of the prime minister.

\textsuperscript{916} Soňa Szomolányi, \textit{Klukatá cesta k demokracii}, Bratislava: STIMUL (1999)
\textsuperscript{917} George Tsebelis, ‘Veto Players and Institutional Analysis’, \textit{Governance}, 13, 4, (October 2000), pp. 441-74 (p442)
\textsuperscript{918} Ellen M. Immergut, ‘The Rules of the game: The logic of health policy-making in France, Switzerland and Sweden’ in Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen and Frank Longstreth
Institutions matter. Institutions not only structure power relations, they also shape the goals political actors pursue and impact on the outcomes of events. From the chapters on leadership and decision-making it should be clear that this thesis does not articulate an institutional determinist argument. Institutions ‘constrain and refract politics, but they are never the sole “cause” of outcomes. Moreover, although this thesis has recognized the merits of the rational choice institutionalists such as North, the thesis tends more towards the historical institutionalist school: institutions are important as constraints, but they also play a much greater role in shaping politics and political history. Moreover, rational choice accounts forward a rationalist view of preference formation. The chapter on decision-making theory and its applicability emphasized not just the strategies, but the goals actors pursue are shaped by the institutional context.


920 Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, ‘Historical institutionalism in comparative politics’ in Steinmo, Thelen & Longstreth (eds.), *Structuring Politics*, pp. 1-32 (p3)

Trenchant critics and hagiographical accounts of Mečiar tend to downplay the role of institutions and highlight the role of the man himself. Cohen, for example, argued that politicians like Mečiar ‘used democratic institutions and electoral politics rather than being shaped by them’. ‘Institutional design is thus deceptive as a subject of study without understanding the context - in this case the political actors who inhabit these institutions.’ This chapter, in contrast, argues that political experience can be explained fully only by understanding the complex interaction between institutions and agency.

The Czechoslovak Experience

Before embarking on a discussion of Slovak institutional development, it is worth dwelling briefly on the Czechoslovak experience after 1989. The short-life of post-communist Czechoslovakia and its role in creating the terrain of politics on which Slovakia’s first six years of independence were played has already been discussed earlier in the thesis, nonetheless a number of points with regard to institution-building are worth stressing. A first factor was the insistence of the new democratic elite on the continuity and constitutionality of process of change. In many respects a force for the good, but in the hands of constitutional nit-pickers like ODA’s Jan Kalvoda, it proved a hindrance to change and a factor in the demise of the common state. As both Stanger and Olson have argued, the decision to accept the constitution of the outgoing order as the starting point for the democratic transition had portentous consequences. Attempting to draft a constitutional

settlement agreeable to three new political orders (Czechoslovak, Czech and Slovak) with the *zákaz majorizace* (a hangover from the Prague Spring constitutional changes) in full force was, in Stanger words, ‘an invitation to constitutional deadlock, even if all three legislative bodies had been comprised of angels.’ The experience of Czechoslovakia between 1989 and 1992 demonstrates the gap which can emerge between the structure of power envisaged by the institutional framers and the reality. Czechoslovakia was ‘officially a federation, but operated politically as a confederation.’ The end of Communist Czechoslovakia proved to be the cue for all and sundry to step onto the political stage and articulate their own vision of the constitutional future and institutional structure of Czechs and Slovaks. In a constitutional version of Newton’s second law of motion, almost every proposal seem to create an opposing proposal from the other side.

The need to insulate the constitution-making process from the rough and tumble of politics is also demonstrated in the Czechoslovak example. Havel’s decision to limit the term of the first freely elected federal assembly to two years, for example, shortened the time for discussion and gave an extra incentive for politicians to concern themselves more with rhetoric that would increase their support in the run-up to the election than to put secondary concerns aside and resolve the primary issue of the constitutional structure of the country. It would be incorrect, however,

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925 Olson, ‘The Sundered State’, pp. 97-124 (p111)
to single-out Czechoslovakia for failing to capitalize on what Ackerman believed was the necessity of seizing the ‘constitutional moment’ to constitutionalize revolution. Throughout CEE the 1990s saw either constitutional tinkering, amending or radical overhaul. Poland, for instance, was initially governed under the 1952 constitution, which was modified in the Little Constitution of 1992, which in turn was replaced by the 1997 Constitution.

The Slovak Institutional Framework

The Constitution

The size, shape and lay-out of the pitch on which the game of politics is played is determined to a significant extent by a country’s constitution. The ‘idea of constitutionalism’, as Preuss suggests, ‘is neutral vis-à-vis the amount of power whereas it is very much concerned about the mediation, civilization, and rationalization of political power.’

Not all constitutions are the same. Even across CEE, where a similar experience of Communist rule was followed by a desire to return to the European mainstream, has seen the emergence of a plethora of different constitutional structures. This diversity

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927 George Sanford, ‘Parliamentary Control and the Constitutional Definition of Foreign Policy Making in Democratic Poland’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51, 5, (1999), pp. 769-97 (p771)
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reflects a number of inputs into the decision-making process. Inherited structures, historical experiences, political actors’ preferences during the transition, deal sweetners during the round-table talks, a concern for historical continuity, in CEE’s case, ‘the European inheritance of parliamentarism’ and the pull of the European Union all played their part. The output of the constitution-making process is determined by the inputs into the system. As Sanford has convincingly argued, Poland developed a ‘mixed semi-presidential-parliamentary system during 1989-97 as a constitutional response to its negotiated transition away from communism’.

Just as institutions shape politics so the institutions themselves are in turn shaped by ‘institutional legacies’. In Romania during the 1989 revolution the Communist symbol was removed from the centre of the national flag. To Jowitt this is symbolic that although the Communist centre had been removed, a ‘good deal’ of the institutional inheritance is still in place. Constitutions existed before 1989. Under communist rule, however, constitutions were reduced to little more than extensions of Communist party programme and ‘lent a veneer of legality to monocratic rule.’ The problem, as Charta 77 demonstrated, was compliance. The Charta 77

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930 This list owes much to a conversation with Kieran Williams.

931 Sanford, ‘Parliamentary Control and the Constitutional Definition of Foreign Policy’ pp. 769-97 (p770)


933 ibid p294

934 Kieran Williams, ‘Constitutional Choices and Separation of Powers in East Central Europe’, lecture, SSEES/UCL, 29 November 2000
experience also raises an important point, highly relevant to the Slovak example: institutions matter not only when behaviour is orientated in terms of certain institutions (i.e. when institutions are obeyed), but also when behaviour takes rules into account, but intentionally neglects or breaks those rules.  

Institutions shape political behaviour, but they are also products of political bargaining themselves. In the early post-communist years, politicians created, or at least moulded, the institutional framework. In framing the institutional structure politicians looked to three models: the ‘distant past’, the modern West and the ‘accomplishments of the immediate past of the state socialist system’. Focussing merely on these categories could, however, lead the analyst to ignoring the importance of the personal political interests of those involved in the framing process. Framers may offer impartial arguments based on concepts such as the public good, individual rights or democracy, but the motivation may have much, if not more, to do with their own self-interest and ‘the position in which politicians find themselves at the time of design’. Moreover, the presentation of arguments in terms of concepts such as the common good may have more to do with close public scrutiny than genuine democratic values. As an outcome of a bargaining process, constitutions therefore ‘resemble bundles of compromises rather than acts

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937 Shugart, ‘The inverse relationship between party strength and executive strength’, pp. 1-29 (p2). Shugart does concede, however, that alternative explanations, such as those relying on historical factors, should not be ruled out entirely with regard to the new democracies in CEE.

938 Elster, Offe & Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies*, p77
of legal professionalism. As Holmes argues, '[l]egislators should not negotiate the rules of the game while they are playing the game, but, since ordinary parliaments are everywhere doubling as constituent assemblies, this is exactly what East European politicians are doing'. As Batt and Wolczuk suggest, Elster's description of constitution building in post-communist states as akin to rebuilding the boat at sea is instructive for two reasons. The ship could not be taken out of commission for a few years to enable a full refurbishment and secondly it was the sailors themselves who had to undertake the repairs, whilst simultaneously sailing the ship. Although true, it should be remembered that it is impossible in any political environment to press the pause button whilst a constitution is drawn up. All constitutions, therefore, are examples of 'rebuilding the ship at sea'.

The drawing up of the Slovak Constitution is an illustrative example of how actors in the initial post-communist periods determine the institutional framework. The process of drawing up a constitution became a means by which parties attempted to bolster their standing and support. KDH, for example, submitted a proposal in February 1991 for an independent Slovakia, followed soon afterwards by SNS.'
proposal for independence. Initially, VPN backed the parliamentary and cabinet commission’s draft (known as ‘Plank’s proposal’), but VPN split in March 1991 and the new groupings took different positions. VPN split into a pro-federal faction, the Civic Democratic Faction (ODU), which continued to back Plank’s proposal, and HZDS, which submitted proposals based on the idea of vaguely defined confederation. There may have been a divergence between the real aims of political actors and their stated intentions, but the Slovak example suggests even the actors drawing up a constitutional framework may be unsure of the exact outcome they want to see. Again this phenomenon was not unique to Slovakia. Croat politicians, for instance, appeared to be unclear what human rights provisions to enshrine in their constitution.944

Although the introduction of new constitutions mark out the new organization of the pitch, they often do not mark a complete break with the past. New constitutions build on the experience, both negative and positive, of previous constitutional settlements. Poland, for example, could draw on the lessons of the constitution of 3 May in 1791, two inter-war constitutions (1921 and 1935) and the 1952 communist constitution.945 Despite only gaining her independence in 1993, Slovakia also has a constitutional hinterland. Slovakia’s constitutional history is dominated by both the 1960 socialist constitution, combined with elements of the 1920 Czechoslovak constitution, and the constitutional arguments which dominated Czech-Slovak

945 Batt & Wolczuk, ‘Redefining the State’, pp. 83-102 (p91)
relations during the short life of post-Communist Czechoslovakia. A close examination of these previous constitutional experiences, even the 1920 constitution, clearly demonstrates the impact. The requirement for only a three-fifths rather than the more typical two-thirds majority in parliament to change the constitution, for instance, was a clear legacy of the inter-war constitutional framework.

The drafting of the Slovak constitution began soon after the collapse of the Communist regime in November 1989. This decision was legitimised and legalized by the provisions of the old constitutional law ‘On the Czecho-Slovak Federation’ (no. 143/1968, article 142), which was passed during the short-lived Prague Spring in 1968. That law stipulated that after passing a new federal constitution, both republics would adopt their own constitutions.

According to Havel the main role of the newly-elected federal parliament in June 1990, was to adopt a new constitution, a task it proved incapable of performing. With her independence in 1993, Slovakia has, in effect, had to undergo a second phase of institution building. Although a significant amount of

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institution building and modification had been done under the aegis of post-communist Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic inherited much of the formal institutional architecture. In institutional terms Slovakia, like other more junior members of larger federations such as Ukraine, got the rawer deal. Whilst her erstwhile federative partner inherited much of the political know-how, personnel and buildings of the federal state, Slovakia had to build up many of its state institutions, such as a constitution, a constitutional court, the national bank and new bodies to oversee state radio and television from scratch. Tibor Papp contrasting the ‘relatively old and institutional stable’ Czech state with the Slovak state still ‘in the making’, argued that in consequence ‘the institutional system of the Czech Republic facilitates bargaining and consensus, while politics in Slovakia resembles a zero-sum game where the gain of one party is automatically the loss of another.’ Papp is right to make a distinction, but he overstates the difference between the two former partners. After the divorce the Czechs were also embroiled

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952 Tibor Papp, Who is in, Who is out? Citizenship, Nationhood, Democracy and European Integration in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Florence: European Union Institute (1999)
in constitutional debates. Nonetheless, there was more of a zero-sum game in the Slovak case.

**The Slovak Presidency 1993-8**

Attempts to measure the relative constitutional power of presidents throughout CEE place Slovakia’s head of state close to the regional average. Although not a perfect dividing line, a distinction should be made between directly and indirectly elected presidents. Directly elected presidents tend to have more power and a greater legitimacy derived from their mandate from the people. Until the 1999 constitutional amendment, Slovakia like the Czech Republic and Hungary, but unlike Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia had an indirectly elected president. Directly elected presidents, however, do not always have things their own way as the experience of Bulgaria’s Zhelyu Zhelev demonstrate, although Zhelev won his battle against Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov over the lack of progress on reform, ousting Dimitrov’s government in the autumn of 1992. Zhelev appointed his personal economic adviser, Ljuben Berov, as the new prime minister. Far from becoming Zhelev’s faithful servant, Berov soon realized he needed to build up support in parliament in order to survive. In consequence, he became as much parliament’s man as the president’s.

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Throughout CEE the ‘executive tug of war’\textsuperscript{956} between prime minister and the president has been in evidence. Such conflict is not the reserve of the new democracies of CEE, but as Baylis suggests the added problem in CEE example is that in addition to the ambiguity in constitutional position, there are ‘no [or few] precedents and established conventions and understandings that define the boundaries between key institutions more precisely.’\textsuperscript{957} Arpad Gőncz and Jozsef Antall, for example, crossed swords over TV and radio appointments in Hungary in 1990-2; Zhelyu Zhelev battled with both Philip Dimitrov and Ljuben Berov over the pace of reform in Bulgaria; Havel and Klaus clashed over the speed, direction and purpose of reform; and Lech Wałęsa fought with Waldemar Pawlak (and virtually everyone else) over appointments and the budget in 1995. Slovakia was no exception. Indeed the relationship between President Kováč and Prime Minister Mečiar was at the heart of Slovak politics for the period under consideration. As the relationship between president and prime minister was only briefly discussed in the leadership chapter, this relationship will be examined here in some detail. Rather than retell the narrative, I will focus on two questions: to what extent did President Kováč act as a constraint on Mečiar and to what extent was Mečiar’s drift into publicly adversarial politics a function of relatively private disputes (feelings of revenge and betrayal) as well as institutions jostling for power and definition?


Michal Kováč was not HZDS' first choice for the presidency, but after Roman Kováč (no relation) failed to muster enough support in the first round of voting in parliament, he was nominated by the party and duly won the parliamentary vote. Although he was originally considered to be close to Mečiar - indeed he has subsequently stressed he felt very much in harmony with Mečiar and the prime minister's vision in 1993 - when he took up office Kováč declared himself a president for all Slovaks. Kováč explained part of his motivation to distance himself from his party label lay in the fact that Slovakia was a 'new state' in which all 'the strengths' of all different groups needed to be harnessed. (Mečiar has since frequently accused Kováč of working 'only for himself'.) At a press conference held to mark two years in the job, Kováč reiterated his desire to stand above party politics, 'the president is the head of state, not [the head] of either the opposition, or the coalition.' Throughout his tenure Kováč stubbornly refused to act as anyone's poodle president. Kováč is in no doubt that his oft-repeated declaration to be a president for all Slovakia was the main reason relations between the two men deteriorated so quickly. Soon after his election Kováč's decision to fill his newly created presidential office not only with HZDS and SNS members, but also advisers with affiliations to SDL, KDH, former VPN and those with no party allegiance annoyed the prime minister. There were tensions between the two men during

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958 Michal Kováč (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 11 May 2000)
959 Kováč interview. Across CEE many presidents have '...assumed the role of popular tribunes'. See Baylis, 'Presidents versus Prime Ministers', pp. 297-323 (p308)
960 See, for example, the interview with Mečiar in The Slovak Spectator, (6-12 December 1999)
961 Pravda, 2 March 1995
962 Kováč interview
963 ibid
1993, but what really riled Mečiar and caused the prime minister to view the president as a treacherous enemy was Kováč’s role in his removal from the premiership in March 1994.

Unlike Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia, in Slovakia the president, under article 110 clause 1 of the constitution, does theoretically have a free hand in appointing and dismissing the prime minister. Kováč used this power after the 1994 no-confidence vote in Vladimir Mečiar’s government to remove Mečiar from office and replace him with Jozef Moravčík. The president’s powers, however, are limited by parliamentary arithmetic. A prime minister has to be able to command the confidence of parliament. Moravčík, unlike his former party leader, could command the confidence of the parliament. Stung by the effect of the desertion of some of their erstwhile members, HZDS initiated a referendum calling for the dismissal of deputies who defected from the party that had nominated them. HZDS began gathering the required the 350 000 signatures required under article 95 of the constitution. Rather than waiting passively for the results of HZDS’ petition drive, President Kováč actively intervened and rejected the initiative on constitutional grounds. Kováč maintained that dismissing deputies, who had changed their party affiliation after elections, would contravene the constitutional prohibition on imperative mandates. With the wind taken out of the petition’s sails, the total number of signatures fell well short of the required number. In this regard, with a mixture of constitutional power and his own political actions, Kováč was able to thwart Mečiar’s plans.
Kováč had less success when it came to appointing and dismissing ministers. Article 111 of the constitution ascribes the president only reactive powers. (S)he can appoint and dismiss individual cabinet ministers only on the recommendation of the prime minister or, in the latter case, after a parliamentary vote of no-confidence in the minister concerned. On Mečiar’s recommendation, for example, Kováč dismissed Foreign Minister Milan Kňažko within weeks of being elected president in February 1993. Equally, Kováč followed Mečiar’s recommendation when he appointed Gustáv Krajčí, Karol Česnek and Pavol Hamžík as new ministers in August 1996. The constitutional picture, however, is blurred by article 116.4, which ‘states that a motion for the dismissal of a member of the government may be presented also by the prime minister.’ Mečiar used this power in 1993 to deal with what he regarded as disobedient and obstreperous ambassadors and ministers. President Kováč, however, did not stand idly by. He took the matter to the constitutional court, which found in his favour, ruling that only the president has the power to appoint or dismiss ministers and ministry officials.

Hell, it seems, hath no fury like a Mečiar scorned. From March 1994 onwards Mečiar regarded Kováč as someone akin to an enemy agent impeding his plans for Slovakia. After HZDS’ success at the ballot box in the autumn, the party sought to remove the president by fair means or foul. On 5 October, for example,

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964 Ústava Slovenskej republiky, Bratislava: Remedium (1993) p43
965 Leff, 'Dysfunctional Democratization?', pp. 36-50 (p45)
966 See Slovenska republika and Sme, 28 August 1998
967 Malová, ‘Slovakia: From the Ambiguous’, pp. 347-77 (p319)
Keltošová and Lexa visited the president and called on him to go. Meanwhile, (as described in chapter five) HZDS attempted to construct a coalition that would have a constitutional majority in parliament. Although HZDS failed to muster a constitutional majority, a government with a parliamentary majority was formed. No sooner had the government been sworn in than the campaign against the president began. The government undertook both a concerted effort to curtail the power of the presidency and an almost obsessive attempt to discredit the officeholder in what Leff described as the ‘besiegement of the Slovak presidency’ In January 1995 around the time of the announcement of the new government’s programme, Kováč asked the prime minister to let bygones be bygones and to leave the battles of the past ‘in the past’, but Mečiar would have none of it. Mečiar issued an order to his ministers not to meet the president, although there was frequent written communication and Kováč had regular contact with the ministries. HZDS ministers obeyed the instruction, but others, particularly Defence Minister Sitek, continued to meet the president, albeit only sporadically.

Kováč had to endure a series of no-confidence votes in his presidency and the removal of his powers to appoint key personnel in the media, defence and internal security. The presidential office’s budget was reduced to a bare minimum and the staff was reduced to just three by 1996-7. Even with an energetic campaigner such as Pavol Demeš at the helm, with such a small number of staff Kováč’s ability to do

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969 Kováč interview; Olga Keltošová (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 18 April 2000)
971 Leff, ‘Dysfunctional Democratization?’, pp. 36-50 (p44)
972 Kováč interview
973 ibid
974 Ján Sitek (interviewed by the author, Podbiejel, 25 May 2001)
much beyond the constitutional minimum was restricted.\textsuperscript{975} Thanks to what Mečiar and other HZDS leaders described as Kováč’s campaign to discredit Slovakia, the government even refused to allocate funds to support the organization of a summit of eleven Central European presidents in Levoča in January 1998.\textsuperscript{976} Kováč, however, fought back during his presidency. In May 1996, for instance, he filed formal changes against Mečiar for slander and defamation of the head of state.\textsuperscript{977} He also used his annual state of the nation address as a platform to criticize the government.\textsuperscript{978} Moreover, in the aftermath of the botched referendum in May 1997, Kováč accused Interior Minister Gustáv Krajčí of exceeding his ministerial powers by removing the question on the direct election of the president from the ballot paper.\textsuperscript{979} Krajčí responded with a vituperative open letter to the president in \textit{Slovenská republika}. Krajčí ended by expressing his hope that Kováč would not still be around when the next elections were held so he would not be able to ‘influence’ the outcome\textsuperscript{980}; which at least suggests Krajčí did not regard the president as an inert nobody. Asked what he regarded as his greatest success, Kováč declared along

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{977} RFE/RL \textit{Newsline}, 30 May 1996
\textsuperscript{978} See for example his 1996 speech reported in \textit{Sme} and \textit{Pravda}, 12 December 1996
\textsuperscript{979} See \textit{Sme} and \textit{Pravda}, 20 August 1998
\textsuperscript{980} Gustáv Krajčí, ‘Obviňuje všetkých okrem seba’, \textit{Slovenská republika}, 20 August 1997
\end{footnotesize}
with others he had ‘defended the principles of democracy’ and ‘defended respect for the constitution and constitutionalism.’

The attempt to discredit Kováč also formed the backdrop to one of the most infamous events of Slovak politics: the kidnapping/abduction of the president’s son. Kováč junior was no saint, but his involvement in the shady dealings of Technopol hardly merited being pumped with alcohol, tied up, thrown in the back of a car and dumped outside an Austrian police station. Suspicions quickly fell on the enemies of President Kováč. The who and the why of the kidnapping remain less than transparent, but an examination of the murky events of that night and the subsequent death of Róbert Remiáš and the bomb placed in investigative journalist Peter Tóth’s Opel Corsa, both of whom had discussed Kováč junior’s abduction with former SIS employee and witness, Oskar Fegyveres, points towards involvement by men close to the prime minister, particularly the head of the Slovak intelligence service, SIS, Ivan Lexa. Mečiar had twice nominated Lexa as a

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981 Kováč interview

982 Kováč senior was on holiday in the Low Tatars and when he was informed of his son’s abduction he immediately travelled to Austria. His suspicions that the Slovak intelligence service were involved were aroused as soon as he spoke to his son. An anonymous fax and subsequent discussions with Oskar Fegyveres and Róbert Remiáš, who came to see the president, convinced Kováč ‘99%’ that SIS had undertaken the kidnapping. Kováč interview

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minister, but Kováč had rejected him on both occasions. Lexa may have been acting on his own initiative, but the target was popular in HZDS circles, fuelled by a long and vicious campaign waged by the pro-government daily Slovenská republika. Mečiar's involvement or non-involvement remains unproven. His un-statesmanlike reaction to the news on television, the granting of amnesties to some of those accused and his decision to relinquish his parliamentary seat in favour of Lexa in 1998 and thereby give the former SIS chief parliamentary immunity do nothing to remove the suspicion of (at least partial) blame from the former prime minister. Despite the public vilification, the trauma of his son's kidnapping/abduction and the reduction of his office to a handful of staff, Kováč refused to budge. Kováč remained in office thanks to parliamentary arithmetic. The government could not muster the 90 votes required for constitutional amendments.

An indication of the impact Kováč and the institution of the presidency had on curbing Mečiar's plans can be gleaned from Slovakia's brief periods without a president. Between the parliamentary elections in June 1992 and the election of Kováč in February 1993, for example, Mečiar used the institutional space created


984 Slovenská republika reported on 7 March 1995 that an arrest warrant had been issued for the son of a prominent Slovak whom it named as Michal K. This was part of a larger agenda to discredit the president. For a taste, see Slovenská republika on 6 and 16 May 1995

985 Although Williams and Leško's accounts are persuasive. See Williams, 'Slovakia since 1993', pp. 123-58; and Marián Leško, 'Záhady a prekvapenia z prípadu zavlečenia', Pravda, 10 October 1995

by the absence of a president to increase his power base. In January 1993, for example, the prime minister ignored a parliamentary resolution for postponement and assumed the presidential power to appoint judges to the newly established constitutional court. After Kováč’s time as president had elapsed, on 2 March 1998, parliament proved unable to agree on a successor. In the absence of a president, some powers passed to the chairman of parliament (Ivan Gašparovič of HZDS) and some to the prime minister. Mečiar used his temporary presidential powers to issue an amnesty and halted the possible prosecution of individuals suspected of involvement in Kováč junior’s kidnapping. Moreover 28 ambassadors who had been appointed by Kováč were relieved of their duties. The examples in this paragraph, but also the examples in the remainder of this section, therefore, all point to the conclusion that Kováč as president was at times an effective veto point, at times thwarting Mečiar’s ambition. The limited powers of the president, however, ensured Kováč’s ability to act as a restraint on Mečiar was not extensive. There was little inherent in the institution of the presidency which actively contributed to Slovakia’s Sonderweg, but thanks to the personality of the office-holder the institution was an important limiting factor on prime ministerial ambition.

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988 Literally: a clock in central Bratislava counted down the days.
989 RFE/RL Newsline, 3 March 1998
The Electoral System

The choice of electoral system plays a significant role in determining the number and relative strength of the different political parties on the political pitch. More specifically electoral systems perform a number of different functions. Firstly, electoral systems transform the preferences of the people into seats in parliament. They also structure the alternatives presented to the electorate at election time. Indeed, they act as 'midwives of political parties'. The rise, fall and survival of parties is down in large measure to their success at the ballot box and the possibilities offered by the electoral system for gaining access to political power. Electoral systems also can play (both a negative and positive role) in contributing to the management of political, social, economic and ethnic divisions. Most significantly, the choice of electoral system plays a large role in explaining the degree of fragmentation of parliaments and thus influences the creation and durability of government which depend on the enduring confidence of a parliamentary majority. In creating the electoral system a number of choices need to be made. The most obvious choice is that between majoritarian, proportional or mixed formulas, but other issues such as open versus closed party lists, preference voting, thresholds, assembly size and district magnitude can also be significant.

As the Polish experience shows, the introduction of thresholds, for example, can have a 'reductive effect' on the number of parties in parliament and therefore

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991 See Elster, Offe & Preuss, Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies, p111

992 ibid p111

993 ibid p111

increase governability, but it can also nullify the votes of a significant portion of the electorate. Indeed, in elections in the early 1990s around a quarter of Czechs, Slovaks and Bulgarians voted for parties which failed to cross the respective thresholds. This fact highlights an important broader point. Whatever the constraining effects of the electoral systems might be, these may be mitigated by the degree of institutionalisation of the party system.¹⁹⁵

Most actors on the political stage are aware of the importance of the electoral laws. In the immediate post-communist period Bulgaria and Hungary opted for a more majoritarian electoral system and smaller constituencies compared to the more proportional system adopted by Czechoslovakia. In large part the decision had much to do with the power of the Communists during the round table discussions.¹⁹⁶ In Czechoslovakia, in contrast to Bulgaria and Hungary, the electoral system was largely imposed by the opposition.¹⁹⁷ With the change in the balance of power in the summer of 1991, however, Bulgaria dropped the majoritarian components of the 1990 electoral law in favour of a strong proportional system introduced using the d'Hondt formula and a 4% threshold.¹⁹⁸ Stalin may once have pithily remarked that it does not matter who votes, but who counts the votes, in democratic polities it also matters how the votes are counted. Apart from the obvious difference between proportional representation and majoritarian systems,

¹⁹⁷ Elster, Offe & Preuss, Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies, p112
¹⁹⁸ ibid p113
there is a wide variety of counting systems within PR systems, particularly regarding the level of the quota and the means for redistributing remainders. As Gallagher has shown Slovakia's option, Hagenbach-Bischoff/Droop, is less favourable to large parties than D'Hondt, STV or Imperiali. The different counting methods may only make the most marginal difference of one or two seats, but these can be the difference between majorities (normal and constitutional) and minorities.

In his classic study of political parties, Duverger forwarded a number of propositions linked to the core idea that certain electoral systems produce particular outcomes. He argued, for example, that plurality systems (in single-member districts) tend to lead to two-party competition. Duverger suggested the existence of a psychological effect: aware, for example, that a third party will be underrepresented implies a wasted vote, voters will, therefore, refrain from voting for it. Elster et al applied Duverger's argument that the more proportional an electoral system the more parties will be produced to Bulgaria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia (Czech and Slovak Republics). In contrast to other geographically broader studies, which suggested PR systems do show a greater degree of party system fragmentation, they found, up until 1994 at least, Duverger's law had

been turned on its head. Although Bulgaria was the most proportional of the electoral systems it had the fewest number of parties. Hungary, in contrast had the least proportional electoral system, but the highest number of parties. (Czechoslovakia and her successor states were in-between.) Elster et al argue an explanation may be found in Sartori’s idea electoral systems are only effective as long as the party system expresses ‘a natural system of channelment’.\(^\text{1002}\)

The importance of electoral rules is also clear from two examples from post-communist Czechoslovakia. The 5% electoral threshold eliminated moderate centre parties (and in consequence many of the leaders of Czechoslovakia’s first post-communist government) in 1992 and removed from the institutional framework political actors who could have lessened the likelihood of the dissolution option being chosen for Czechoslovakia. Secondly, although the election law did not require parties to organize on a republic level rather than a federal level it ‘offered every incentive to do so’. The vote remainder, for example, was ‘like all other features of the electoral law, republic-centric’.\(^\text{1003}\) Above all, the experience of post-communist Czechoslovakia indicates that even with an institutional structure created to promote consensus in a multi-ethnic state in situations of constitutional imbroglio an easy way out is to solve the problem by dissolving the common state. The institutional structures may not have ‘caused the demise of the common state’, but they were ‘certainly ineffective in preventing it’.\(^\text{1004}\)

\(^\text{1002}\) Elster, Offe & Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies*, p129

\(^\text{1003}\) David M. Olson, ‘Dissolution of the State: Political Parties and the 1992 Election in Czechoslovakia’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 26, 3, (September 1993), pp. 301-14

\(^\text{1004}\) Henderson, ‘Czechoslovakia’, pp. 111-33 (p119)
Electoral systems do not constitute all the pieces of the explanation jigsaw, but are nonetheless important pieces. Taagepera and Shugart are correct to assert that although electoral systems are not of 'overriding importance' they do matter⁴⁰⁰⁵, but they have to be put into the wider matrix of political explanation. Electoral system can explain why a particular party system is more likely to appear, but they cannot explain why party x rather than party y is more successful at the ballot box, forms the government and pursues its public policy agenda. Nevertheless HZDS' oft-stated desire for radical overhaul of the electoral system and, in the face of heavy criticism, the frequent tinkering with the electoral laws, such as the introduction of a single electoral region in 1998, indicate HZDS politicians were either acutely aware of the importance of the electoral laws, or severely deluded. The former seems more likely. Previous chapters, particularly three and five, have identified the importance of coalition government to the form, type and programme of government in Slovakia after independence. The electoral system played an important role in this regard by ensuring HZDS needed coalition partners to form a government with majority support in parliament.

⁴⁰⁰⁵ Taagerpera & Shugart, Seats & Votes, p236
Between 1989 and 1993 Slovakia’s parliament (NRSR) went from being a regional rubberstamp, faithfully executing the wishes of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, to the supreme legislative organ of a newly emerged democratic state. The new Slovak Constitution accorded the NRSR significant powers including the powers to adopt constitutional acts (article 86.a), amend the constitution (article 84.3), declare war (article 86.k) and the power both to elect and recall the president (article 86.b). The aforementioned powers, however, could only be exercised upon a favourable vote of three-fifths of all deputies (article 84.c).

In addition to these powers, the constitution bestowed on parliament a series of other powers including proposing referenda; establishing ministries and other institutions of state administration; debating fundamental issues of domestic, international, economic, social, and other policy; approving the budget; and consenting to the sending of troops outside Slovakia’s territory; the power to elect and recall the chair and vice-chair of the supreme auditing office (article 61.1); and the power to summon ministers, the chair of the constitutional court, and the prosecutor general to attend parliamentary sessions. Parliament was also given important powers over the judiciary including the election of the presidents and vice-presidents of the supreme court and the constitutional court, the appointment of judges, and the power to declare acts of government null and void.

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1006 This section builds on points made in Darina Malová and Tim Haughton, ‘Parliament and System Change in Slovakia’ in Susanne Kraatz and Silvia von Steinsdorff (eds.), *Parlamente und Systemtransformation im postsozialistischen Europa*, Opladen: Leske und Budrich (forthcoming, November 2001). Although I acknowledge my debt to my co-author for facts in this section, the language used and the tables were all my own work.

1007 *Ústava Slovenskej republiky*, pp. 37-8
of judges to regular courts (article 86j), and the power to propose candidates for membership of the constitutional court (article 134.2).

The Slovak constitution, however, does not specify every detail of the internal functioning of the legislature. Parliament’s presidium, for example, is composed of the chairman and a maximum of four deputy-chairmen, but the actual number of vice-chairmen depends on assembly voting. Equally, the constitution does not outline in great detail the structure, procedures and power of committees, which are regulated by the standing orders.\textsuperscript{1008}

Despite the array of powers under the constitution, the potency of the Slovak parliament’s power has been diminished by the rise in party power. Party power was not strong in 1989. Throughout the early 1990s in particular the Slovak party system was embryonic, fluid and rapidly developing. Frequent defections and new party formation was the order of the day. During the 1990-2 period over one fifth (44) of all seats in Slovakia’s parliament (150) changed from one party affiliation to another, a figure (28) almost replicated in the 1992 and 1994 period. Between 1994 and 1998, in contrast, only 5 seats (3%) changed hands.\textsuperscript{1009} Up to 1994, therefore, elections were not so much ‘definitive decision[s] about the party composition of


and size in parliament as [...] about individual members, who then become primary actors in the formation of new parties. 

6.1 The Number of Parties in Slovakia's Parliament 1990-8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliament</th>
<th>Number of parliamentary parties elected (treating electoral coalitions as single parties)</th>
<th>Number of parliamentary parties elected (treating parties in electoral coalitions as separate entities)</th>
<th>Number of separate parliamentary parties at the parliament's dissolution</th>
<th>Number of seats which changed hands during the parliamentary term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11*</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8**</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8***</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* plus three independents; ** plus three independents; *** plus four independents

The history of Slovakia's parliament during the early and mid-1990s is a story of increasing party cohesion. By early 1994 partisanship had really begun to take hold. Voting on party lines on many key issues approached 100%. Indeed, the 1994 parliamentary election appears to mark a dividing line. It is worth emphasizing that in both 1991 and 1994 splits in Slovakia's parliamentary parties led directly to the establishment of new governments. The Gaulieder case outlined in chapter four gave a stark example of the stick used to enforce discipline, but carrots (i.e. rewards for party loyalty) may have been as important as sticks in explaining the cohesion.

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1011 Based on Malová & Krause, 'Parliamentary Party Groups in Slovakia', pp. 195-213 (pp. 200-1)

1012 *ibid* p198
Good performance and loyalty in parliament was a reliable road to ministerial office and high civil service position. Perhaps inevitably the only area where MPs from across the political spectrum united against the government was when MPs salaries were up for discussion.

Parliament did not become an irrelevant body after independence. The decision by many leading politicians to opt to sit in parliament rather than around the cabinet table is evidence of the importance ascribed to the institution. After the 1994 election a few high-ranking members of HZDS (most notably Ivan Gašparovič and Augustin Marián Húska) took up parliamentary positions. Moreover, the leaders of the two other coalition partners, Ján Ľupták and Ján Slota, both opted for parliament. In Slota’s case, his commitment as mayor of one of Slovakia’s largest towns, Žilina, may have played a part. The presence of both Gašparovič and Húska was important for two slightly contradictory reasons. Parliament’s legislative supremacy demanded participation by high-level members of HZDS, but the presence of such figures helped ensure the parliamentary rank-and-file of HZDS stuck to the leadership’s script and was hence a pliant instrument of the government. Gašparovič’s position as parliamentary chairman also put control of the parliamentary agenda in the hands of a HZDS loyalist. The preference for parliament over government was even more marked during the Moravčík government. That coalition did not include the leader of any of the coalition

1013 Kopecký, Parliaments in the Czech and Slovak Republics, pp. 188-9
1014 ibid pp. 132-3
1015 article 109 of the Slovak constitution forbids ministers from serving simultaneously as deputies.
member parties (until Prime Minister Jozef Moravčík was elected to his party’s presidency later in the coalition period).

Given the fact that the executive cannot resort to parallel legislation such as decrees and ordinances, the Slovak parliament is a central and unavoidable part of the legislative process. Although the constitution allows the government, MPs (both individually and in groups), and committees to propose bills, in practice the government proposed the overwhelming majority of laws. Individual members have the right to propose legislation, but are hampered by the lack of a support staff to draft bills correctly and in accordance with the law. Research has shown that the proportion of bills submitted by individual members, outside the context of the parliamentary party groupings, decreased from 30% of the total in 1990 to 25% during 1992-94. As the tables below show, the declining trend continued after 1994.

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1016 See table below
6.2 Legislative Initiative, Government or Parliamentary: Bills Passed By the Slovak Parliament 1994-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Bills passed</th>
<th>Number of Government Proposed Bills passed</th>
<th>Government Proposed Bills: Percentage of total bills passed</th>
<th>Number of Bills passed proposed by Parliamentarians</th>
<th>Parliamentarian proposed bills: Percentage of total bills passed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994 (after autumn elections)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 (until autumn elections)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 (after autumn elections)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3 Bills not Passed by Slovak Parliament 1994-9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliamentary Term</th>
<th>Total Number of Bills Rejected</th>
<th>Number of Government Bills Rejected**</th>
<th>Government Bills Rejected: % of total</th>
<th>Number of Parliamentarian proposed bills rejected</th>
<th>Parliamentarian proposed bills rejected: % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994-8</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data available only until end of 1999

** After both the 1994 and 1998 elections there was a time lag between the elections and the formation of the government. Given the change in parliamentary arithmetic, 'government' is taken here to mean the parties who formed a government after the elections, even if they were not yet officially a government.

In theory committees were an important part of the legislative process in Slovakia with the powers to propose and oversee legislation, but also to summon any minister or civil servant and institute inquiries into the activities of administrative agencies and state-owned enterprises. The power of committees between 1994 and 1998 were restricted by two factors. Responsibility for assigning bills to committees was in the hands of the chairman of parliament and key Mečiar ally, Ivan Gašparovič, but more significantly the committee system became less an institution of criticism and careful reflection of proposals and more an instrument of party power. Acutely aware of the role of committees, the HZDS-led coalition formed in 1994 dictated the composition of parliamentary committees. Parliamentary standing orders provide that parliament designates committees members through voting during the floor session. Except for the ‘Special Controlling Committees’ which are

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1019 Földešová & Kiripolská, Prehľad legislatívnej činnosti Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky, pp. 39-41. Siváková & Földešová, Prehľad zákonov prijatých v priebehu I. volebného obdobia Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky, pp. 50-60
proportional under article 60 of the 1996 standing orders, the standing orders do not require that committee appointments reflect the party ratio of parliament as a whole or the specialisation of parliamentary deputies, but between 1990 and 1994 parliamentary coalitions followed such informal rules, even while securing a coalition majority in each committee. The 1994-8 coalition, however, awarded itself disproportionately large majorities on several important committees and decreased the usual number of opposition representatives. Many of the displaced opposition deputies found themselves appointed to the environment and ecology committee whose membership increased from nine to nineteen in the reshuffling. Relegation of opposition members to this committee actually put them in the majority there, but in exchange for losing control over a very limited committee, the coalition gained an even more comfortable majority in the remaining ten more important ones.\textsuperscript{1020}

Given the role of committees in the legislative process, the changing of committee membership provided an important mechanism for ensuring the co-ordination of the coalition's legislative agenda and the minimising of potential obstruction from opposition members. The end of the informal system of proportional committee membership led to committees becoming sharply more partisan. Surveys of Slovak deputies highlighted, the \textit{party} (whether in the form of the parliamentary party, the party leadership or the party's executive) was the dominant, but not exclusive, determinant of committee membership. Moreover, voting patterns have increasingly followed party lines.\textsuperscript{1021}


\textsuperscript{1021} Malová & Siváková, ‘The National Council of the Slovak Republic’, pp. 108-33; Kopecký, \textit{Parliaments in the Czech and Slovak Republics}
The power and limits of controlling parliamentary committees was highlighted by the DÚ affair. Democratic Union (DÚ) had been formed in 1994 from splinter groups from HZDS and SNS. The party contested the 1994 election and won parliamentary representation, but HZDS led a campaign claiming the DÚ’s electoral registration petition included many fake signatures. Thanks to control over the mandate and immunity committee the government were able to create a parliamentary commission containing no members of the opposition. It duly reported back in October 1995 claiming the list had contained insufficient valid signatures (only 8,219 of the 10,000 required). The head of the commission, Dušan Macuška, suggested the DÚ deputies should voluntarily resign. The DÚ deputies refused to resign and the government dropped its protests after the constitutional court confirmed the decisions of both regional and national-level election commissions to accept the lists. The government eventually backed down. Claims HZDS and SNS were merely acting out of the best intention of wanting to uphold the law, however, do not hold. ZRS’ candidate list was also under suspicion at the time, but Meciar seemed content with Šupák’s assurances that everything was in order.1022 The commission along with another commission instigated to examine the events of March 1994 were just ‘tool[s] of the governing majority to enhance its rule and undermine the legitimacy of the opposition.’1023

Since the 1994 elections, the opposition parties have been adept at using parliament, particularly during plenary sessions, as a focal point of discontent with the

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1023 Kopecký, Parliaments in the Czech and Slovak Republics, p135
government of the day. During the 1994-8 government, the no-confidence weapon was used by the opposition against Agriculture and Culture Ministers, Peter Baco and Ivan Hudec, to highlight their activities. The current opposition (1998-) has used the no-confidence weapon no fewer than seven times, including once against Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda, between early 1999 and mid-2000. These votes have not been effective in achieving the ultimate aim (of removing the minister), but they did direct the media’s and public’s attention towards those ministers. The no-confidence weapon, however, has been successful on one important occasion: in March 1994 when Mečiar lost a vote of no confidence and his government resigned.

The importance of party cohesion is raised again by this example. The no-confidence vote succeeded thanks to defections from HZDS and SNS. Apart from this one success, oppositions particularly after the 1994 elections, have been limited in their influence not least because with only 66 deputies out of a total of 150 any opposition proposal was doomed to failure without abstentions, absences or support of a number of deputies from the government parties. There was only one attempt to organize a common meeting of the opposition party groups aimed at calling an extraordinary parliamentary session in October 1995. However, SDL’s internal debate over possible co-operation with the government and the demands of its rank-and-file members resulted in a rejection of co-operation with KDH. It should be noted, however, that both KDH and SDL joined other opposition parties in the round table talks in spring 1998, which proved to be the springboard for the formation of the new government after the 1998 elections.

1024 The fractured and ideologically disparate nature of the opposition mentioned in chapter three can be factored in here.
In terms of veto power, it seems clear the ebb and flow of parliamentary power has been determined largely by the power and discipline of the governing coalition's parliamentary parties (although the movement of power has been more towards the executive and away from parliament). The more stable and secure the government's parliamentary majority, the weaker the policy-forming and amending role of parliament. After the 1990 and 1992 elections the fragility of the governing coalitions, frequent splitting of parties and lack of party discipline meant that parliament exercised considerable power, demonstrated by the high proportion of private members bills and the substantial amendments, both in committee and floor sessions, to governmental bills. One could even go as far as to say that the Slovak parliament represented the 'transformative' or 'non-party' mode of legislature until the successful vote of no-confidence in the HZDS-SNS government in early 1994. From 1994 onwards, particularly due to increased party cohesion and discipline executive-legislative relations in the NRSR, things have changed. Deputies and ministers have increasingly demonstrated their loyalty to their party. The NRSR came to resemble an 'arena' or 'inter-party' mode of legislature. Safe in the knowledge of a reasonably pliant parliamentary contingent, the governing parties in Slovakia, particularly during 1994-8 government, have not had to worry about parliament blocking or substantially amending much of the governmental programme. The Slovak parliament, in Liebert's terms, may not have

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1026 Anthony King, 'Modes of Executive-Legislative Relations: Great Britain, France, and West Germany' in Norton (ed.), *Legislatures*, pp. 208-36
1027 Polsby, 'Legislature', pp. 129-48
1028 King, 'Modes of Executive-Legislative Relations', pp. 208-36

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been a ‘submissive’ (i.e. rubber stamp) legislature, but it was ‘subordinate’ (initiative lies in hands of executive). 1029

The Constitutional Court

The establishment of a constitutional court embodies the idea of constitutional supremacy over parliamentary sovereignty. Article 124 of the Slovak Constitution describes the constitutional court as an ‘independent judicial organ’ created to ‘defend constitutionality.’ 1030 Nonetheless, constitutional courts can be politicised. Whereas in the Hungarian and Bulgarian examples the constitutional courts were not devised as parts of the judiciary, in both the Czech and Slovak cases, the constitutional courts were created as special courts within the judicial power of the state. In Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia all the constitutional courts have the right to declare laws unconstitutional. In Hungary this has proved to be problematic due to a contradiction at the heart of the constitution. The Hungarian National Assembly is described as the guarantor of the constitutional order, but the constitution is the ‘Fundamental Law of the Republic of Hungary’. This ambiguity may help explain the fact that the constitutional court has been heavily involved in the political struggles of parliament, government and the presidency. 1031

The Slovak Constitutional Court was established in March 1993. Article 134 of the constitution decrees that the president appoints members of the court from a short-

1030 Ústava Slovenskej republiky, p48
1031 Elster, Offe & Preuss, Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies, pp. 102-5
list drawn up by parliament. Parliament elects the president and vice-president.\textsuperscript{1032} The judges serve for seven years. The court has the right to examine the constitutionality of any law, statue, or regulation passed by parliament, cabinet of ministers, or local government. The court, however, does not have the power of \textit{a priori} constitutional review.\textsuperscript{1033} The court is, therefore, in theory the bulwark against attempts by government to overstep its constitutional powers. The efficaciousness of the Slovak constitutional court in acting as a veto player will be assessed in relation to a number of the high profile cases during the Mečiar years.

Two parliamentary events discussed in previous chapters are worth revisiting. Even before the 1994-8 government had been officially formed, HZDS, SNS and ZRS deputies took part in the \textit{Long Parliamentary Night}. They may have won the free and fair election, but their actions on that night suggested they did not feel duty-bound to conform to constitutional niceties. The ‘rights, rules and conventions’ of the polity did not enjoy any sanctity, but were ‘contingent on the fit with the agenda of the moment’.\textsuperscript{1034} The constitutional court was powerless to intervene in the clear contravention of the spirit of a democratic polity.

\textsuperscript{1032} \textit{Ústava Slovenskej republiky}, pp. 48-52


Following hard on the heels of Gaulieder’s explosion from parliament (described in chapter four) was the case of Emil Spišák caused by the death of SNS deputy Bartolomej Kunc in December 1996. According to electoral law, his place was supposed to be taken by the next candidate on the party’s electoral list, Emil Spišák. Spišák relations with his party had deteriorated so much that he was expelled from SNS. The Nationalists nominated Ladislav Hruška to become Kunc’s successor, but Spišák, keen to exercise his right, wrote to the chairman of parliament, Ivan Gašparovič, demanding to be sworn in as a deputy in accordance with the law. Gašparovič, however, did not respond. Following a resolution of the mandate committee, 73 deputies of the ruling coalition passed a resolution accepting Hruška as Kunc’s replacement in parliament. Spišák responded by filing a complaint based on article 30.4 of the constitution which states that ‘all citizens shall have equal access to elected or public offices.’ The constitutional court ruled on 8 January 1998 that not only had this constitutional provision been violated, but that parliament had violated the electoral law. The constitutional court, however, proved to be toothless in this regard. Only parliament, has the right to cancel its own decision. Despite both internal and international pressure to reverse the revocation of Gaulieder and Kunc’s mandates the governing parties refused to budge (a clear example of the limits of the ‘world opinion’ in the decision-making model outlined in chapter three). Whenever the opposition parties attempted to summon a special session of the legislature in order to discuss the Gaulieder’s and Kunc’s cases, representatives of the ruling coalition either voted to remove that issue from the

1035 Darina Malová, ‘Nefáchká inštitucionalizácia parlamentnej demokracie na Slovensku’, Politologická revue, 1, (June 1998), pp. 43-59
agenda, or simply boycotted the session and hence deprived the session of the requisite quorum.

The constitutional court was also involved in one of the headline grabbing events of the 1994-8 government: the 1997 referendum on NATO membership and the direct election of the president. At the end of 1996 six opposition parties (KDH, DS, DIU, Spolužitie, MKDH a MOS) launched a petition drive to change the constitution to a directly elected presidency. The governing parties accused President Kováč of improperly combining unrelated questions on NATO membership and the election of the president in one referendum. The Constitution, however, clearly states the final decision on any referendum, including the number of questions, lies with the president. In April the Central Referendum Commission (CRC) endorsed the four-question referendum and decided on the format of the ballot paper. On 22 April the government demanded the constitutional court declare the question on the direct presidential elections was illegal on the grounds that the constitution cannot be changed by referendum. Three days later the CRC retaliated, declaring that the government’s attempt to interfere in the referendum was illegal. Finally, on 14 May the constitutional court ruled against the government. In open disregard of the court’s decision, Interior Minister, Gustáv

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1036 For a good, if rather partial, account see Eastern Europe Newsletter, 11, 11, (9 June 1997)
1038 HZDS politicians continued this line of argument after the referendum. See Dušan Slobodník, ‘Ideme svojou nefáhkou cestou’, Slovenská republika, 27 June 1997
Krajčí, issued ballot papers containing only the three questions regarding NATO membership and omitted the direct presidential election question. Two days before the referendum the constitutional court, under pressure from the government, ruled that the subject of a referendum could be a constitutional one, but that the attachment of the fourth question contravened the law on referendums, meaning that if the electorate backed the proposal the constitution would not have to be changed. Rather, it would be an expression of the people’s desire. Krajčí used this dubious ruling as an excuse. Although the constitutional court found against Krajčí’s decision in a ruling on 9 February 1998, the government backed the minister. In addition, in April after Kováč’s term had expired, the government made use of its presidential powers and withdrew from the constitutional court a complaint by the then ex-President Kováč regarding the conduct of the referendum.

In the run-up to the 1998 elections HZDS made two naked attempts to disadvantage its main opponent, SDK, and alter the political landscape in its favour. Thanks to the fact that only a simple majority is required to change electoral law, the government passed an amendment in May 1998 requiring each individual party in the coalition to secure more than 5% of the vote. Furthermore, in early August 1998 HZDS petitioned the supreme court to cancel the registration of the SDK candidate list as a party and ‘requalify’ the SDK’s status as a five party coalition. As a five-party coalition SDK would have needed to obtain a far larger share of the vote in order to secure parliamentary representation. The constitutional court,

Mesežníkov, ‘Domestic Politics’, pp. 13-64 (p15). It should, of course, be noted that the formation of SDK was an equally naked (but constitutional) attempt to defeat the governing coalition at the ballot box. See Lubomír Kopeček, ‘Slovenská demokratická koalice – vznik, geneze a charakteristika’, Politologický časopis, 3, (1999), pp. 248-70
however, found in SDK’s favour; confirming SDK as a ‘party’. The constitutional court also ruled on the amendments to the law on parliamentary elections, finding a number of provisions against the constitution, including restrictions on the electronic media. The ruling was only made, however, in May 1999 after the elections had taken place. In the light of Gaulieder and Spišák that begs the question: if the 1994-8 government had been re-elected would they have taken any notice of the ruling?

**Placing Institutions Back into the System: the Role of Ambiguity**

Constitutions are not unambiguous documents. Many of the CEE countries began their institutionalisation of democracy with vaguely drafted constitutions; especially ambiguous were the provisions specifying the separation of powers and the weak checks and balances. Flexibility is required in a polity, particularly one undergoing a rapid societal change. Indeed, in such circumstances rigid institutional frameworks can engender greater unpredictability and uncertainty. Nonetheless, ambiguity provides opportunities for those politicians seeking to

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1042 Holmes, ‘Conceptions of Democracy in the Draft Constitutions of Post-Communist Countries’, pp. 71-81 (p73)

enhance their powers. The ascription of competences in the field of Polish foreign affairs, for instance, to decision-making bodies and institutions such as parliament, president and foreign minister under both the 1992 and 1997 constitutions provided opportunities for actors wishing to enhance their power. Lech Wałęsa, for example, 'took advantage of every conceivable kind of ambiguity of the Little Constitution [...] stretching its provisions to extend his powers.' The Slovak constitutional order was still 'provisional' and 'remained all too clearly subject to revision for political advantage.' Mečiar stretched the system to the limit. As a Slovak prime minister with a majority in a unicameral parliamentary democracy, the 'effective number of vetoes' was limited. The only points in the policy process where the mobilization of opposition was able to thwart policy innovation were the decisions of the president, the constitutional court and whenever SNS and ZRS flexed their muscles. All three utilized their veto point power from time to time, but not frequently.

This chapter has shone the spotlight on the institutional framework of Slovak politics. It has attempted to argue that institutions matter, but they do not, by themselves, determine political development. Institutions, however, do matter. ‘[T]hey can be a source of both systematic stability and systematic change’.

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1045 Sanford, ‘Parliamentary Control and the Constitutional Definition of Foreign Policy’, pp. 769-97 (especially pp. 771-74)

1046 Batt & Wolczuk, ‘Redefining the State’, pp. 83-102 (p91)

1047 Leff, ‘Dysfunctional Democratization?’, pp. 36-50 p37

Institutions can create conditions for a relatively stable hierarchy of authority.\textsuperscript{1049} ‘Constitutions play an important role in channelling political activity’. ‘The outcome of many struggles over power and policy can be traced to the general and sometimes even specific influence of those constitutions.’\textsuperscript{1050} For all the polarization, the Slovak political system was relatively successful in managing the level of political conflict. Institutions proved to be reasonably robust. Even though the government grew to despise him, the president remained in office until the end of his term.

Nonetheless, agency matters. To treat politics as a process in which ‘institutions confer power on some groups rather than others, with a set of interests given in advance of the process, is to neglect the creative contribution that political contention can make to the definition of interests and, thus, misspecifies the political process quite fundamentally.’\textsuperscript{1051} Indeed as the chapter on leadership and decision-making theory suggest, the personality of the office-holder is as important, if not sometimes more important, than the formal political structure.\textsuperscript{1052} Indeed, if one were to play a counterfactual game, it is hard not to imagine, even if the Slovak


\textsuperscript{1052} McGregor comes to similar conclusions. See McGregor, ‘The Presidency in East Central Europe’, pp. 23-31
political framework were the same, a different prime minister to Mečiar would have produced a different political outcome in Slovakia. Decisions are made by political actors, but these decisions are made within an institutional framework which acts as both facilitator and impeder.
The last piece of the jigsaw this thesis will examine is public opinion. The intention here is to flesh out the major points alluded to in earlier chapters and to provide a discussion which shines a spotlight on those parts of the decision-making environment Parsons described as ‘the current state of the immediate environment’ and the ‘conscious political and politically relevant orientations’ and what was referred to in the model outlined in chapter three simply as ‘public opinion’. Drawing on the excellent work undertaken by Krivy, Krause, and others and some of the author’s own calculations using data from surveys conducted by FOCUS and IVO, it intends to grapple with the one public opinion question central to this thesis: why did a significant section of the Slovak electorate support HZDS? The question will be largely tackled by examining an explanation provided by leading HZDS politician Peter Baco. Although part of the explanation for the

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1056 Peter Baco (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 15 March 2000)
party's level of support lies in HZDS' ideology and the policies pursued by HZDS and its allies, given the earlier discussion of the party's ideology and programme this chapter will avoid repetition and concentrate not on the appeal, but on the reception of the party's promises and policies and on their correspondence to certain group's values and preferences.

Comparing the trajectories of Slovakia to her erstwhile federal partner 'might lead an observer to expect that Slovaks and Czechs held radically different sets of political opinions'. As the comparative research conducted by the CEU, a range of other surveys and Krause's number crunching have shown, however, the 'political opinions of the average Slovak differed little from those of the average Czech.' Nonetheless, closer examination of the opinions of Czech and Slovak voters 'shows that the similarity of their opinions actually conceals meaningful and significant differences in the weight that they gave to particular issues when making political decisions.' Whilst Czech voters tend to evaluate parties on the familiar basis of socio-economic questions, Slovaks 'evaluate parties on the basis of questions about the nation and democracy'.

As the reader of this thesis will have become all too aware by now, chronological parameters are helpful in making a problem more manageable, but they are not water-tight categories. In order to assess public opinion in the 1993-8 period it

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1057 Krause, 'Public Opinion and Party Choice in Slovakia and the Czech Republic', pp. 23-46 (p23)
1058 ibid pp. 23, 25. Krause cites surveys conducted by AISA, CSA and ISSP
1060 ibid pp. 23-46 (p24)
would be folly to ignore aspects of the pre-independence period, particularly the 1992 elections, if for no other reason than Slovakia was governed until the 1994 elections by individuals and parties elected in June 1992.

Voting is an imprecise mechanism for gauging public opinion. It is difficult to assess public opinion on the basis of the bundle of policies presented to voters at an election. Caution should be the watchword before reading too much into the electorate’s views. Although this author would be the first to ascribe ordinary voters with more common sense than some others, by their own admission many electors do not understand certain government policies. In a FOCUS poll conducted in December 1995, for example, 39% of respondents admitted to only partially understanding the privatization process and 22% claimed not to understand the government’s policy at all.

Individuals make their choice on packages of promises presented to them at election time. Identifying beyond reasonable doubt which factor(s) tip(s) the balance in favour of party x over party y can be a forlorn task. The best the analyst can do is suggest, on the balance of probabilities, the relative importance of factor x over factor y. Moreover, factors may not always be clearly separate. As discussed in previous chapters, the debate on the direction, speed and purpose of Klausite

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economic reform became inextricably linked to the national question in the early 1990s. These caveats will be borne in mind when assessing Baco’s triadic explanation. Before turning to Baco’s analysis it is worth briefly reviewing the literature on cleavage structure.

**Cleavage Structures**

Identifying and operationalizing cleavages has been a popular pastime amongst political scientists since the publication of Lipset and Rokkan’s seminal study in 1967. The applicability of these cleavages, even in a modified form, has generated a wealth of literature. Whether Lipset and Rokkan’s four main cleavages based on the West European experience (centre-periphery, religious-secular, urban-agrarian and owner-worker) are helpful for post-communist Slovakia

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or not, there is general consensus that party systems are structured by ‘a configuration of cleavages’.

The search for more satisfying explanations have led political scientists and sociologists to search for alternative categorisations. Markowski identified four divisions across CEE: ‘economic populism versus market liberalism’, ‘participation’/non-participation, ‘libertarian-cosmopolitan’/non-libertarian cosmopolitan, ‘religious’/non-religious. In Slovakia he identified a fifth ‘idiosyncratic’ factor related to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. Others have drawn on the historical and ethnographical traditions of Slovakia’s regions highlighting divisions between catholics and evangelicals, ‘European’ as opposed to traditional attitudes, differing attitudes towards the free market, and ‘democrats’ as opposed to ‘anti-democrats’. Historical explanations can be helpful, but it is a short step to falling into a political culture trap. Krivý, has identified a strong correlation between regions which voted proportionally more for HZDS and SNS in the 1990s with those regions which voted for Andrej Hlinka’s inter-war party. To take that fact one step further by suggesting particular values have been passed down unscathed from the 1930s to the 1990s runs the risk of falling into the worst kind of political culture theory which this thesis countered in earlier chapters. If nothing else, such a view of timeless values reduces to a minimum the impact of 40

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1067 Krivý et al, Slovensko a jeho regióny, pp. 11-3
1068 Krivý, Čo prezrádzajú volebné výsledky?, pp. 90-101
Tim Haughton Explaining the Slovak Sonderweg

years of Communism in Slovakia. Communism may have influenced some values and behaviour by 'negative reaction',

but it affected views and values. Communism, for example, bequeathed to the citizens of Slovakia the belief that it was the state’s role to provide high levels of material security and social welfare guarantees.

As Evans and Whitefield outline, the impact of the communist inheritance on the social bases, dimensions and stability of party competition has been explained in three ways: the ‘missing middle’, modernization and a comparative communist approach. The missing middle argues the communist legacy has led to individuals lacking institutional or social structure identities from which to derive political interests other than those of the nation or mass society.

The modernists posit the existence of developments similar to those in the West and hence talk of interest development convergence. The comparativists in contrast 'point to the role of country-specific factors in explaining the formation of interests in communist societies.'

Evans and Whitefield prefer the third explanation which, given its country-specific character, can incorporate ‘missing middle’ and modernization explanations. Contrasting the ‘high’ success, ‘high’ ethnic homogeneity and non-breakaway nature of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic to the rest of Central

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1070 Sharon Wolchik, ‘The Czech Republic and Slovakia’ in Barany & Volgyes (eds.), The Legacies of Communism in Eastern Europe, pp. 152-176


1072 ibid p534

1073 ibid p534
Tim Haughton Explaining the Slovak *Sonderweg*

and Eastern Europe they were much more optimistic about the prospects for Western-style patterns of social cleavage and party systems in those three countries.\(^{1074}\)

From his analysis of the CEU data Krause identified four key factors for the Czech and Slovak Republics: (a) *religion* ‘involving church influence, abortion and atheists’; (b) *nation* ‘involving nationalism, the split of Czechoslovakia and patriotism’; (c) *economy* ‘involving privatization, factory closure and income differentials’; and (d) *transformation* ‘involving the willingness to accept major changes in the immediate conditions of daily life involved in the transition away from communism, such as crime, unemployment, and private ownership’.\(^{1075}\) Using factor analysis, Krause has shown the locations of party supporters in both Slovakia and the Czech Republic are internally consistent throughout the 1992-6 period.\(^{1076}\) SNS, HZDS and ZRS stand together near one pole, whereas KDH, MK and DÚ stand close to the opposite pole. SDL', however, shifts from a position of proximity to the HZDS cluster towards the opposite pole over time, although it does move back slightly towards the HZDS grouping in 1996, when the coalition went through its crisis and when SDL' offered to support a HZDS government.\(^{1077}\) Krause then ran factor tests to show that whilst party choice in the Czech Republic involved ‘primarily economic and socio-economic questions’ the results for Slovakia differ significantly. In 1992 three factors correlate well with the preference dimension:

\(^{1074}\) *ibid* p541

\(^{1075}\) Krause, ‘Public Opinion and Party Choice in Slovakia and the Czech Republic’, p29

\(^{1076}\) *ibid* p35

\(^{1077}\) See chapter five
religion, economy and nation. These three factors form the basis of Baco’s argument which will be examined below.

Two notes of caution should be inserted here. Cleavage structures can explain much, but not everything. To employ the adapted language of economics, they represent the latent demand in the electoral marketplace ready to be tapped by potential suppliers. Immediately after the revolutions of 1989 the power of the monopoly supplier was deprived of its position and was replaced by a proliferation of parties. Many of these not only lacked a membership base and organizational infrastructure that could be used to political advantage, they also failed to tap into the latent demand. Other parties, however, were far better at appealing to the new consumers in the electoral marketplace. To understand fully the appeal of HZDS, therefore, requires an appreciation of the ideology, programme and organization of the party discussed in chapter five. Secondly, in the initial post-revolutionary period in particular, the electoral marketplace was very fluid. Indeed, one point that will become clear in this chapter is that HZDS’ support base has shifted over the course of the 1990s.

Exploring Baco’s Triadic Explanation

HZDS has been the most successful Slovak political party at the ballot box since its creation in 1991. Former Agriculture minister and HZDS stalwart, Peter Baco, argues the party’s support is built on three pillars: (a) those who have suffered (more) during economic transformation, particularly the rural population and the

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inhabitants of northern and central Slovakia; (b) the ‘Christian aspect’, (c) and HZDS’ greater sensitivity to the voters’ desire for a ‘national aspect’.

Before embarking on a detailed analysis of Baco’s explanation, it is worth bearing in mind the results of a multiple regression (ordinary least squares) test conducted by the author using the data from the FOCUS surveys. The HZDS vote category was the dependent variable and was tested against four available variables: Catholic/non-Catholic, worker/non-worker, village dweller/non-village dweller, and pensioner/non-pensioner. The test was then re-run using three other parties (KDH, SDL and SNS) as the dependent variable. The author is fully aware not just of the limitations of such an analysis, but also that Krivy and others have subjected the raw statistics to a meticulous, comprehensive and thorough analysis; hence the results are considered to be no more than supporting data. Nevertheless, the results are interesting and indicative and will be incorporated into the detailed analysis.

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1079 Baco interview
1080 FOCUS/IVO surveys, Aktuálne problémy Slovenska
1081 village in the FOCUS/IVO studies is taken to mean a municipality of less than 1000 inhabitants
7.1 Multiple Regression Tests Based on FOCUS/IVO Data

(a) FOCUS January 1992 t values and standardized beta coefficients (t values appear first)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Worker</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Pensioner</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>-.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>4.697</td>
<td>.143**</td>
<td>-2.587</td>
<td>-.081</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDL</td>
<td>-3.801</td>
<td>-1.16**</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>-.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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N/S t value <1.96;
* significant at the <.005 level
** significant at the <.001 level

(b) FOCUS October 1993 t values and standardized beta coefficients (t values appear first)

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<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Worker</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Pensioner</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>3.568</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDL</td>
<td>-6.046</td>
<td>-.152**</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>2.359</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>-2.508*</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

317
(c) FOCUS December 1994 t values and standardized beta coefficients (t values appear first)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party voters</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Worker</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Pensioner</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>3.609</td>
<td>.098**</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>5.012</td>
<td>.141**</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>6.087</td>
<td>.165**</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>2.147</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDE</td>
<td>-3.620</td>
<td>-.099**</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>2.955</td>
<td>-4.192</td>
<td>-.118**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>2.896</td>
<td>.079*</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-4.192</td>
<td>-.118**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) FOCUS December 1995 t values and standardized beta coefficients (t values appear first)

<table>
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<th>Party voters</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Worker</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Pensioner</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>4.099</td>
<td>.132**</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>3.810</td>
<td>.120**</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>3.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDE</td>
<td>-3.238</td>
<td>-.102</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>3.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>1.775</td>
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</table>
(e) IVO January 1997 t values and standardized beta coefficients (t values appear first)\(^{1082}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Worker</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Pensioner</th>
<th>Adjusted R(^2)</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>4.127</td>
<td>.087**</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDL</td>
<td>-5.506</td>
<td>-.115**</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>-.2383</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>3.230</td>
<td>.068*</td>
<td>N/S</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>3.566</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) those who have suffered (more) during economic transformation

Although HZDS has garnered support from across the social spectrum and from all four corners of the country, the party has been less successful in attracting support from the *winners* (private entrepreneurs, white collar workers, university educated) of economic reform, but more successful in attracting votes from the *losers* (the unemployed, retirees, blue collar and agricultural workers).\(^{1083}\) The latter group is concentrated in the rural areas, particularly in northern and central Slovakia.

Unemployment has been one of the most visible indicators of those who have lost out. The market has introduced unemployment into societies where it was (nominally at least) non-existent. Regression analysis conducted by Fidrmuc confirms what one might expect that ‘unemployment strongly reduces support for parties associated with economic reforms, and increases for left wing parties.’ He

\(^{1082}\) Given the absence of the KDH and pensioner variable, these results cannot be directly compared with the other results, but have been included for indicative purposes.

calculated a one-percentage point increase in the rate of regional unemployment reduced the electoral showing of pro-reform parties by around the same amount.\textsuperscript{1084}

The Slovak case, however, appears less clear-cut. A brief review of the FOCUS/IVO data shows the unemployment variable was not significant for HZDS, SNS, SDL and SNS in both October 1992 and December 1994. Even in IVO’s January 1999 survey unemployment was not a significant factor explaining HZDS support.\textsuperscript{1085} Fidrmuc offers a possible answer. His regression analysis, based on different statistics, suggests unemployment also reduces support for the nationalists, but that relationship is by no means as strong.\textsuperscript{1086} The national aspect of the HZDS vote will be discussed below.

Age is not a neat divider of opinions on marketization, but two generalizations can be made. The young are proportionally keener on the idea of a free market reforms and the old have suffered disproportionally more from the adverse effects of reform.\textsuperscript{1087} Fidrmuc’s research, however, suggests the ‘retirees’ variable is insignificant across the V4.\textsuperscript{1088} In the Slovak case, the stereotypical image of the HZDS voter is the old granny. The regression analysis using the FOCUS/IVO data displayed above, however, yields revealing results. The results suggest the

\textsuperscript{1084} Fidrmuc, ‘Economics of voting in post-communist countries’, pp. 199-217 (p212)
\textsuperscript{1085} Author’s own calculations based on FOCUS and IVO opinion survey data January 1992, October 1994, January 1999
\textsuperscript{1086} Fidrmuc, ‘Economics of voting in post-communist countries’, pp. 199-217
\textsuperscript{1088} Fidrmuc, ‘Economics of voting in post-communist countries’, pp. 199-217
pensioner variable was not significant in either 1992 or 1993, but had become highly significant by December 1994.

Indeed the regression results for the ‘pensioner’ variable seem indicative of a wider trend. Throughout the 1990s the HZDS vote appears to transmute from a party with broad appeal to one with a specific allure. The January 1992 FOCUS survey, for example, appeared to suggest HZDS was gaining support from both sides in roughly equal measure of a litmus test question: are you satisfied with the changes since 1989 or not? Krivy’s work has suggested at the end of the decade HZDS voters held the values of authoritarianism, anti-minority attitudes, anti-Western attitudes, paternalism and egalitarianism more strongly than the supporters of any other major Slovak party including SNS, although even Krivy’s work shows a decline in the authoritarian and anti-minority measures of HZDS’ supporters between 1997 and 1999.

At the heart of the changes was the process of marketization. As one might expect, in the immediate aftermath of the 1989 revolutions the concept of the market was popular. In an International Social Justice Project (ISJP) survey 82.9% of Czechoslovak citizens agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘a free market economy is essential to our economic development.’ A figure lower than Slovenia (94.4%), but higher than Bulgaria (68.7%), Estonia (73.0%), Poland (71.5%) and Russia (70.5%). The headline enthusiasm for the market, however, masked a

1089 FOCUS survey data (January 1992)
1090 Krivy, Politické orientácie na Slovensku, pp. 36, 27
1091 Mason, ‘Attitudes towards the Market’, pp. 385-406 (p388)
deeper ignorance of a market economy.\textsuperscript{1092} When asked a series of more detailed questions on a free market economy such as the government’s role in job provision and on fair distribution, ‘most people in the postcommunist states’ still had a ‘basically egalitarian and statist orientation that works against the laissez-faire and decentralizing reforms being implemented in the region.’\textsuperscript{1093} The Czechoslovak figure masks differing levels of support amongst the population of the two halves of the old federation.

Evans and Whitefield’s research suggested Czechs ‘are more supportive of market principles than either Slovaks or Slovak Hungarians.’\textsuperscript{1094} Czechs are more likely than Slovaks to ‘agree that governments should not intervene to secure job provision, income inequality, state ownership and control over wages, prices and profits.’ Nonetheless, Czechs do not emerge as advocates of laissez-faire. An ‘overwhelming’ majority believe the government should ensure guaranteed basic incomes and a majority believe governments ‘should ensure jobs for all and a decent standard of living.’\textsuperscript{1095} The following table contrasts the attitudes of ethnic Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians living in the former Czechoslovakia.

\textsuperscript{1092} This is not intended to be patronising. After all, if the tables had been turned in 1989 very few Westerners would have had a sophisticated idea of how a socialist command economy worked.

\textsuperscript{1093} Mason, ‘Attitudes towards the Market’, pp. 385-406 (p393)


\textsuperscript{1095} \textit{ibid} p139
7.2 Attitudes Towards Markets, Government Involvement and Social Liberalism by Ethnic Group (based on Whitefield and Evans)\(^{1096}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question posed</th>
<th>Czechs % agreed</th>
<th>Slovaks % agreed</th>
<th>Ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia % agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The government should ensure every person has a job and a good standard of living</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Government should take all major industries into state ownership</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Enterprise is best</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should provide a guaranteed basic income</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This country needs government with a strong hand</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HZDS’ success in the 1992 federal elections was thanks in large part to its economic platform opposing the continuation of Klausite economic reform and proposing a more cautious programme.\(^{1097}\) In Klaus’s language, Slovakia suffered more from the ‘transformation shake-off’ (the decline in GDP since 1989) and was blighted by a large ‘expectations-reality gap’\(^{1098}\) A Boris Kusenda cartoon from the early 1990s sums it up well. Klaus and Fedor Gál (chairman of VPN) are playing tennis. Klaus’s racquet labeled ‘right-wing’ is hitting over the net sticks of dynamite bound together and labeled the ‘social consequences of reform’. The sticks of dynamite, however, go straight through Gál’s stringless racquet. The scoreline reads ‘Prague Economist 1: Slovak province 0’.\(^{1099}\) In the Klausite economic game

\(^{1096}\) ibid pp. 140-2


\(^{1098}\) Václav Klaus’s address to 20th Anniversary Congress of the Czechoslovak Society for the Arts and Sciences, Washington DC (8-13 August 2000)

Slovakia was not going to win. The disappointment over economic reform merged with a declining lack of trust amongst Slovaks towards federal institutions\textsuperscript{100} making a specifically Slovak solution to economic problems much more appealing. The support base of HZDS, up until the 1994 elections at least, had an equivocal attitude to the process of marketization, compared to enthusiasm among KDH supporters and a lack of support amongst Common Choice (SDL and its electoral alliance allies) voters.\textsuperscript{101} The enthusiasm for marketization mirror polls assessing attitudes towards the former Communist regime. A poll conducted in 1994 found nostalgia for the communist regime was highest amongst SDL supporters, around three-quarters of whom said things were better before the revolution. A significant portion of HZDS voters (41\%) shared those sentiments.\textsuperscript{102} Another survey conducted around the same time found 64\% of ethnic Slovaks believed their living standards have fallen over the past 5 years compared to 42\% of Czechs.\textsuperscript{103}

There is evidence to support Baco’s contention that HZDS has derived a disproportional level of support from the rural population and the inhabitants of Northern and Central Slovakia. The results of the multiple regression test outlined above suggested ‘village’ dweller was not a significant variable in explaining

\textsuperscript{100} Rüdiger Kipke, ‘Nejnovější politický vývoj v Československu v zrcadle veřejného mínění’ in Rudiger Kipke and Karel Vodička, \textit{Rozloučení s československem: příčiny a důsledky česko-slovenského rozchodu}, Prague: Český spisovatel with the support of Patriae (1993) pp. 41-56 (pp. 47-50)


\textsuperscript{102} Zora Bútorová and Martin Bútora, \textit{Slovensko po rok: cesty a križovatky nového štátu očami jeho obyvateľov}, Prague: Sociologické Nakladateľstvo (1994) p32

\textsuperscript{103} Whitefield & Evans, ‘Political Culture Versus Rational Choice’, pp. 129-55 (p145)
HZDS and SNS support throughout the 1990s, nevertheless, a clear rural bias in the HZDS and SNS vote is discernible. Comparing the HZDS and SNS vote in settlements above and below 5000 inhabitants there is a marked difference. Although it would be overly simplistic to talk of a huge gulf between the voting patterns of rural and urban areas, both HZDS and SNS drew a disproportionally large slice of their support from the rural areas as the following tables and graph indicate.

### 7.3 Success of HZDS and SNS in Settlements of 5000 Inhabitants or Fewer and in Settlements with Greater than 5000 Inhabitants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party and election</th>
<th>% of vote in settlements of 5000 inhabitants or fewer</th>
<th>% of vote in settlements of greater than 5000 inhabitants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS 1992</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HZDS 1994</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HZDS 1998</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS 1992</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS 1994</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS 1998</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HZDS + SNS 1992</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HZDS + SNS 1994</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HZDS + SNS 1998</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1104 The following tables are based on Krivý's statistics see Krivý, Čo prezentujú volebné výsledky? pp. 53-6; and Krivý, Politické orientácie na Slovensku p8-13. The rural vote coefficient is my own calculation.

1105 Krivý, Čo prezentujú volebné výsledky? pp. 52-9; Krivý, Politické orientácie na Slovensku p13.
7.4 The Division of the HZDS and SNS Vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party and election</th>
<th>% of party's vote in settlements of 5000 inhabitants or fewer</th>
<th>% of party's vote in settlements of greater than 5000 inhabitants</th>
<th>Rural vote coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS 1992</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HZDS 1994</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HZDS 1998</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS 1992</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS 1994</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS 1998</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia as a whole 1992</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia as a whole 1994</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia as a whole 1998</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.5 The HZDS and SNS Vote in 1994 According to Settlement Size

(NB The National Average was 40.4%)
In terms of geographical break-down the 1992, 1994 and 1998 elections saw HZDS score its best results in Central and Northern Slovakia. In the 1992 election it won over half of the votes in the following okresy (districts): Čadca, Žiar nad Hronom, Považská Bystrica, Prievidza, Zvolen, Žilina, Martin and Banská Bystrica. SNS in contrast, performed best in Bratislava. Indeed, the nationalists’ top seven best scoring okresy were all parts of the capital.\textsuperscript{1106} The 1994 election served up similar results. HZDS won over 50\% of the vote in Čadca, Považská Bystrica, Topolčany, Žiar nad Hronom, Prievidza and Žilina. These okresy, with the exception of Čadca, can be categorised as industrial centers; the very areas worst hit by Klausite economic reform,\textsuperscript{1107} highlighting the linkage between region and economic success. Five of the six best scoring okresy for SNS were in the capital, the only exception being party leader Ján Slota’s home town of Žilina.\textsuperscript{1108}

Although other factors point to an increasingly well-defined support base, the same cannot be said of geographical support. In 1994, for example, HZDS’ national vote fell by 2.3\%. The party lost support across the country. The largest drops occurred in Žiar nad Hronom (-6.9\%), Bratislava’s fifth district (-7.9\%), Rimavská Sobota (-7.9\%), Zvolen (-8.1\%), Lučenec (-9.3\%), Veľký Krtiš (-9.5\%), Banská Bystrica (-9.7\%) and Martin (-13.4\%). HZDS, however, saw its vote increase in Svidnik (8.8\%), Topolčany (5.4\%), Michalovce (5.0\%), Bardejov (4.8\%), Vranov nad

\textsuperscript{1106} Krivý, et al Slovensko a jeho regióny, pp. 48-9
Topľou (4.8%). In 1994 SNS support only increased in Čadca and Lučenec. The party may still have had its best results in the capital, but the seven largest drops in SNS support all occurred in the capital’s districts. The combined HZDS and SNS vote fell in 55 okresy in both 1992 and 1994, with eight other okresy witnessing drops in the combined vote in the 1994 election. In contrast, support in six eastern okresy rose. In 1998, the increase in the HZDS vote in the east was noticeable. (It should be noted that thanks to the 1996 administrative reforms the system of okresy was different in 1998. The 1994 and 1998 election results cannot, therefore, be compared on an okres by okres basis.) It is important, however, to remember the starting points. It is, on the whole, easier to increase support in a region when a party is starting from a low ebb. Conversely when a party’s vote in a region declines from 59.1% to 52.2%, as HZDS’ did in Žiar nad Hronom, the most notable fact is that a majority of voters are still supporting that party. It would be wrong, however, to see all Central Slovak towns as HZDS strongholds. Banská Bystrica’s rejection of HZDS in the 1998 elections, which prompted an emotional outburst from Mečiar in his infamous television broadcast, is not so surprising when one considers the low level of HZDS support in the 1994 communal elections, although the extra impetus given by the anti-government campaigns such as ‘Rock the Vote’ which were very active in central Slovakia’s largest town, cannot be ignored.

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109 Krivý et al, Slovensko a jeho regióny, p99
110 Krivý, Čo prezradzajú volebné výsledky?, pp. 36-7 and p49
Returning to Baco’s explanation the question which arises is whether the changes in HZDS’ support in particular *okresy* can be explained by its economic performance or not. An analysis of unemployment statistics produces a mixed picture. Where Slovakia as a whole saw a 3.0% increase in unemployment between 1991 and 1994 (from 11.8% to 14.8%), in those *okresy* which saw a significant fall in HZDS support in 1994, Banská Bystrica (-1.9%), saw a decline in unemployment, but Žiar nad Hronom (3.8%), Rimavská Sobota (14.7%), Zvolen (3.7%), Lučenec (18.5%) Veľký Krtiš (8.3%) and Martin (3.7%) saw an increase. In those *okresy* where HZDS’ vote increased, Svidnik (10.0%), Michalovce (7.9%) Bardejov (3.3%) and Vranov nad Topľou (16.8%) saw an increase in unemployment, but Topoľčany (-0.4%) witnessed a decline. If we look at a snapshot of the GDPs of the same *okresy* between the first and fourth quarter of 1994 a similar mixed picture emerges. Where Slovakia as a whole saw an 8.2% increase, *okresy* where the HZDS vote declined markedly GDP rose by varying amounts: Banská Bystrica (19.0%), Žiar nad Hronom (4.8%), Rimavská Sobota (9.3%), Zvolen (14.7%), Lučenec (4.7%), Veľký Krtiš (9.0%) and Martin (18.4%). Looking at those *okresy* where HZDS vote increased a very different mixed picture emerges. Where Michalovce (32.3%), Vranov nad Topľou (18.0%) and Topoľčany (7.3%) saw GDP increase significantly, Svidnik (0.7%) witnessed little change and Bardejov suffered a drastic decline (-32.2%). Neither the unemployment nor the GDP figures, therefore, suggest changes in economic performance *per se* can explain changes in HZDS support.

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1113 Author’s calculations based on Štatistický úrad Slovenský republiky, Štatistická ročenka okresov Slovenskej republiky za roky 1990-1995, p42
(b) the Christian aspect

The evidence for Baco’s second explanation, religion, is indicative, but inconclusive. In analyzing the impact of religion on voting patterns, it is clear that ethnic Hungarians vote for ethnic parties because they are ethnic Hungarian parties not because of religion. Of those areas with a population of over 80% ethnic Slovaks, there are marked differences between the levels of support in areas dominated by different confessional groupings. The tables below, drawing on the work of Krivý, distinguish between districts with above average representation of various religious groupings (Roman Catholic, evangelical, no religion and Greco-Catholic).

7.6 HZDS and the Catholic Vote: Election Results in Districts with Above Average Representation of Different Religious Confessions

(a) 1992 Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Districts with &gt;80% ethnic Slovaks</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
<th>Evangelical</th>
<th>No religion</th>
<th>Greek-Catholic</th>
<th>Slovakia as a whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDE</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) 1994 Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Districts with &gt;80% ethnic Slovaks</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
<th>Evangelical</th>
<th>No religion</th>
<th>Greek-Catholic</th>
<th>Slovakia as a whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV (SDE)</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Krivý, Čo prezrádzajú volebné výsledky?, pp. 77-9
As the tables show, in all three elections, HZDS picked up a proportionally larger share of the vote in Roman Catholic areas, although in areas dominated by other confessional groupings, the party has still managed to win a significant share of the vote broadly in line with its national tally. These findings should not be overemphasized. A higher level of support for a party in a district with a greater than average proportion of a particular confessional group does not prove the increase in support is due to religious affiliation. Nonetheless, the statistics suggest a relationship. Given the respective roles Christianity plays in the ideologies of HZDS and KDH (as discussed above) it is no surprise to see KDH as the more successful party (proportionally) in terms of winning the Catholic vote. These results are broadly in line with the multiple regression test tabulated earlier. Catholicism was a factor in explaining KDH and SDL' support, working as a positive and negative factor respectively. The regression analysis does, however, suggest Catholicism did not become a significant variable explaining HZDS support until 1994.
Although 72% of Slovaks declare themselves to be catholics\textsuperscript{1115}, such self-ascription could mask differences between those to whom their faith is central to their lives and those to whom Catholicism is little more than a category they ascribe themselves to. White \textit{et al} found, however, the attitudes and political party preference of regular church-goers were virtually identical to irregular church attendees.\textsuperscript{1116} Moreover, they found that church attendance in Slovakia cut across divisions of gender, age and rural-urban divides.\textsuperscript{1117}

\textbf{(c) The National Accent}

The debate on the origins, spread and meaning of nationalism and national identity has engaged some of the finest social science minds and will not be repeated here.\textsuperscript{1118} Whether nations are pre-industrial, products of the industrial revolution or merely invented, it is clear a number of ingredients have been thrown into the brew one can label the ‘Slovak national accent’. The Great Moravian Empire is viewed by some as a kind of \textit{golden age} of Slovak nationalism.\textsuperscript{1119} Such harking back to distant history is not restricted to ex-pat nationalist Slovak historians, but is also

\textsuperscript{1116} \textit{ibid} pp. 692, 695
\textsuperscript{1117} \textit{ibid} pp. 681-705. See also Vladimir Krivy, ‘Hodnotové orientácie a naboženské prejavy slovenskej verejnosti v 90. rokoch’, \textit{Sociologia}, 33, 1, (2001), pp. 7-46
enshrined in the preamble to the Slovak constitution. The golden age view has much to do with the fact that the Great Moravian Empire was followed by what is labeled as ‘1000 years of Magyar rule’, followed by seventy years of second-class citizenship in Czechoslovakia. At root, therefore Slovak nationalism focuses on Slovakia having her own state and identifies ‘outsiders’, ‘Czechoslovaks’ and particularly Hungarians as forces who have at best deprived Slovaks of their own state at worst as enemies of the Slovak nation.

The tactic of labelling one’s political opponents as enemies of the state has been popular in CEE in the 1990s. Franjo Tudjman, for example, frequently labeled his critics as ‘Yugo-communists’ or ‘Yugo-unitarists’. Mečiar’s rhetoric and vitriol was never as harsh as Tudjman’s, but he did employ the same tactic. In the 1994 elections Mečiar made constant reference to Prague and Budapest and stressed the importance of solving our own problems. From the early 1990s he has frequently labeled his former VPN colleagues turned enemies such as Peter Zajac, František Šebej and Fedor Gál disparagingly as ‘Czechoslovaks’, who loathe the idea of Slovak independence. HZDS and its allies projected themselves as the representatives of Slovakia’s true interest. The concept of the ‘other’, distinguishing the ‘us’ and the ‘them’ was not unique to Slovakia’s HZDS. Sharon Fisher has noted how both HZDS and Croatia’s HZD (Tudjman’s party) used the idea of the

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1121 Zuzana Huďová (ed.), *5 rokov HZDS v tlací*, Odbor verejnej mienky kancelárie HZDS (1996) p80
'other' to focus on external forces, ethnic minorities and internal enemies within the nation itself.  

From 1989 to the end of 1992 the 'national accent' was to be heard in the policies and programme surrounding the future of the federal state. HZDS scored highly in the 1992 elections thanks to the articulation of a middle way. Slovak equality was championed, but the rhetoric of all-out independence was rejected.  

The claim HZDS politicians were interested in promoting the interests of the nation, rather than their own interests, had taken a battering thanks to the succession of privatization scandals. In the 1998 election the opposition countered the notion that HZDS/SNS/ZRS were 'pro-national', but were merely concerned with the wellbeing of a narrow party elite. A fortnight before the elections the front page of Pravda displayed pictures of luxurious villas on the Spanish coast that had been purchased by three top managers from VSŽ, all of whom were close to HZDS. The headline read, 'Where to after the election?'

Slovak nationalists use the Hungarian card, in Zajac's phrase, like a 'reliable button'. Acts of leading Hungarian politicians such as Miklós Duray's support for the motion forcing Mečiar to step down as prime minister in 1991, the letter

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1123 Sharon Fisher, 'The Rise and Fall of National Movements in Slovakia and Croatia', Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs, 1, 2, (Fall 2000), pp. 18-21


signed by leading Hungarian politicians Bugár, Duray and Nagy which Pál Csáky delivered to leading US politicians in 1995\textsuperscript{1127} and Duray’s speech in at Komárno in 1993 in the eyes of Mečiar allies, were typical of the treachery of the ethnic Hungarians.\textsuperscript{1128} Duray flatly rejects the accusations.\textsuperscript{1129} Nevertheless, the perception of Hungarian perfidy persisted amongst a chunk of the Slovak population.

Ethnic nationalism is by its very nature exclusionary. It would be reasonable to assume advocating exclusionary politics may lose a party support amongst other ethnic groups. Support for HZDS has been at its lowest in the southern edge of Slovakia where most ethnic Hungarians live. In 1992, for example, in Dunajská Streda and Komárno just 3.3% and 7.0% respectively of their electorate who voted cast their vote for HZDS; figures which barely changed in 1994 (2.9% and 7.0%).\textsuperscript{1130} It is not just HZDS, however, which fails to capture the ethnic Hungarian vote. Ethnic Hungarians tend to vote \textit{en masse} for ethnic Hungarian parties.\textsuperscript{1131}

The distrust and suspicion of Hungarians in HZDS’ programme and statements finds a receptive audience. An IVO poll conducted in January 1999 found that in response to the statement, ‘Hungarians living in Slovakia are just as interested in the well-being of the country as are Slovaks’, only 24% of HZDS voters strongly

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{1127} Slovenská republika, 23 June 1995, p4
\bibitem{1128} See, for example, Dušan Slobodník, Proti sedemhlavému drakovi (2 dejin zápasu za Slovensko), Bratislava: Spolok slovenských spisovateľov (1998) p188; For a more balanced view see Marián Leško, Masky a tváre novej elity: čítanie o dvanástich politkoch z prítomných vládnych stran, Bratislava: IVO (2000) pp. 303-22
\bibitem{1129} Miklós Duray (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 11 May 2001)
\bibitem{1130} Krivý \textit{et al}, Slovensko a jeho regióny, pp. 47-64 and pp. 93-111
\bibitem{1131} Krivý, Čo prezrádzajú volebné výsledky?, p73
\end{thebibliography}
agreed or agreed with 62% strongly disagreed or disagreed (the remaining 14% were don’t knows). Although the EU and other international bodies criticized the treatment of the Hungarian minority ethnic Slovaks were divided on the merits of the government’s policy towards Hungarians. An IVO poll conducted in October 1997 found 38% of ethnic Slovaks 38% thought government policy towards ethnic Hungarians was correct, 30% said it was confrontational, 15% too moderate and 17% didn’t know. The results of Whitefield and Evans’s research tabulated below reinforces IVO’s research and suggests the attitudes of ethnic Slovaks were not quite up to the standard expected by the EU.

7.7 Attitudes Towards Ethnic Rights (based on Whitefield and Evans)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question posed</th>
<th>% of Czechs who agree</th>
<th>% of Slovaks who agree</th>
<th>% of ethnic Hungarians who agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minority groups should have far more rights than they do now</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone should have the right to become a citizen regardless of their ethnic origins</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ethnic group a person belongs to should not influence the benefits they can get from the state</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All minority groups should have to be taught in (country’s language)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1134 Whitefield & Evans, ‘Political Culture Versus Rational Choice’, pp. 129-55 (p142)
Further research by Evans and Whitefield used correlation analysis which indicated strongly that the question of ethnic rights was central to an explanation of the support base of the ethnic Hungarian parties, SNS and to a much lesser extent HZDS.\textsuperscript{1135}

The other main minority button available to press in Slovakia concerns the Roma. Dislike of the Romany population is widespread in Slovakia, even amongst those who would be classified as liberals. HZDS tapped into feelings of hostility amongst the ethnic Slovak population. Health minister, Ľubomír Javorský, for example, told a party rally in October 1995 that the government ‘will do everything to ensure’ more white than Romany children are born.\textsuperscript{1136} As with treatment of the ethnic Hungarians, however, the language of HZDS’ politicians never reached the venom of SNS. Ján Slota once remarked that the solution to the ‘gypsy problem’ was a ‘long whip and a small yard’\textsuperscript{1137}. Roma activists may be divided on many issues, but as interviews conducted by Peter Vermeersch have shown, ‘they are more or less united on one thing: SNS is anti-Roma.’\textsuperscript{1138} Two Roma, Ján Kompus and Jozef Ravasz, were on the HZDS candidate list for the 1998 elections. The agreement was, for both sides, little more a marriage of convenience. For Kompus and Ravaszs, who were active in small Romany parties, the decision to run on the HZDS ticket was motivated primarily by money. For HZDS, allowing the two well-

\textsuperscript{1135} Evans & Whitefield, ‘The Structuring of Political Cleavages in Post-Communist Societies’, pp. 115-39


\textsuperscript{1137} Quoted in The Economist, 7 November 1998 (web edition)

\textsuperscript{1138} The author is grateful to Peter Vermeersch for sharing the fruits of his research
known Romany politicians to benefit from the financial resources of the party was more than offset by the perceived electoral advantage.

The national issue was clearly important in Slovak politics in the 1990s. Whilst socio-economic questions were the bases of Czech voters’ evaluation of parties, ‘nation and democracy’ were the basis of evaluation for Slovak voters. Slovak national identity it should be remembered was formed, at least in part, in opposition to Hungary and all things Hungarian. It is interesting to note that the strongest anti-Hungarian feelings are to be found amongst Slovaks who live in the parts of the country furthest away from the areas populated by ethnic Hungarians.

Baco was keen to deny Slovaks are nationalist, preferring instead to argue his countrymen respond well to parties with a ‘national accent’ and contrasting that against comments such as those uttered by the former SNS leader Ján Slota that Slovakia should send tanks to Budapest. Nonetheless, however Baco wishes to portray HZDS’ appeal, an emphasis on the nation struck a chord with a significant portion of the Slovak electorate.

(d) Mečiar as a source of popularity

Although Baco did not include the personality of Mečiar in his triadic analysis, along with every other HZDS politician interviewed, he stressed the importance of

1139 Krause, ‘Public Opinion and Party Choice in Slovakia and the Czech Republic’, pp. 23-46 (pp. 24-5)
1140 Krivy, Čo prezrádzajú volebné výsledky?, pp. 29-51
1141 Baco interview
the party leader as a vote-getter.\textsuperscript{1142} Indeed, in attempting to gauge HZDS’ popularity one cannot ignore the role of the party founder and chairman. As with his party, Mečiar’s popularity gradually declined throughout the 1990s. As the following table shows, Mečiar’s trustworthiness rating declined steadily throughout the 1990s from three-quarters of Slovaks in 1991 to around 20\% by 1997 expressing their trust in him. From 1997 onwards it appears his trustworthiness rating had stabilized, or at least the rate of decline had fallen.\textsuperscript{1143} From the mid-1990s onwards until late 1999 he was invariably voted the most popular and trusted politician in the country. (He also consistently topped the tables of the most unpopular and least trusted politician in the country).\textsuperscript{1144}

\textsuperscript{1142} Baco interview. Other HZDS politicians who laid great stress on Mečiar as a vote-grabber included Ivan Hudec (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 5 April 2000); Rudolf Žiak (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 21 March 2000); Ol’ga Keltošová (interviewed by the author, Bratislava 18 April 2000); Jozef Božik (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 3 May 2001); and Jozef Kalman (interviewed by the author 31 May 2000)

\textsuperscript{1143} Zora Bútorová and Martin Bútora, Slovensko po rok: cesty a križovatky nového štátu ocami jeho obyvateľov, Prague: Sociologické Nakladatelstvo (1994)

7.8 Mečiar’s Trustworthiness Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month of poll</th>
<th>Those respondents expressing trust in Mečiar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 1991</td>
<td>75%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1991</td>
<td>55%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1992</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1993</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1993</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1994</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1995</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1996</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1997</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1997</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1997</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1998</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1999</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1999</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2000</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2000</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* these two figures were extrapolated from a graph and should be treated more as a guide rather than an accurate figure.


(Methodological note: respondents were asked which politician do you trust the most? Respondents could give up to three replies. All the surveys here were conducted using the same methods and are therefore comparable)
Part of Mečiar’s appeal was his strong leadership style. Goldman probably took it too far when he suggested Mečiar ‘seemed to cater to a popular yearning for a strong directive, paternalistic leadership to which Slovaks had become accustomed during most of their recent political history’, but research conducted at the beginning of the 1990s suggested both Slovaks and Czechs were convinced of the need for strong leaders in their newly democratic polity. Another important part of his appeal is his projection of himself as the ‘father of the nation’ and the man who ‘in effect created’ the modern Slovak state.

Even by 1993, Mečiar was a man who provoked polarized opinions. Around a third of Slovak voters appreciated his strong personal characteristics, whereas 29% highlighted his explosiveness, impetuosity and impulsiveness. It would be incorrect, however, to suggest in 1993 he was the ‘love him or hate him’ politician he had become by the end of the decade as the following tables highlight.

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1146 Goldman, *Slovakia Since Independence*, p222
1148 ‘Ak budú lepši, potom odidem’, *Pravda*, 20 March 2000, p1
7.9 The Six Most Popular and Unpopular Politicians in Slovakia in 1993 and 1999\textsuperscript{1150}

(a) The Six Most Popular Politicians in Slovakia in February 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>% of respondents who agreed with the statement I like him/her very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michal Kováč</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan Gašparovič</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Weiss</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Kováč</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan Kňažko</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimír Mečiar</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) The Six Most Unpopular Politicians in Slovakia in February 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>% of respondents who agreed with the statement I do not like him/her at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>František Mikloško</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ján Čarnogurský</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miklós Duray</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olga Keltošová</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan Mikloš</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimír Mečiar</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) The Six Most Popular Politicians in Slovakia in September 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>% of respondents who identified politician as their most popular*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vladimír Mečiar</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Róbert Fico</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudolf Schuster</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikuláš Dzurinda</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Maliková</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Béla Bugár</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*respondents allowed to choose up to three names

(d) The Six Most Unpopular Politicians in Slovakia September 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>% of respondents who identified politician as their most popular*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vladimír Mečiar</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikuláš Dzurinda</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ján Čarnogurský</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ján Slota</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Béla Bugár</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigita Schmögnerová</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*respondents allowed to choose up to three names

\textsuperscript{1150} ibid data tables appendix; Sme, 10 February 2000
It is incorrect however to think all HZDS supporters are blind devotees of the party leader and see Mečiar as someone akin to the deity incapable of fault\textsuperscript{1151}. In Krivý’s wide ranging study, conducted in January 1999, only 57.6\% of HZDS supporters described the HZDS chair as an ‘unambiguously positive person’, compared to 57.4\% for Štefánik and 69.0\% for Alexander Dubček.\textsuperscript{1152}

**Building on Baco’s explanation**

Baco’s explanation is helpful, but does not totally satisfy. Other explanations are worth examining.

**(a) The Appeal of the Centre**

HZDS’ ideological position, as chapter five argued, is a pick and mix amalgam located somewhere in the fuzzy middle of the left-right spectrum. HZDS’ rhetoric appealing to the centre makes sense from a vote maximization perspective. Throughout the 1990s the percentage of Slovaks who described themselves as in the ‘centre’ or ‘more in the centre than to the left or right’ never fell below 36\% and averaged around 40\%.\textsuperscript{1153} Although the following table is based on data collated in January 1999 (and hence just outside the thesis’s timeframe), the spread of HZDS support is notable. Not only does the party draw support from across the left-right spectrum, it also wins a substantial share of the ‘conservative’, ‘socialist’, ‘nationally inclined’ and ‘communist’ slices of the population cake. Few ‘liberals’, however, support the party. Self-ascription is not a fail-safe mechanism for

\textsuperscript{1151} Miroslav Kusý comes very close to this view in ‘Dvaja preméri’, *Mosty*, 42/1999 reprinted in *Sme*, 25 October 1999 p4

\textsuperscript{1152} Krivý, *Politické orientácie na Slovensku*, p76

\textsuperscript{1153} Based on statistics in Krivý, *Politické orientácie na Slovensku*, p46
assessing ideological positions, but how voters perceive themselves is an important guide to assessing voting habits.

7.10 Percentage of Self-ascribed Groupings who Declared Themselves Supporters of HZDS in 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Definitely Left</th>
<th>More to the left</th>
<th>centre</th>
<th>More to the right</th>
<th>Definitely Right</th>
<th>conservatives</th>
<th>liberals</th>
<th>socialists</th>
<th>nationally inclined</th>
<th>communists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS supporters</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the left-right division, Slovakia displays notable similarities and differences with her erstwhile federal partner. In terms of left-right self-placement on a seven-point scale (where one is extreme left and seven is extreme right) Krause’s analysis of the surveys conducted by the Central European University from 1992 to 1996 shows an almost identical dispersion in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, with a standard deviation of 1.51 in the former and 1.58 in the latter. In contrast, ‘the spread of voter positions within individual parties is considerably greater among Slovak than among Czech parties’. The raw figures show a deviation of 1.30 in Slovakia, but only 1.16 in the Czech Republic.

Use of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ are problematic in the CEE context. The fact that the left in the West European sense is identified with ‘change’ and ‘equality’, for

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1154 Krivý, Politické orientácie na Slovensku, p54

1155 Krause, ‘Public Opinion and Party Choice in Slovakia and the Czech Republic’, pp. 23-46 (pp. 27-8). Krause does not give the exact mean values for these deviations, although they are around a central point (i.e a 4 value) on the seven-point scale.

1156 ibid pp. 27-8
instance, does not sit comfortably with the fact that 'most of the impulses for change are associated with reducing equality'. ‘Change-orientated actors’, in this sense, endorse objectives usually associated with the right.\textsuperscript{1157} Nonetheless, in terms of the appeal of a party projecting itself as ‘centrist’ what matters is self-ascription, not how the party’s policies and the voters’ opinions accord with the Western ideological spectrum. Nevertheless, self-placement is itself dependent on reference points. As Markowski points out these reference points are not necessarily fixed. In 1990, for example, ‘most respondents may have endorsed rapid privatisation’ and placed themselves on the right, but by 1994 many may have opposed further privatization and tended to place themselves closer to the opposite end of the spectrum.\textsuperscript{1158}

(b) Class

Class has long been seen as a good explanatory factor for elections in Western Europe, particularly in the UK.\textsuperscript{1159} Matějů and Řehákova suggested class-based voting, or at least voting on the basis of social stratification, has emerged in the Czech Republic.\textsuperscript{1160} Řehákova’s research showed that across five social groupings (professionals, routine non-manual, self-employed, manual and retired) there was a shift to the ‘left’ between 1992 and 1996. ‘The most visible and biggest shift to the

\begin{footnotes}
\item Markowski, ‘Political Parties and Ideological Spaces in East Central Europe’, pp. 221-54 (p223)
\item \textit{ibid} p223
\item See, for example, Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell and John Curtice, \textit{How Britain Votes}, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1985)
\end{footnotes}
left wing parties', she writes, 'occurred among manual voters, but even more among the self-employed, while the smallest shift occurred among professionals, and surprisingly also among pensioners.' Brokl and Mansfeldová, however, have criticized the class-based view. Not only did both major parties, the right-wing Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and the Social Democrats (ČSSD), win sizeable portions of the other's natural class vote in 1996, but they argue the swing in support to ČSSD in the last few months running up to the election is best explained by the psychological effect of the 5% threshold: voters did not wish to waste their vote. Nevertheless, some relative class voting can be seen in the Czech example. The problem with applying such an analysis to Slovakia is HZDS' refusal to project itself as a party of a particular class. Indeed, the only Slovak party which projected itself explicitly as a class-based party was ZRS.

(c) A sizeable segment of Slovaks harbour non-democratic values

The EU labelled some of the Mečiar-led governments' policies as non-democratic, yet HZDS retained the support of a large section of the electorate. Was this fact, therefore, indicative of a sizeable segment of Slovaks harbouring non-democratic views? Comparative research conducted in 1995 suggested Slovaks were less democratic than Czechs and Poles. Only 49.7% of Slovaks agreed with the statement that 'an important element of democracy is the defence of the rights and freedoms of those who lost in elections', in contrast to 65.7% of Czechs and 74.6%

1162 Lubomir Brokl and Zdenka Mansfeldová, 'How the Voters Respond in the Czech Republic' in Lawson et al Cleavages, Parties & Voters, pp. 203-213
1163 Stanovy a organizačná štruktúra ZRS (1996)
of Poles. Equally, 68.1% of Slovaks agreed with the statement that a 'parliamentary opposition is necessary for the good working of the country' in contrast to 82.7% of Czechs and 65.6% of Poles. Specific research conducted by IVO in Slovakia in October 1997 found significant portions of the electorate who were not unsettled/disturbed (znepokojit) by some of the headline-making events of Slovak politics. Of those polled, 60.2% were not unsettled by the Gaulieder affair, 45.8% by the explosion of Remiáš's car, 47.7% by the kidnapping of the president's son, 50.4% by the privatization of Nafta Gbely, 46.7% by the botched referendum in May 1997, and 54.9% by the murder of Roma. It would be wrong to infer from these statistics, however, that the actions of the Mečiar governments were just a function of an anti-democratic outlook held by a sizeable portion of Slovaks. Nevertheless, they suggest a significant section of Slovak public opinion were prepared to accept the pursuit of anti-democratic policies by their government.

(d) The Role of the Media

The media have played an important role in Slovak politics. The issue of media influence in Slovak politics is complex and merits in-depth analysis in itself, nevertheless in order to understand the support base of HZDS it is important to note, for example, the slavishly pro-HZDS newspaper Slovenská republika and the markedly anti-Mečiar newspaper Sme have helped to engender entrenched animosity between HZDS and its supporters on the one hand and their critics on the

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1164 Róbert Roško, Slovensko na konci tisícročia, Bratislava: Veda (2000) p341
1165 IVO, Aktuálne problémy Slovenska (October 1997)
other. The most widely read newspaper, *Nový Cas*, although usually more concerned with the sex lives of the stars and the performance of the nation’s sporting heroes, was broadly supportive, or at least not very critical of the Mečiar-led governments. Moreover, the two main television stations produced markedly different accounts of events. The state-run STV was supportive of the 1994-8 government, whilst the private *Markiza* station was broadly critical after initial neutrality. In certain areas of Slovakia which could not receive *Markiza*, particularly the northern edge of the country, the HZDS and SNS votes were higher than the national average. To ascribe a causal link, however, seems unwise. After all, given the fact that these areas were amongst the poorest and most deprived in the country, HZDS and SNS were likely to receive above average support anyway. Further research is required to assess fully whether the impact of the Slovak media can be categorized as ‘reinforcement’, ‘agenda-setting’, ‘framing’ or ‘direct effects’.

(e) If not HZDS then who?

A helpful indication of the support base of a party can be gleaned by looking at the attitudes of voters of one particular party towards others. When a representative sample of voters were asked in May 1994 which party they would give their second vote if they were to have one, 10.1% said ZRS, 9.8% SNS, 8.4% SDL', ŠŽS (greens) 7.3%, and HZDS 6.0%. The high score for ZRS probably had much to do with the novelty value of the party, but the high SNS percentage can be

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1167 Krivy, *Čo prezrádzajú volebné výsledky?*, pp. 104-108
1168 See page 98 footnote 323
accounted for mainly by HZDS voters. Indeed, amongst HZDS voters 36% said they would give their second vote to SNS, whilst 18% said ZRS and 11% SDL, leaving around a third who would not exercise a second vote. SDL voters, however, did not reciprocate. 26% said they would give a second vote to ZRS, 17% to SDSS and 9% to the Greens (SZS). By May 1994 polarized attitudes towards HZDS were discernible. 26.6% of all voters declared they would not in any circumstance vote for HZDS, KDH scored a similar, but slightly smaller amount (21.6%), with all the other parties failing to incur the dislike of more than a tenth of the electorate. Many of those definite no votes came from parties which would become the opposition in the 1994-8 government. 49% of KDH voters, 47% of DS voters, 53% of DÚ voters and 33% of SDL voters said they would definitely not vote for HZDS. These statistics reinforce Krause’s view on the discernible ‘clusters’ of political parties in Slovakia.

(f) The Nature of Slovak Modernization

This chapter has attempted to look at what could be described as the here and the now explanations of public opinion. What would be required in the eyes of some analysts would be an understanding of underlying factors. Most of the longer-term explanations centre on the nature of Slovak modernization. Soňa Szomolányni, for instance, suggested that while Slovakia had caught up with the Czechs in quantitative social and economic terms, the more traditional value system of the Slovaks remained intact. Thanks to the forced nature of Slovakia’s modernization,

1170 *ibid* p58

1171 *ibid* pp. 58-9

étatiste, egalitarian and paternalist values had been entrenched and pre-empted the emergence of liberal, individualistic value system characteristic of Western societies. Szomolányi suggests the communist revolution from above had overwhelmed cities with traditional peasant values. Chelemedik put it more graphically. The majority of Slovaks, he wrote, even today are rural citizens ‘right down to the bone.’ Such a view provokes three responses. Firstly, it could start the analyst down the slippery slope into the type of political culture determinism the thesis attacked in early chapters. Secondly, it would render useless much of the research on rural/urban divisions in Slovak society, because de facto everyone would have rural views. Even the most casual observer of Slovak society would have to acknowledge there is a difference in the value systems of, for example, Bratislava and Orava. Admittedly this difference can be overstated. In 1992 and 1994, for example, HZDS picked up a quarter of the vote in the capital. Nonetheless, a difference exists. Thirdly, as the chapter on political culture argued value systems do change gradually, but they do change. We should avoid the ‘year zero syndrome’ but also the historical determinist approach.

1175 The term comes from Lipták who, as one would expect from a historian, stresses the importance of the past. See Ľubomír Lipták, Storočie dlhšie ako sto rokov: o dejinách a historiografii, Bratislava: Kalligram (1999) pp. 143-4
Mapping Slovak opinion – Some concluding thoughts

The data surveyed in this chapter suggests a number of conclusions. Firstly, Baco’s analysis is a useful tool to help us grapple with the questions of who voted for HZDS and why. There is a tendency in the common parlance of Slovak intellectuals to dismiss HZDS supporters as old, stupid, rural peasants. Many, but by no means all, of those who do vote HZDS, however, vote not because they are old or stupid or live in rural areas, but rather because they have not been recipients of the fruits of marketization. HZDS has garnered support by using ‘language and rhetoric which people understand’. In order to explain policies, argued Baco, one needs to be able to formulate an explanation using words an average worker can understand, even though a university professor might find such a formulation simplistic. What is ironic is that HZDS has hung on to the votes of those who lost out, even though HZDS ministers had their hands on the levers of power, suggesting the ‘responsibility thesis’ has not been borne out in post-1989 Slovakia. The dramatic fall in support from 37% at the 1992 election to a low of 12% in November 1993, however, indicates disenchanted voters were conforming to the responsibility thesis, re-invoking the question, discussed in chapter four, of whether the anti-Mečiar forces were right firstly to remove his government and then push for early elections in 1994.

It appears the HZDS electorate has evolved over time, with a greater proportion of votes garnered from voters who feel insecure on other fronts such as ethnicity,

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1176 Baco interview
1177 Fidrmuc, ‘Economics of voting in post-communist countries’, pp. 199-217 (p200)
1178 Bútorová & Bútora, Slovensko po rok, p31
identity, age and core-periphery issues, or that most other political parties have appeared to advocate even faster transformation. For former cabinet minister and HZDS deputy chairwoman, Oľga Keltošová, HZDS’ success was built on a programme of ‘economic transformation with a strong social dimension.’ In response to Czechoslovak President Havel’s peace plan in the early 1990s, which envisaged a drastic reduction in armaments production, HZDS’ championing of the interests of the armament workers of Central and Eastern Slovakia was important in building up support in the region. In addition, Mečiar’s tour around Slovakia after he was ejected from the premiership in 1991, helped project HZDS as the party which had the interests of non-Bratislava dwelling Slovaks at heart. Moreover, the desire to better represent the non-Bratislava based population was important for many who left VPN to join HZDS in 1991.

Although there is no convincing evidence it also seems reasonable to suggest HZDS’ longevity has been a factor in its continual support. In societies undergoing transitions from single to multi-party rule high degrees of electoral volatility are normal. Whilst higher than the West European average (8.6%), the Slovak figures for the 1990-2 (23.1%) and 1992-4 (23.8%) periods are similar to the Czech and Hungarian figures for the early to mid 1990s. In terms of parties, Czech and Slovak had more stable party loyalty than both Hungarians and Polish.

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1179 Keltošová interview
1180 Gaulieder interview
1182 Tóka, ‘Party Appeals and Voter Loyalty in New Democracies’, pp. 589-610 (p593)
Nevertheless, there was fluidity in the electoral marketplace. In contrast to the continual creation, merger and dissolution of other parties on the Slovak political scene, HZDS has been a constant, identifiable brand.

HZDS has catered for an increasingly well-defined segment of the Slovak electorate who are ‘security seekers’, keen to defend their national identity and are apprehensive of rapid change. HZDS is in one sense a party of those who lost out (the elderly, the uneducated) and who see nothing in the ‘project’ of modernizing Slovakia. But its support base is also linked to the ‘parallel worlds of Slovak politics, society and history’. Southern Slovakia is, in reality, the ‘northern edge of the Great Hungarian Plain, a polyglot region with a European frame of reference’. The ‘real’ Slovakia is the valleys and mountains of Central and Northern Slovakia where Slovaks withdrew and kept their culture alive down the centuries, whenever danger threatened. ‘Their point of reference has tended to be inward, provincial, defensive and nationalist’.

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1183 Krivosy et al, Slovensko a jeho regiony, p33. Krivosy admits he is borrowing the term from Lamentowicz


1185 The author is drawing on communication with an official who prefers to remain anonymous.
Conclusion: Mečiar and his Place in Slovak History

Mečiar was the dominant figure in Slovak politics during the 1990s. The three-time prime minister founded and led Slovakia’s most popular party, HZDS, to two election victories in 1992 and 1994. Even when it lost power in 1998, HZDS was still the most popular party commanding the support of 27% of the Slovak electorate.

During Mečiar’s time as prime minister, particularly his third stint between 1994 and 1998, the government’s policies harmed the construction of strong democratic institutions and a supportive political culture in Slovakia. Nothing bears this out more than the relentless campaign to remove President Michal Kováč from his post. Kováč’s refusal to be a party president, preferring instead to declare that ‘the president is the head of state, not of the opposition, nor of the government’ was not respected by the government. According to democratic norms, Mečiar was perfectly entitled to be upset and annoyed by Kováč’s decision to stand above politics, particularly given the fact that the president was nominated by HZDS, but the campaign to diminish the president’s power and force him to resign went beyond democratic norms. Indeed the European Commission was rightly concerned that the rule of law and democracy were not sufficiently deeply rooted in Slovakia. The Slovak Republic, the Commission declared, required:

1186 Pravda, 2 March 1995. Also Michal Kováč (interviewed by the author, Bratislava, 11 May 2000)
‘a greater openness to opposing views, the proper functioning of state institutions and the respect for their individual roles in the constitutional order. A democracy cannot be considered stable if the respective rights and obligations of institutions such as the presidency, the constitutional court or the central referendum commission can be put into question by the government itself and if the legitimate role of the opposition in parliamentary committees is not accepted.\textsuperscript{1187}

Mečiar is an easy scapegoat, someone on whom blame and opprobrium can, and frequently are, levelled. One legacy of his time as prime minister is Mečiar-obsessed media. He attacked the leading Slovak newspaper, \textit{Sme} (a trenchant critic of HZDS) for its obsession with his future: ‘[p]olitics for you begins and ends with whether Mečiar will continue in politics’\textsuperscript{1188}. ‘Because in Slovakia it’s this way’, he complained to \textit{The Slovak Spectator}, ‘the bus is late, the hens aren’t laying eggs – it must be my fault’\textsuperscript{1189}. Mečiar and Slovakia have not been blessed with beneficent or even objective coverage in the Western media.\textsuperscript{1190} Klaus’s erudition in West European languages and his professed belief in Thatcherism, in the eyes of Western journalists, contrasted well against a man who did not have a command of English or German and whose time (albeit brief) as a boxer was an easy metaphor for his government’s style and policies.\textsuperscript{1191}

\textsuperscript{1188} \textit{Sme}, 20 March 2000
\textsuperscript{1189} Interview in \textit{The Slovak Spectator}, (6-12 December 1999)
\textsuperscript{1191} See, for example, Ian Mather, ‘Meciar’s maulers aim to knock out the opposition’, \textit{The European}, 7-13 September 1998. Even some academics have not been immune from using the metaphor. See Josette Baer, ‘Boxing and politics in Slovakia: “Meciarism” [sic] – roots, theory, practise’, \textit{Democratization}, 8, 2, (Summer 2001), pp. 97-116
This thesis has attempted to show that certain explanations of political development are unsatisfactory when looking at the Slovak case. All the major theories of democratization (modernization, structural, evolutionary, transition, path dependency and particularist) offered something, but could not satisfactorily explain Slovakia’s kl’ukatá cesta (zigzag path).\footnote{Soňa Szomolányi, Kl’ukatá cesta k demokracii, Bratislava: STIMUL (1999)} Equally political culture explanations, not least because of inherent flaws in the approach, can provide the analyst with little more than a supplementary explanatory variable. Moreover, approaches which build on political culture and portray the Slovakia people as a mass unhinged from traditional institutions and ties and hence ideal for mobilization by political opportunists using nationalist rhetoric (i.e. Mečiar), such as Shari Cohen’s, fail on at least two fronts. Firstly, they assume leaders such as Mečiar are solely power-driven politicians. As chapter three argued, although power was an important part of Mečiar’s motivation, the pure power-driven approach falls into a Procrustean trap: too many inconvenient facts are made to fit within the framework. Secondly, if the mass were so inert and easily mobilized, how can the 1998 election results be explained?

The thesis has argued an explanation for Slovakia’s development lies in a structured nuanced view. Agency matters, but only within the framework of institutions and public opinion. Given the areas of ambiguity in the institutional framework, due to its novelty and flaws in the design, and the preponderance of informal rules, agency in post-communist Slovakia was accorded more room than it would have had in an older and more settled polity. Since Mečiar bade his country farewell in an

\footnote{Soňa Szomolányi, Kl’ukatá cesta k demokracii, Bratislava: STIMUL (1999)}
infamous television interview, Slovakia has made significant strides in attaining membership of the European Union and NATO. Proof enough, it could be argued, of the decisive role played by Mečiar in Slovak political development between 1993 and 1998. It would be a major mistake, however, to equate ‘agency’ with Mečiar. Mečiar may have been at the centre of decision-making and may have dominated his party, but he was not the central figure in all aspects of policy formation. As chapter five showed, not only were individual ministers given a significant degree of autonomy, but the impact of one of HZDS’ junior coalition partners, SNS, cannot and should not be ignored. In terms of the decision-making framework outlined in chapter three, the personalities of the decision-maker(s), the relations between the decision-makers and the ideology values and stated aims of the decision-maker(s) all need to be considered when analysing SNS’ influence over government policy. In order to assess SNS’ influence, however, the model’s stress on the importance of the issue to the decision-makers is particularly important. For SNS, which wanted the culture, education and defence portfolios after the 1994 election, defending the interests of Slovakia’s territory, culture and education system from outside were the party’s priorities. SNS, for instance, used its veto power to force a raft of concessions over the issue of the Slovak-Hungarian Treaty. The fact that the Slovak parliament eventually ratified the treaty and that the government was, nominally at least, committed to NATO entry, however, suggest SNS’ influence should not be overstated.

When asked to give his verdict on the impact of the French Revolution, Mao Zedong is reputed to have replied, ‘it is too early to judge.’ It may be too soon to produce the definitive assessment of Mečiar’s impact on Slovak political
development between 1993 and 1998, but as a provisional judgment, it seem accurate to conclude Mečiar was the dominant figure, but by no means omnipotent.


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Statistical Appendix

This appendix provides the statistical proof for the results of the Taagerpera and Shugart's coalition duration test in chapter five.

The 1994 parliamentary election: seats and votes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% of vote</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>% seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS (+RSS)</td>
<td>34.96</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>40.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZRS</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV (SDL, SDSS, ZRS, HP)</td>
<td>10.41</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MK (MKDH, Spoluzitie, MOS)</td>
<td>10.18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH (+SKOI)</td>
<td>10.08</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DU + NDS</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each party's fractional share is taken turned into a decimal and then the product is squared:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% seats</th>
<th>Square of decimal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS (+RSS)</td>
<td>40.66</td>
<td>0.1653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZRS</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>0.0075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.0036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV (SDL, SDSS, ZRS, HP)</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>0.0144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MK (MKDH, Spoluzitie, MOS)</td>
<td>11.33</td>
<td>0.0128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH (+SKOI)</td>
<td>11.33</td>
<td>0.0128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DU + NDS</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

¹¹⁹⁴ Štatisticky úrad Slovenskej republiky Volby do Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky konané 30.9 a 1.10.94
These figures are then put through the Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index (HH):

\[ HH = \sum p_i^2 \]

Where \( p_i \) is the fractional share of the \( i \)-th component

Hence in this case \( HH = 0.2264 \)

RAE fractionalization index (F):

\[ F = 1 - HH \]

\[ 1 - 0.2264 = 0.7736 \]

Taagepera and Shugart's effective number of parties test

\[ N = \frac{1}{1 - F} \]

\[ N = \frac{1}{1 - 0.7736} = 4.417 \]

\[ C \text{ (months)} = \frac{400}{4.417^2} = 20.96 \text{ months} \]
Re-running the test with HZDS (RSS), ZRS and SNS treated as a single-party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% seats</th>
<th>Square of decimal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HZDS (+RSS) + ZRS + SNS</td>
<td>55.32</td>
<td>0.3060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV (SDL, SDSS, ZRS, HP)</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>0.0144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MK (MKDH, Spoluzitie, MOS)</td>
<td>11.33</td>
<td>0.0128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH (+SKOJ)</td>
<td>11.33</td>
<td>0.0128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Σπᵢ² = 0.346

\[
\frac{1}{\sum \pi_i^2} = \frac{1}{0.346} = 2.890 = N
\]

\[
C (\text{months}) = 400 = 47.89 \text{ months}
\]

\[
2.890^2
\]