# POLITICAL CULTURE AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN SLOVAKIA

## by Silvia Mihalikova

*The remedy for the vices of the army is not to be found in the army itself, but in the country.*

Alexis de Tocqueville
*Democracy in America,* (Boston, 1873, vol.2) p.331.

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The Centre for European Security Studies is an independent and non-profit foundation engaged in research, education and training on foreign policy and security affairs affecting the whole of Europe. A key mission is to promote democratic structures and decision-making procedures in this field, especially throughout Central and Eastern Europe where it works to support those organisations and individuals striving to establish civil societies under the rule of law. By facilitating a comprehensive process of learning, it aims to contribute to mutual understanding on all security matters, thus helping to build a stable all-European order.

**FOREWORD**

By Peter Volten

When the Centre for European Security Studies (CESS) first approached the Volkswagen Foundation to seek funding for our European Fellowship Programme (EFP), we stressed two features of our scheme. One was the opportunity we wished to provide: for scholars from Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) to examine an aspect of their own nation's transition in the defence field, under our professional supervision and with a period of 'study abroad' in the Netherlands. The other was the results we could expect: authoritative, original research on *civil-military relations* and *security policy-making* in CEECs – the two themes on which we decided the EFP should focus – and hence valuable additions to an English-language literature on these subjects which had been dominated hitherto by general (and often superficial) essays by Western analysts.

In terms of these aims, the programme succeeded beyond our expectations. Some 25 fellows took part in it and most have seen their work published in this monograph series or elsewhere. For this success I have to thank all those members of my staff involved in the exercise. In particular, I must mention EFP Co-ordinator Sipke de Hoop, who was responsible for the selection of Fellows and overall management of the programme from early 1997; Joost Herman, who fulfilled this role at the start of the venture in 1996/97; and our administrators – Elena Herman and, later, Joke Venema – who provided office support for everyone and much practical help to the Fellows themselves.

Coming from CEECs, our Fellows faced the formidable challenge of writing-up their research in English, which for each of them was a second language (or even a third). All rose to this challenge, some impressively. Not surprisingly, however, their final submissions required careful editing prior to publication. The lion's share of this work has fallen to David Greenwood, Research Director at CESS. To him we owe a substantial debt for the effort he has expended in 'helping authors to say what it is they have to say' (in his own formulation). Thanks are also due to Sergei Malkin – and, latterly, Elzaline Schraa – for undertaking the final preparation of copy for our printer.

One last debt of gratitude I must acknowledge is to the Volkswagen Foundation, for providing the academic venture capital that made our programme possible. This was a courageous investment; but it has yielded regular dividends, of which this volume is the latest example.

Silvia Mihalikova has written a most thoughtful account of the evolution of civil-military relations in Slovakia and an insightful analysis of the reasons for the slow pace of change in the mid-1990s. Obviously, political conditions in the country have altered since the change of government in 1998. In the security arena as elsewhere there is a new atmosphere, characterised by high hopes and great expectations.

This does not mean, however, that Professor Mihalikova's material has been overtaken by events. Quite the reverse: her commentary on the Meciar era and her emphasis on the significance of Slovakia's political culture provide a basis upon which subsequent developments can be assessed. Thus, like many other studies arising from the EFP venture, I regard this text as a most useful contribution to the literature of transition. I commend it to you.

Groningen
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## I. INTRODUCTION

Any analysis concerning the former Eastern Bloc countries inherently tends towards the subjective. Persistent flux prevents the building of any coherent theoretical framework for understanding what remains labelled by most observers a post-communist transformation. While it is a matter of growing contention within the body of contemporary academic literature whether *any* theoretical framework can aid objective evaluation, in the case of Slovakia this post-modern dilemma has been particularly secondary because of the fluidity of political processes and socio-economic developments. Moreover, until 1998-99, Slovakia was regarded as the exception amongst the four Visegrad countries, the anomaly in Central Europe, its path uncertain and future unpredictable.

Nevertheless, it has become a habit of observers in Slovakia, from journalists to academics, to measure all phenomena according to Western yardsticks. In this sense anything that broadly approximates 'the Western way' has come to be perceived as normal, standard or systemic, that which has deviated from Western norms and practices as strange, unorthodox or non-systemic. It is in this spirit that many political and economic commentaries have been written.

The problem with this conceptualisation is that it is not only very vague but it ignores the dynamic nature of the benchmark (i.e. the Western capitalist system in general). Furthermore, it embodies the ethnocentric notion that all countries diverging from the direct path towards political plurality and a free market economy are ab-normal. This last tendency often results in a masochistic self-abasement in the face of non-conformity with the blueprint drawn at the dawn of the 'post-communist' era by Western neo-liberal enthusiasts (and reformers in the East) – a blueprint expressing a complete rejection of communism and with it all social or planned arrangements. In this sense the negative reflex to anything perceived as non-western stems from the deprivations of living on the 'wrong' side of the Iron Curtain. Last but not least, regarding the West as being apart and uniquely admirable, accompanied by the 'immutability fallacy', has prevented placing East European developments into the dynamic global context.

The present study addresses these shortcomings and seeks to balance the pro-Western emphasis. It also recognises global influences on East European transformation, some positive, some posing serious challenges for reform. Slovakia's political and socio-economic trends are treated diachronically, drawing on the work of Slovak and foreign observers, academics, journalists and politicians. Most important, the current state of civil-military relations in Slovakia is explained in the context of past and present developments of the Slovak *political culture*. The basic hypothesis is that political culture and its manifestations must be seen as one of the most important aspects of East Central European democratisation. Along with changes in economic, legal or institutional frameworks and political systems in general, historically formed and historically variable attitudes, evaluations and behavioural patterns in politics are major indicators of the path of transition to democracy.

A study of civil-military relations in Slovakia during the period when the country was consolidating its democratic rule must take into account not only these

general changes but also those associated with the very specific transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime. There is no universal theory of civil-military relations apart from the idea that 'healthy' civil-military relations are a key aspect of the democratic transition. Therefore the inquiry has to pay attention to the circumstances under which these relations developed, including the legacy of the communist regime. An evolving political environment has a significant impact on the military institution. The legal and constitutional framework shaping civil-military relations mirrors the 'quality' of democracy and rule of law. On the other hand we should not forget that the degree of professional autonomy enjoyed by the military affects the relationship between the army and society. Also, we should consider the role of the military in terms of its specific position in society as a special interest group that seeks to shape or influence the content of policy itself. As Alexis de Toqueville wrote more than 100 years ago, the remedy for the armed forces' vices must be found not in the army itself but in the country. Hence, we have to concentrate on the political system and regime those forces serve.

It is argued here that political fragility, several conflicts among state institutions and the so-called 'democratic deficit' in Slovakia created difficult circumstances for the Slovak military in the face of which it did its best and behaved itself as correctly as possible. Civil-military relations in any country are a product of the socio-political situation and fully reflect political culture and elite behaviour. Analysing those relations in such a perspective, the military serve as a barometer. Aspects of defence and military policy indicate the direction in which the country is moving. This is true in the Slovak case at several levels: political changes, personnel restructuring and the extent of co-operation with Western countries.

Another element in the consolidation of democratic management of armed forces is the creation and fostering of broad security policy communities. Only with such communities – as 'institutions capable of mediating, refining, and moderating political interaction between the state and society' as part of 'civil society, conceived as an aggregate of institutions whose members are engaged primarily in a complex of nonstate activities'[1] – can there be broad understanding of and open debate on military and defence issues, as well as education on the needs of the armed forces and respect for their place in society.

Several years after gaining independence, Slovakia finds itself locked in a paradox: while the transformation to a market economy has been relatively successful (despite problems), there is a far greater ambivalence and even dissatisfaction concerning the process of democratisation and the way power is exercised. There is less of this since the political changes in 1998, but the contrast remains. The general hopes for a continuous and linear unfolding of democracy were certainly frustrated through the mid-1990s by chronic political instability, permanent conflict among political elites and tensions between state institutions. This tale is told in the following part of the study (section II).

After sharing a common starting-point with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, why has Slovakia followed a quite different path?

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[1] P.M.E. Volten, 'Analyzing Civil-Military Relations', in: *National Security Education Project. Supplementary Handbook* (Centre for European Security Studies, Groningen, 1995) p.4.

The simplest answer is that in 1993 Slovakia had to start building state institutions from scratch. The new state was to some extent different – in terms of economic development, ethnic homogeneity and proximity to the West – and definitely lacked the experience that the Poles, Czechs and Hungarians had in governing and administering foreign and military affairs. While all these factors undoubtedly play a role, however, attention to the societal and political *culture* is necessary also if we are to understand the tensions within Slovak society, as well as between Slovakia's representatives and international bodies. We must note that in the post-communist countries, particularly in Slovakia, there are only few traditions of pluralist democracy and understanding of the rule of law relates to the interpretations of party elites. In addition, most citizens of Slovakia who were 80 or older in 1993 had experienced seven state formations and eight constitutions without changing residence. Of five regimes in their lifetime, only two could be considered democratic.

If we are to understand the contemporary Slovak political culture fully, we should therefore seek to identify its roots and then describe its main features. This means first examining the country's *undemocratic* traditions. Like other post-communist states, Slovakia has a mixed tradition of democracy and authoritarianism with roots not only in the socialist period, but going back at least to the early nineteenth century and the Slovak emancipation movement. These themes are covered in section III and section IV of this study.

Issues of civil-military relations are taken up in the course of the narrative, concentrating on the general concept of civil-military relations (understood in the broadest possible sense as identical to the somewhat more general principle of democratic control of the armed forces). The analysis is mainly based on an historical approach. The following sections (V and VI) are an attempt to evaluate Slovakia's experience with civil control of the armed forces – and the process of defence and security policy institution-building – since 1989 and particularly after gaining state independence in 1993.

## II. POST-COMMUNIST SLOVAKIA IN RETROSPECT

Developments in Slovakia since 1989 are best reviewed by dividing the analysis into two periods.  The first runs from the collapse of communism in November 1989 to the June 1992 elections and the consequent dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia) on 1 January 1993 (the two events are considered as fundamentally interconnected).  The second covers the consolidated rule of Vladimir Meciar´s Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and its two coalition partners, the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS).  The small interregnum of 1994, marked by Meciar's fall in a vote of no-confidence and the resulting early September 1994 elections, will be analysed as an episode in the second period.  Special attention is given to the end of this period and the September 1998 elections plus their impact on the image of the Slovak state both inside and outside the country.

Each transition toward democracy has its own unique characteristics and the case of Slovakia is used on the one hand to show that it is possible to manage peacefully a complicated event like dividing a country; and, on the other hand, as an example of negative factors like nationalism, xenophobia and renewal of authoritarianism.  Are these ingrained in our political culture? And if so, how do we understand contemporary developments in Slovakia?

The response of the Slovak population to the post-1989 changes was similar in many respects to that in other post-communist countries, but it also has some specific features of its own.  The most notable is ambiguity about whether through the 1990s the transition was toward democracy or a 'new model' of authoritarianism.  The priority given to nationalistic demands and to state independence led observers to ask if Slovaks 'might prefer to live under a non-democratic state of their own nationality rather than accept a non-national state even if it is democratically inclusive.  They might be ready to support a nondemocratic government to achieve the national goals rather than press for full democracy'.[2]

## 1. Slovakia between 1989 and 1993

The brief period between the collapse of Communism and the creation of the Slovak independent state was marked by a highly politicised struggle between the Slovak and the Czech elites about the future shape of the federation, against the backdrop of a complex transformation process.  This process, directed from Prague by federal politicians, involved economic and political reforms in line with the standard neo-liberal transformation package.  In economics the reforms entailed rapid liberalisation and stabilisation, followed by restructuring and small- and large-scale privatisation.  In the political sphere institutions and procedures that previously played only a cosmetic role were to be transformed into genuine organs of a democratic state,

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[2]  Y. Shain and J.J. Linz, *Between States. Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions,* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.96.

embodying the principles of plurality, tolerance, and compromise. Only then, it was assumed, would the East European identity fade. Reintegration into Western civilisation would follow, with all the benefits of a capitalist market economy rooted in democratic governance.

This posed serious challenges for the unity of Czechoslovakia. The two parts of the federation brought with them different legacies not only from the recent past but also from their more distant history. However, separation was not inevitable. First, the two republics were closer in terms of basic economic and social indicators at the time of the separation than at any other time in their shared history. Second, public polls conducted before, during, as well as after the division indicated that the majority of both Czechs and Slovaks favoured preservation of the common state. Third, those who aimed at achieving Slovakia's independence and positioned themselves to the forefront of the independent state after its creation had no history of commitment to emancipation. They were opportunists. Fourth, the fact that the reform policies of the independent Slovak state did not change dramatically from those directed from Prague under the federal arrangement testifies to many shared aspirations.

There is no doubt, though, that the initial transition influenced the Slovak economy more negatively than the Czech. Slovakia faced higher unemployment figures and the level of foreign investment was lower. Furthermore, Slovakia's heavy industry – a legacy of Communist modernisation and equalisation efforts – proved difficult to restructure and/or privatise. Politically or ideologically Slovakia differed slightly from its Czech counterpart due to a milder post-1968 normalisation period. It had a less active dissident community as well as a population more inclined to tolerate state intervention (social planning) or paternalism. These factors underlay Meciar's appeal. So did grey areas between the Czechs and Slovaks regarding issues such as the interpretation of Czechoslovakia's birth or the conduct of the two republics during the Second World War. There was no room for addressing these in the context of the First Republic nor under Communism.

The politicisation of the differences between the Czechs and Slovaks crystallised in the June 1992 elections. Two parties based on national lines won the elections and proved unable to compromise. The leaders of the Czech-based Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and the Slovak-based HZDS, Vaclav Klaus and Vladimir Meciar respectively, opted to dissolve the common federation. Dissolution occurred on 1 January 1993, without a referendum.

While the transition to independent statehood proved relatively easy for the Czech Republic – which inherited the capital city and appropriated formally federal institutions – Slovakia faced a problem of building up a new state almost from scratch.

## 2. Slovakia under Meciar's Rule 1994-1998

A number of Slovak political scientists and foreign observers[3] argue that, after the separation, Slovakia abandoned the transformation path clearly set out by the federal government in Prague. Undoubtedly, there was a regressive tendency intensified after the early 1994 elections following which a coalition government of the Movement for Democratic Slovakia, the Association of Workers of Slovakia and the Slovak National Party took office, led by the Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar. The majority support for this government resulted in a situation where the representatives of the leading coalition parties voted basically to exclude the opposition from decision making. As a result important functions were taken over by the coalition parties' candidates or their previous holders recalled. In the formation of parliamentary committees coalition MPs held a two-thirds majority, making the input of the opposition MPs largely irrelevant.

All this allowed Meciar's government to abuse its power. It could break constitutional laws, disregard verdicts of the Constitutional Court, and develop dubious relations with the economic sector. An illustration of deficiencies in democratic governance is the case of Frantisek Gaulieder, an MP ousted as a result of quitting the Movement for Democratic Slovakia parliamentary caucus. In a letter to Ivan Gasparovic, speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic (Slovak Parliament ), Gaulieder stated his intention to remain in parliament as an independent deputy. Within days, however, Gasparovic received another letter – allegedly from Gaulieder, but denounced by him as a fraud – in which the former HZDS member resigned his seat in parliament. The matter was referred to the parliament's mandate and immunity committee, in which the government coalition held the majority. Despite the fact that the committee's chairman agreed that the second letter was a fraud, the full committee recommended that it be accepted. Consequently, the ruling majority in parliament voted to accept the resignation of deputy Gaulieder and to replace him with a HZDS substitute. Despite a verdict of the Constitutional Court declaring this act unconstitutional, the parliamentary majority remained indifferent and deaf also to outside protests at its blatant violation of parliamentary privilege. The case appeared to be a dead issue until recently when the new formed parliament 1998/99 approved a moral satisfaction and financial compensation to Mr.Gaulieder.

Other unsavoury episodes include the strange circumstances surrounding the abduction of President Michal Kovac´s son to Austria and the state authorities' reluctance to investigate this case; and the involvement of Meciar's government in privatisation schemes whereby coupon privatisation was discontinued and redistribution of property continued on the basis of direct sales to predetermined

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[3] From domestic studies I refer especially to S. Szomolanyi and J.A. Gould, *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation and the Struggle for the Rules of the Game,* (Slovak Political Science Association, Bratislava, 1997) or the issues of the Institute for Public Affairs *Global Report on Slovakia,* (Bratislava, 1996, 1997, 1998); and from foreign sources to M. Kaldor and I. Vejvoda, 'Democratization in central and east European countries', *International Affairs*, (73, 1,1997) pp.59-82 or M. Carpenter, 'Slovakia and the Triumph of Nationalist Populism', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, (1997, Vol.30, No.2) pp.205-220.

buyers through a Meciar-controlled Fund of National Property. Especially revealing were the cases of Nafta Gbely, Ironworks Kosice, and Devin Bank.[4]

As a result in the mid-1990s there emerged in Slovakia a clear political polarisation not along classical partisan (ideological) lines as in the West but along a socio-political and cultural-civilisational axis. Two broad political camps developed.[5] The first, represented until September 1998 by the leading governing coalition parties, consisted of the Movement for Democratic Slovakia, the Association of Workers of Slovakia, and the Slovak National Party. To the second, broadly encompassing the opposition parties from both the left and the right, belonged the Christian Democratic Party, Party of the Democratic Left, Democratic Union, Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party of Slovakia, parties of the Hungarian Coalition and the Slovak Green Party. In 1996 a so-called Blue Coalition was established in which the Christian Democratic Party, Democratic Union and the Democratic Party combined forces. In 1997 this coalition was joined by the Social Democratic Party of Slovakia and the Slovak Green Party to form the Slovak Democratic Coalition.

The former camp could be characterised as a grouping of national-authoritarian parties that approached the political process with a confrontational style and that had a power-based understanding of politics, relying on unilateral decision making and enforcement rather than compromise and agreement. Meanwhile, the latter camp could be perceived as anti-authoritarian, having a civil-democratic and pro-European leaning. The September 1998 elections ended the semi-authoritarian style of the government led by Meciar – and halted Slovakia's mounting 'democratic deficit' – since the former opposition won a majority in the Parliament.

Besides this polarisation, tensions among legislative, executive and judicial organs were a feature of the mid-1990s. The conflict between President Michal Kovac and Prime Minister Meciar and his government was especially pervasive. It actually resulted in a 'temporary' elimination of the Presidency after a failed and muddled referendum.[6] Conflicts between the legislative majority and the government on the one side and the judiciary on the other were reflected in the former's refusal to submit to the latter's verdicts. It could be stated, therefore, that the division of power among the main state organs remained unresolved. Indeed, the struggle for their positioning and role in Slovak political life continued well into 1998.

Meciar's rule has been described as unstable though still democratic, at least in the formal sense, precisely because the struggle over rules and procedures took place within the existing (formal) democratic institutions.[7] This leads to another conundrum, namely, that having a democratic institutional framework does not necessarily mean having a democracy. For instance, while laws were passed in a semblance of a democratic procedure they were often ineffectual.

The unstable environment was reflected in the realm of international affairs. It accounts for the disqualification of Slovakia from West European and transatlantic

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[4] See more in I. Miklos, 'Privatizacia', *Slovensko 1997. Suhrnna sprava o stave spolocnosti a trendoch na rok 1998,* (Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998) pp.405-433.

[5] G. Meseznikov, 'Domestic Politics', *Slovakia 1996-1997. A Global Report on the State of Society,* (Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998) pp.11-27.

[6] See G. Meseznikov and M. Butora (eds), *Slovenske referendum '97: zrod, priebeh, dosledky,* (Institut pre verejne otazky, Bratislava, 1997).

[7] S. Szomolanyi and J.A. Gould (eds), *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation and the Struggle for the Rules of the Game,* (Slovak Political Science Association, Bratislava, 1997).

integration processes. During the 1997 summit in Madrid, Slovakia was excluded from the group of countries included in the first wave of NATO enlargement, despite its apparent military readiness. Furthermore, notwithstanding the country's impressive macroeconomic performance (at least until 1996/1997) – and its status as an associated member of the European Community (EU) – it was not invited to further integration talks until the end of 1999. Thus the mid-1990s were years of lost opportunities for Slovakia in the field of international relations.

Despite the mostly negative political development in Slovakia after 1994, the economy showed signs of improvement until 1996/1997.[8] Indeed, the years 1994 and 1995 were marked by revival and macroeconomic stabilisation. Relatively fast growth was combined with a falling inflation rate and did not hinder macroeconomic balance. The year 1996 began to show a growing deficit and faltering levels of output. Low inflation and stable currency were maintained through strict monetary policy, involving high interest rates prohibitive to the flourishing of business activity. However, the biggest problem was the tendency of Meciar's government to interfere in the economy for its own interest. Lack of transparency and circumvention of law – as in the privatisation process, for instance – discouraged foreign investment and were therefore inimical to growth.

## 3. The September 1998 Elections

The September 1998 elections marked a break from the policies and conduct of the previous government. Although HZDS received the biggest single share of the votes, the former opposition gained a constitutional majority in the Parliament overall. The election turnout was very high: over 80 per cent of eligible Slovaks voted – thanks to the participation of many young people and first-time voters.[9] The ballot thus rejected 'Meciarism' and endorsed those parties committed to redirecting Slovakia's path towards democratic consolidation and integration with the West (the two are considered virtually identical goals). The key statistics of the election are shown in Table 1 overleaf.

Month-long talks resulted on 28 October 1998 in a coalition agreement among four parties: the Slovak Democratic Coalition, the Party of Democratic Left, Party of the Hungarian Coalition, and the Party of Civic Understanding. Because of this, the new government had the theoretical support of 93 MPs – a constitutional majority. It immediately sent strong signals to the international community about its commitment to resume the path to Europe. Indeed, integration is one of the most important challenges facing the new leaders.

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[8] I. Miklos, 'Celkovy ekonomicky vyvoj', *Slovensko 1997. Suhrnna sprava o stave spolocnosti a trendoch na rok 1998,* (Institut pre verejne otazky, Bratislava, 1998) pp.329-369.

[9] According to a daily *SME* some 320,000 first-time voters participated in the September elections.

Table 1. Results of the Parliamentary Elections (25-26 September 1998)

| POLITICAL PARTY OR SUBJECT | TOTAL VOTES | % VOTES | SEATS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Movement of Democratic Slovakia | 907 103 | 27.00 | 43 |
| Slovak Democratic Coalition | 884 497 | 26.33 | 42 |
| Party of Democratic Left | 492 507 | 14.66 | 23 |
| Party of the Hungarian Coalition | 306 623 | 9.12 | 15 |
| Slovak National Party | 304 839 | 9.07 | 14 |
| Party of Civic Understanding | 269 343 | 8.01 | 13 |
| The Communist Party of Slovakia | 94 015 | 2.79 | – |
| Association of Workers of Slovakia | 43 809 | 1.30 | – |
| Our Slovakia | 16 192 | 0.48 | – |
| Slovak Peoples Party | 9 227 | 0.27 | – |
| Hungarian Peoples Movement for Moderation and Prosperity | 6 587 | 0.19 | – |
| Independent Initiative of Slovak Republic | 6 232 | 0.18 | – |
| Becko-Revolutionary Workers Party | 4 319 | 0.13 | – |
| Slovak National Unity | 4 688 | 0.12 | – |
| United Workers Party of Slovakia | 3 574 | 0.10 | – |
| National Alternative to Slovakia | 3 034 | 0.09 | – |
| Movement of the Third Path | 2 515 | 0.07 | – |

Source: compiled by author

The first visit abroad of the new Prime Minister, Mikulas Dzurinda, was to Brussels (5-6 November 1998) to meet the authorities of NATO and EU. The delegation wanted Slovakia put among the first group of countries invited to EU and NATO membership. It did not achieve this but on his return Dzurinda reported that EU and NATO officials had been pleased with the recent political changes in Slovakia, and had said they believed the country would soon become a candidate for entry to either of their organisations.

As a matter of fact, Slovakia's new government has succeeded in transforming the country's image abroad; but it still needs to convince analysts it can tackle problems at home. Domestic policy has been oriented mainly to the past – to expose past misrule, ministries have prepared so-called 'black-books' detailing abuses of power under the last government. The two most controversial early results were the arrest of two members of the security services (SIS) in connection with the Kovac kidnapping, and the vote for lifting parliamentary immunity from former Interior Minister Gustav Krajci to allow his criminal prosecution for the role he played in hampering the preparation and course of the 1997 NATO and direct presidential election referendum.[10] The government has also declared invalid the privatisation of

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[10] According to Slovak law, no sitting member of parliament can be prosecuted for criminal acts – even murder – committed while in office. In order for an MP to be prosecuted, parliament must first vote to lift his immunity by constitutional majority, or 90 deputies out of 150 who sit in the chamber. Members of parliament who lose their immunity do not lose their seat unless found guilty before the courts.

a stake in oil and gas storage firm NAFTA. However, such moves could not substitute for the enactment of forward-looking policies.[11]

The Dzurinda Government took up this challenge in 1999. This is not the place for details. Suffice is to say that, following NATO's 50th anniversary summit in Washington (April 1999) there is now a good prospect of Slovakian participation in the 'second wave' of that organisation's enlargement. As for the EU, the year's progress in Bratislava was enough to overcome early reservations about membership. At a Council of Ministers' meeting in Helsinki (December 1999), it was announced that Slovakia would be invited to start pre-accession talks in 2000.

The most concrete foreign policy improvement of 1998/99 was a warming in relations with neighbouring Hungary. The government has pledged to push through reform of language laws to accommodate the 500,000-strong ethnic Hungarian minority, which often complained of unfair treatment by Meciar.

On the economy, problems persist but ambitious plans have been laid: the government is selling a big stake in the state telecom company and wants to slash the budget deficit to two per cent of GDP. On the other hand, the country has experienced increasing unemployment and an increase in the cost of living. There was a wave of public protests in early 1999, including a campaign involving metalworkers, organised by the biggest trade union organisation in the Slovak Trade Union Confederation, under the slogan 'For Jobs, Wages and the Rights of Employees'.[12] (The government considered this unjustified since the problems of the industry have been mounting for years and the new government is doing its utmost to halt unfavourable developments.)

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[11] See more in: I. Remias, 'Cabinet trumpets progress on EU entry. Western alliance officials warn demands must be met', *The Slovak Spectator*, International Weekly, (Vol. 4, No. 27, 16-21 November, 1998).

[12] According to Slovak News Agency SITA in *The Slovak Spectator*, International Weekly, (Vol.5, No. 5, 21-27 February 1999) p.5.

## III. MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK IN SLOVAKIA

Discussions on democratic transition tend to fall into two streams – the first studying democratic political culture as a precedent and a precondition of democratic transition and the other seeing democratic political culture as a final outcome of democratic transition. The present debate has reanimated old controversy about where democracy really lies and where the substantial force of a democratic political system can be found. In addition, in all post-communist countries it is important to note that the actions of old and/or new regimes did not occur in a vacuum. International factors exerted influence as did social pressures and opposition groups. Most important in the political cultures of the countries of the 'Visegrad Four' – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – there are very few traditions of pluralist democracy.

Responses to the changes following the collapse of communism in Slovakia in the main correspond to those of other Central and East European countries (CEECs). In part, however, they differ markedly as a result of the country's specific history and political situation. Through the 1990s there was widespread uncertainty with respect to the level or state of democratisation within Slovak society. Some commentators, as we have seen, altogether denied that democracy had taken hold, and saw its tender sprout swamped by a new or revived authoritarianism. Certainly, Slovakia's image in international media and organisations deteriorated markedly after 1994. Despite some positive macro-economic achievements, the country was the most problematic of the Visegrad Four. Since Slovak independence (1 January 1993) all Slovak governments have unequivocally declared the desire to become regular members of Western structures. However, until 1998, their representatives violated the principles of a fair dialogue with NATO and EU.[13] The state authorities received several official and unofficial notices, *démarches* and diplomatic recommendations from Western Europe and the United States concerning the exercise of democracy and urging respect for democratic principles, guarantees of the freedom of expression in the media and public life, and increased respect for minority protection. These had little or no effect on Prime Minister Meciar. In other words, the message was sent but the receiver remained deaf: there was no evidence of any positive reaction. Most exasperating was the Janus-face of government foreign policy, simply described as 'You behave differently at home and in Brussels'.[14] Small wonder that Slovakia was excluded from the first invitation list to talks about NATO enlargement (Madrid, July 1997) and EU membership (Luxembourg, December 1997). Although the institutional framework defined by the Slovak constitution responds to the needs of a parliamentary democracy where elections are free and fair, observers could not see democratic principles implemented in political life.

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[13] The seven-month tenure of Jozef Moravcik's coalition government (March-September 1994) could be seen as an exception to this trend.

[14] More detailed analysis of Slovak foreign policy after 1993 see in M. Wlachovský, 'Foreign Policy', in: M. Butora and P. Huncik, (eds.), *Global Report on Slovakia: Comprehensive Analyses from 1995 and Trends from 1996,* (Bratislava, Sandor Marai Foundation, 1997) pp.33-55.

There is a growing literature on this phenomenon. It notes progress made in building democratic institutions. The concern is the stability of these institutions, implementation of democratic principles, the lack of a 'spirit of democracy' among ruling elites and among quite a large portion of the population as well. At issue here is where democracy really lies – *in institutions* or *in culture*; and where the essence of a democratic political regime can be found – in its '*hard*' *institutional* or '*soft*' *cultural* aspect.

One may also argue – as I do in this text – that attention to political culture affords a complementary perspective, not a substitute for other approaches or a single-factor explanation. This understanding is related to the assumption that social reality is complex and that the function of theory is not to deny this complexity but to make it more intelligible. The definition of political culture used sensitises the observer to a certain relationship between regimes and invites recognition of the multifaceted reality characterising post-communist social systems.

Political culture is studied in conjunction with political structure; the one establishing limits for the other. Approaching the concept of political culture this way allows us (a) to take explicit account of the cognitive element of political culture and to see political culture largely as a response to a regime of a given character, (b) to avoid limiting the notion of political culture to the level of personal psychology as most scholars have done, (c) to perceive the systemic significance of what is typically seen as either anomalous or unique in certain post-communist political cultures, and (d) to generate hypotheses dealing with questions of conflict, change, consolidation, and system identity. In short, the goal is an analytic understanding of political culture that facilitates comparison of post-communist regimes in terms of the interaction between formal-structural and informal-cultural elements, thereby avoiding on the one hand the exceptionalist pitfall and on the other the tendency to assert through definition that structure alone is decisive.

Following Jowitt, *political culture* can be defined as 'the set of informal, adaptive postures – behavioural and attitudinal – that emerge in response to and interact with the set of formal definitions – ideological, policy, and institutional – that characterise a given level of society'.[15] Thus political culture is not a cause, but the context within which politics take place. Analysing the political cultures in CEECs – identifying different sub-cultures – can help account for the salience of other factors, such as the presence of authoritarian tendencies, the approach to managing ethnic minority problems, the strength or weakness of civil society. Despite the criticism that such analyses provide static and *post hoc* interpretations of events, I take the view that political culture can and does account for change.[16] At the same time I agree with those authors who argue that extraordinary events – such as the fall of communism and the establishment of a free market – do change behaviour and attitudes, even among older generations (although such change does not occur overnight).

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[15] K. Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction,* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992) p.55.

[16] See H. Eckstein, 'A culturalist theory of political change', *American Political Science Review* (1988, 82/3) pp.789-804; M. Thompson, R. Ellis, and A. Wildavsky (eds.), *Cultural Theory*, (Boulder, 1990); U. Edvardsen, 'A cultural approach to understanding modes of transition to democracy', *Journal of Theoretical Politics,* (9-1, 1997) pp. 211-234.

## 1. Understanding Slovak Political Culture

The starting point for this look at political culture in transforming post-communist Slovakia – in a broader framework of political structures – is the proposition that all post-communist regimes are orientated to certain core tasks that are crucial in shaping the character of the regime and its relationship to society. These tasks include:

- *transformation* – the attempt to alter decisively or destroy values, structures, and behaviour which the new elite perceives as conducive to the actual or potential comeback of old forms or personalities;
- *political socialisation* – the attempt to create the nucleus of a new political community and a rebirth of civil society with the process of dissemination of the basic ideals and practice of the rule of law and grass-roots democracy;
- *decentralisation* – the attempt to develop more empirical and less declarative definitions of problems and policy plus a substantive, differentiated approach to the solutions of problems rather than a formal, procedural approach, together with an understanding of the executive function that stresses command competences rather than idiosyncratic leadership.

Despite these common core features and processes they can be addressed in different ways. The role of political elites is crucial, as became evident in Slovakia between 1994 and 1998, years of continued political polarisation and conduct which brought the country towards international isolation. Although it may sound paradoxical, the primary foreign policy problem of the Slovak Republic has been (and could be again) its domestic situation: the elite's adversarial behaviour and their strong personal competition. Moreover, the complaint that 'there is a lack of competent people' leads in Slovakia to the acceptance of the *re-cycle model* of recruitment by the ruling elite.[17] The same people appear on stage repeatedly – President Schuster being an example.[18]

Another remarkable fact is that top politicians claim a 'political date of birth' after November 1989, disregarding their age and political involvement in the previous regime. This suggests that main factors determining the specific configuration, attitudes, skills, and abilities of the political elites which have shaped post-communist Slovakia are previous historical traditions and political development perpetuated by

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[17] See S. Mihalikova, 'Understanding Slovak Political Culture', in: F. Plasser and A. Priberski, *Political Culture in East Central Europe*, (Avebury, Brookfield, USA, 1996) pp.167-179.

[18] Rudolf Schuster's political career started under communism. Previously, he had a high position in the Communist Party hierarchy. After 1989, he became the Chairman of the Slovak National Council and remained in this position until the first free parliamentary elections in summer 1990. After the communal elections of 1994, he became Mayor of Košice and strengthened his position as a charismatic, active and successful local politician. Schuster decided to create his own party after his failed negotiations with SDK and SDL, and when it became clear that he had no chance to be elected President by the MPs of the former Parliament. After the 1998 elections, Schuster was nevertheless appointed by SDK as its candidate for the presidential election, which he won.

forms of elite recruitment, the accepted legitimacy of the new power, and the socio-psychological atmosphere in society.   Yet the final phase of democratisation is reached only when *democratic* institutions and practices become ingrained in the political culture.   Not only political leaders but also the prevailing majority of political actors, and of the population, come to understand such practices as a part of the right and natural arrangement of society.

No doubt this explains why Slovakia's isolation in the mid-1990s was typically explained by reference to the state's *democratic deficit.*   Through the mid-1990s public discourse concerning this question in Slovakia itself featured two groups of arguments.   The first was used by the former government coalition under Mr. Meciar.  It affected a persecution complex.   All resolutions and warnings coming from abroad were part of an 'international conspiracy against our young state' supported by 'internal enemies of Slovak independence' who might be found in all social strata, in particular among intellectuals.   Accordingly it was necessary 'to improve the positive image of Slovakia abroad', by the establishment of a special information agency, journals, and media organs, ideally paid for by the state.   At the same time, the ruling group tried to limit freedom of expression and access to foreign media for its critics.

The second group of arguments was propounded by those prepared to openly discuss negative developments in internal and external politics.   They considered the return of old and the birth of new authoritarian tendencies to be a major reason for the comments addressed to Slovakia from abroad.   In their opinion, countering the 'negative image of Slovakia on the international scene' required an increased respect for basic democratic principles and the rule of law inside the country, as well as a clear declaration of Slovakia's foreign policy orientation.

These sharply contrasting views on national politics were prominent in the media, in statements of political parties, and in everyday conversation.   Slovakia appeared on the verge of becoming a divided society.   Although many rejected this idea, the evidence is clear.   Contributing to polarisation was the expedient of the Meciar-led coalition in establishing a kind of loyal 'parallel civil society'.   After failing to gain control over key civil society groupings HZDS and its allies established their own competing counterpart organisations in the same field, e.g. the Association of Slovak Journalists, the Slovak Youth Congress, the General Free Labour Union, the Association of Mayors.   This technique was applied not only towards separate interest groups but also towards umbrella organisations, e.g. HZDS established its own Union of Citizen's Associations and Foundations and even helped to create 'parallel' party structures.   Thus HZDS inspired the rise of the Association of Slovak Workers (ZRS) to undermine the Party of Democratic Left (SDL) and actively supported creation of the Hungarian People's Movement for Reconciliation and Prosperity which parallels the Hungarian Coalition, and the Civic Liberal Party of Slovakia which parallels Democratic Union.   Slovak political scientists use the term 'party-state corporatism' to describe such '…efforts of the ruling party to found its own party-affiliated and party-controlled organisations or to gain control over already existing groups'.[19]

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[19]   An analysis of this concept is provided by D. Malova, 'The Development of Interest Representation in Slovakia After 1989: From "Transmission Belts" to "Party-State Corporatism?"', in: S. Szomolanyi and J.A. Gould, (eds), *Slovakia – Problems of Democratic Consolidation. The Struggle for the Rules of the Game,* (SPSA, Bratislava, 1997) pp. 93-113.

## 2. Divided Society – Divided Political Culture?

The political culture of post-communist Slovakia represents a kind of post-communist *mindset* that can be identified as a specific psycho-social constellation typical for CEECs in transition. No matter how far political and economic change has progressed, transformation processes in Slovakia have been hindered by previous patterns of thinking and behaviour as well as by anachronistic structures. *De-communisation* appears to be more difficult than many expected. The post-communist *mindset* has proved harder to change than the institutional framework. Furthermore, even if establishment and workings of the new democratic institutions ultimately change the old mentalities and negate the cultural legacies, it will not happen quickly. It may take a generation to get rid of the vestiges of the past. This is because there must be change at two levels: the *level of personal commitment* (personal values, motivations, drives, thought patterns) and a more hidden *level of cultural code* typical for a given society (shared and objectified patterns and blueprints for acting and thinking).

Symptomatic of a society thus adrift is the polarisation of political preferences even though there is much agreement regarding social problems, evaluations of privatisation, expectations of future development and so on. Instead of natural societal differentiation, the contending political impulses, frequent changes in official political values (both in the past and during recent changes), fragmentation of social structures and rupture of civic society have caused value confusion – in sharp contrast to the 'certainties' which had become a natural part of life under the communist regime.

Not only elites are deeply divided. The entire population is becoming more and more politically polarised. The dividing line is going across families, informal groups, professional associations. There is even reported a growing number of divorces and mental or psychological disorders attributable to political squabbles. Perhaps this is not totally different from the situation in Poland or Hungary but in Slovakia the condition appears especially acute.

To show how deep is this 'splitting syndrome' consider some examples of how political polarisation has affected all social strata, regardless of education level, profession, age, gender, religion, and rural or urban residency. Nor are these instances unique. They have become sufficiently commonplace to be a subject of discussion among political commentators and social and political scientists.

The first story confirms that even closely-related academics on the top intellectual level are not immune. It concerns brothers – Stefan and Jozef Markus – the former a highly educated lawyer, the latter head of Matica Slovenska, a renowned organisation established in 1863 to preserve Slovak's language and culture. The two are politically active and influential public figures. Unfortunately, however, they have publicly acknowledged that they do not speak to each other anymore, standing as they do on opposite sides of Slovakia's political barricade. Stefan Markus, summarising their relationship, says: 'Well, we exchange Christmas postcards, that is about it. I would prefer not to speak about this. It is a rather intimate issue and it

hurts...Slovakia is now sharply cut into two parts...Perhaps it is something in the Slovak character, that we are too emotional when it comes to politics'.[20]

Other tales confirm lifelong friendships broken due to political misunderstanding: women who have regularly met and enjoyed the fact that their children became adult and they could organise their spare time following their own wishes, ceasing to see each other due to fierce arguments over Slovakia's independence, the different interpretation of history and politics – disputes that ended up in unpleasant personal vituperation; families discontinuing the traditional Sunday dinner or birthday parties due to wild arguments about politics.  This deepening gulf regarding present political preferences shows too in the case of former dissident Catholic groups whose members hated the communist regime and often gathered illegally to pray and plot.  Today, they cannot find a common language for discussion.

Resort to a simplistic black and white view of the world and protracted discussions about the past and present fate of the nation have been noted in all post-communist societies and among their elites.  The Slovak variant features misuse of arguments derived from history: politicians and intellectuals distort history, enlisting personalities, events and symbols for their own purposes.  Moreover, they do so indiscriminately, invoking events or personalities belonging to past centuries – in Slovakia it is very popular to cite the 1000-year-long oppression of the Slovak nation by Hungarians – or from yesterday.  All arguments derived from different historical periods are used in order to explain and help to support today's politics, showing who are and always have been our enemies.  The performance of ancient and modern history is perceived as a contemporary issue.  It is a sort of using history in a 'horizontal' way, for manipulation and even mass mobilisation.  It is too soon to say whether the improved political atmosphere that followed the September 1998 elections will lead to a moderation of this destructive tendency.  There are signs that it *might*.  The question is whether the fissures opened up in the 1990s, especially in the Meciar years, are being permanently mended or only temporarily bridged.

## 3. The Meciar Years and Economic Transformation

The changes which took place in the social and political climate in Slovakia after November 1989 –including developments after January 1993 – were full of contradictions.  The majority of Slovaks hold a rather sceptical view about the early 1990s.  This is evident in the succession of names given to the collapse of the old regime.  The first poetic term, the 'Velvet Revolution', lost favour very quickly: one year after November 1989, students started to talk about the 'Stolen Revolution'; and afterwards spread the use of terms like the 'Velvet Outbreak', the 'Communist Riot', the 'Palace Revolution', or the 'Jewish-Bolshevik Conspiracy', and other derogatory labels.

Dissatisfaction in the mid-1990s concerned mainly the character of current democracy.  In one survey 74.8 per cent of the Slovak population disagreed or

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[20] J. Dorotkova, 'Slovak brothers torn apart by politics', *The Slovak Spectator*, (Vol.4, No.2, January 29-February 11, 1998) p.2.

strongly disagreed with the opinion that 'we are living in democracy', 76.3 per cent believed that 'real politics does not respect democratic principles at all' and 75.4 per cent noted the 'presence of authoritarian tendencies in our politics'.[21]  As in the other post-communist countries, there was in Slovakia a tendency towards an idealisation of the communist regime and with it a corresponding increase in nostalgia for the 'good old days', while the injustices of socialism began to be forgotten.  This became obvious in everyday life, in the lukewarm acceptance of the economic transformation, in the confusion surrounding solutions to important problems, in the growing anxiety about the future.  Citizens seemed to miss 'the certainties' that had become part of their way of life under the communists.

Opinion surveys recorded near-unanimity among Slovaks about the superiority of the former regime in provision of social security (94.4 per cent) free education (96.9 per cent) free health care (97.4 per cent).[22]

Economic reform touches the lives of Slovakia's citizens in direct and immediate ways.  It is not surprising that they hold strong opinions about the extent, pace, and fairness of this process.  Before 1989, most people in the country underestimated the necessity for fundamental economic restructuring.  They were not sufficiently aware that the socialist economic system had reached its limits for growth and was functioning at the expense of future generations.  Throughout the mid-1990s more than one-half of the population believed that the country's economy before November 1989 did not require profound changes.  That is to say, they had not accepted the need for fundamental transformation of the pre-1989 socialist economy.  The evidence is in Table 2.

Table 2. 'Did the pre-1989 Slovak economy require changes?' (In per cent)

|  | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1997 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No, it did not | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Yes, but only minor changes | 32 | 39 | 46 | 44 | 44 |
| Yes, profound changes | 49 | 49 | 41 | 44 | 39 |
| Do not know | 13 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 11 |

Source: Bútorová, Z. (ed.), *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia:
A Public Opinion Profile of a Country in Transition* (IVO, Bratislava, 1998) p.24.

Those recognising the need for change mostly favoured liberal or conservative orientations in the economy and politics, preferring a pro-Western course for Slovakia.  For many, though, breaking the mould was important principally to allow aspirations for independence to develop.  Thus the positive attitudes toward post-communism were based on two contradictory impulses.  The first was the prevailing liberal orientation emphasising the values of freedom, plural democracy and individual responsibility plus a pro-Western foreign policy.  In Slovak political analyses people of this value orientation are described as favouring the 'civic approach' or as 'cosmopolites'.

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[21] S. Mihalikova,.(ed.), *Orientations Toward Politics and Economy in Post-Communist East Central Europe*, (Comenius University, research report, Bratislava, 1996) p.18.
[22] Ibid., p.24.

The second was the strong conviction that the sovereignty of Slovakia was a logical outcome of the fall of the communist regime (producing nationalists).

Preference for post-1989 compared to pre-1989 governance – including the Meciar years –seems to have been strongest, through the middle nineties, among men and young people. It was also a function of education and command of foreign languages. Surveys show that over 70 per cent of students considered the post-communist order preferable to 'real socialism'. This view was shared by the same proportion of entrepreneurs and half of Slovakia's intellectuals.[23]

At the same time a strong feeling of alienation from the 'new power' developed due to the generally low confidence of the Slovak population in the top political institutions (President, Cabinet, Parliament, coalition's deputies, and opposition's deputies). One reason was a lack of confidence in the ability of the new elites to safeguard the interests of the common people. Another reason was a very strong sense of impoverishment: a fear of economic failure stemming from social insecurity and a pessimistic evaluation of the effects of economic transformation. As George Schöpflin has observed, low public trust in institutions is a part of people's communist heritage – there was and still is very little understanding of the role of institutions as stabilising agents helping to manage problems and prevent power being accumulated by a small minority – so that personal relations are regarded as far more authentic than institutional ones.[24] The impersonal world of institutions is perceived as strange and it is personal loyalty or disloyalty that dominates politics.

In June 1997, almost 90 per cent of a sample of inhabitants of Slovakia were of the opinion that politicians take care of their own interests and of those of their promoters, first and foremost. Nearly 80 per cent believed that family nepotism, utilitarianism and careerism prevails in politics. Almost as many thought that to achieve something one must have connections, political acquaintances either in the ruling movement or the opposition. It was a widely-held view that 'the rich buy democracy, they have always done so and they always will'.[25]

After a short period of euphoria, during the Velvet Revolution, in the 'Meciar years' the same attitudes and views that were prevalent during the old regime, returned to dominate Slovak political culture: 'politics is a dirty business'.

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[23] See various surveys by Focus, MVK and Nazory.

[24] G. Schöpflin, 'Culture and Identity in Post-Communist Europe' in: S. White, J. Batt, and P.G. Lewis, (eds), *Developments in East European Politics*, (Macmillan Press, London, 1993) pp.16-36.

[25] S. Mihalikova, *The Role of Political Cultures in the Transformation of Post-Communist Societies*, (Comenius University, unpublished research report, Bratislava, 1997) p.36.

## 4. Value and Belief Confusion

The evolution of Slovak society during the period of transition reflects the contending political traditions, frequent changes in official political values (both before and after 1989), the splitting of social structures and both continuity and disruption within civic society.  Following, and probably because of, four decades of indoctrination, citizens have still not been able to build up a new hierarchy of values which is important for their everyday life and professional careers.  Certainly in the 1990s the communist ideology was not dead, it simply changed in its manifestations.  It remained part of the social consciousness, convictions and behaviour of average citizens and of a great number of political representatives in Slovakia.  The internalisation of communitarianism explains the preference for nationalist demands, social demagogy and authoritarian patterns.  In Slovakia, as in other post-communist countries, there was that 'wall in men's heads' first ascribed to the citizens of the former East Germany.  No matter how enthusiastically the people welcomed the fall of communism in the streets, they were not disposed to total rejection of the socialist ethos.

One of the basic value contradictions in the country is the perception of the relationship between the individual and the state.  Slovakia has a strong tradition of collectivism, and state-paternalist orientations.  The results of opinion polls in the mid-1990s confirm that the shift away from the state toward individual responsibility had not then taken place (and maybe still hasn't).  No doubt the nation's severe economic problems are part of the explanation, encouraging demands for protective interventions by the state.

Attitudes concerning the role of the state exhibit certain stability over time.  There is a prevalent conviction that the state must retain important functions.  According to a mid-decade poll 50 per cent of the population opposed comprehensive privatisation; nearly 75 per cent thought the economy could not progress without serious state intervention; more than 85 per cent held that the state should organise co-operation among banks, entrepreneurs, employees and trade unions.[26]  These interventionist expectations did not, however, prevent a substantial portion of the population from being in favour of a free market.  Clearly, this denotes confused, dualistic and openly contradictory orientations among the population: sometimes people agree (fully or partly) with one opinion and, at the same time, agree (fully or partly) with the opposite view; on other occasions the confusion is more subtle, for instance 67.8 per cent of the respondents to a poll thinking that Slovakia is selling-off national property while the proportion believing that the country is becoming a colony of Western countries was only 52.9 per cent.[27]

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[26] S. Mihalikova, (ed.) *Orientations Toward Politics and Economy in Post-Communist East Central Europe,* (Comenius University, research report, Bratislava, 1996) p.28.

[27] Ibid, p.29.

## 5. Political Culture and Participation

The peculiar relevance of the study of political culture in relation to the transition from communism to plural democracy in post-communist countries lies in the fact that the goals of transition have been pursued by new or renewed ruling political elites in societies with diverse historical and cultural traditions. As a result, the future of the countries of this region may be decided by a new series of chance events.[28] With the loosening of the grip of the old ideology and imposed economic and political solutions, the possibility of increased diversity returned to Eastern Europe. Different studies on Slovak political culture post-1989 point out that the analysis has to take into account that the Slovak political, economic and constitutional transitions took place in a historical situation in which there were no remarkable changes in the system of values. Slovak society was not modernised: the standard of living, habits and behaviour patterns were not comparable to those in mature democracies.

The citizens of post-communist countries soon encountered profound economic difficulties and were called, at the same time and by all parties, to participate actively in political life. However, subsequent events showed that making enthusiastic sacrifices does not necessarily bring about better living conditions.

In Slovakia deepening economic problems, the inability of the political elite to manage mutual coexistence with the Czechs (in Czechoslovakia and, later, the Czech and Slovak Republic), the gradual increase in the number of scandals featuring politicians, often in plain view of the public – these progressively undermined the confidence of the people in state policies and in the legitimacy of state institutions. By the end of 1998 people had lost trust in all political institutions.

They had also lost their illusions about the necessity and benefits of participation in political life.[29] It is impossible to unequivocally determine whether it was the result of a conscious or subconscious rejection of recent absurdities, or of a more general underlying trend in society, but in the mid-1990s some 80 per cent of the population of Slovakia believed that citizens should entrust the solutions of vital questions to the politicians, and limit their involvement to insuring that capable representatives and deputies were elected into democratic offices. These citizens did not completely refuse to participate in political life, but felt participation should not be too frequent or demanding. Only 19 per cent of respondents believed that they should be involved in politics and public life as much as possible.[30]

Here, the model of communicative democracy can serve as an alternative to direct political participation. This model maintains that democratic outcomes can

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[28] See more in J. Staniszkis, *The Dynamics of the Breakthrough in Eastern Europe*, (University of California Press, Oxford, 1991).

[29] The situation in Slovakia regarding mistrust and will to participate in politics is very similar to other post-communist countries. Przeworski notes this: 'Survey data indicate that new democracies often show a syndrome consisting of the mistrust of politics and politicians, sentiments of personal political inefficacy, low confidence in democratic institutions. Yet curiously, the belief in democracy as the best form of government does not bear an obvious relation to these attitudes.' A. Przeworski, *Sustainable Democracy*, (Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.59.

[30] S. Mihalikova, *The Role of Political Cultures in the Transformation of Post-Communist Societies*, (Comenius University, unpublished report, Bratsilava, 1997) p.42.

arise from the intensification of permanent communication between elected politicians and the electorate.  This is not realised through traditional channels such as membership in political parties, or participation in their meetings and gatherings.  Instead, the central role is given to the media who become the main link of communication between the political classes and civil society.   Communicative democracy is seen as a stable arrangement even though it calls for no direct popular participation in decision-making.

Legalisation of the citizen's rights of association, assembly and petition encouraged a rapid growth in the number of civil groups.  While before November 1989 there were 306 officially permitted associations and organisations, by January 1991, one year after the fall of communism, nearly 4,000 voluntary associations were registered in Slovakia, and in February 1998 there were over 12,500 such organisations.[31]  The Slovak party system in the later 1990s, on the other hand, was very unstable, and the creation of strong identities between citizens and parties was not been achieved.  Consequently, the political parties did not serve as the basis for an active political life in Slovak society.

## 6. The State of Society in Public Perception

Differing views on how to solve the persistent problems confronting Slovakia concern many issues.  Prominent among them are the following:

- building a democracy governed by the rule of law – on which there are differences about the very meaning of democracy (majoritarian model versus minority-respecting model), and the relationships between state institutions (the President, the Prime Minister, the Parliament, the Government, the Constitutional Court);
- managing ethnic minority problems – where there are divisions over a minority language law and the territorial administration of the country (which is unacceptable for ethnic Hungarian leaders);
- establishing a market economy – controversial because support for the concept of a social market economy and a 'third way' is still alive (although the post-1998 coalition has tried to banish illusions fostered under Meciar);
- determining the state's foreign-policy orientation and external security arrangements – where, through most of the 1990s, the divisive issue was whether the country should be inclining toward East or West);
- aiming to build a civil society – despite the law on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and foundations which

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[31] *National Human Development Report: Slovakia 1998*, United Nations Development Programme, (Bratislava, 1998) p.38.

includes financial limits on, and centralised control over, their activities.

On the last point there are many politicians, scholars and journalists who are confident that the emergence of civil society might overcome all anti-democratic tendencies through the activities of the academic community, professional associations, interest groups, and NGOs. However, opinion polls and other analyses confirm that Slovaks, in contrast to West Europeans or Americans, place much greater emphasis on economic and social rights – such as guarantees of work, free education, health care, child allowances, and pensions – than on civic and political rights.

The deterioration of the sense of security among citizens, the confusing changes in public values, and the hasty interventions to alter mind-sets have caused a cultural shock. This is not only related to the speed of the three-fold transition in the political, economic and constitutional spheres in Slovakia, but also to the durability of stereotypes and images already implanted in the social consciousness. It is one of the features of the contemporary age that we deal more with images than with reality. At the international level these positive or negative stereotypes are influenced by Western policy-makers who sometimes adopt quick oversimplifications.

How did the public opinion reflect the fact that Slovakia failed to be invited to negotiate accession to the EU and NATO together with the first group of post-communist countries? In October 1997, nearly half of the citizens (47 per cent) were critical of Slovakia's international status. As many as 59 per cent of them thought there had been a deterioration of their country's international status after the 1994 elections. In the same poll 55 per cent of respondents stated that 'the ruling coalition is reluctant to implement a more democratic policy' and 48 per cent acknowledged believed that 'our country has not met the political conditions of NATO and EU membership'.[32]

Yet the failure of the Meciar government's policy had not discouraged citizens from integration. In the cited surveys, 74 per cent of people in Slovakia supported membership in the EU and only 13 per cent opposed it. Regarding NATO there was less unanimity: 52 per cent supported membership, while 35 per cent opposed it. (In April 1998, support for integration was higher: 79 per cent of citizens favoured EU and 58 per cent NATO membership).

When evaluating the likely impacts of deepening co-operation between Slovakia and the EU, citizens' positive expectations prevail over negative ones. They generally expect that integration will bring along more benefits than costs. Respondents to polls stated five reasons for EU membership: overall progress; economic improvements and open market; higher living standards; further integration into Europe through EU structures; and financial aid granted from EU. As for potential NATO membership, respondents foresaw these five gains: security and stability in the region; reforms of armed forces and armament industries within NATO structures; military progress and co-operation; welcome NATO support for Slovakia; and protection against Russia. In spite of the fact that accession requires significant

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[32] According to opinion polls quoted in: Z. Butorova, (ed.) *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia: A Public Opinion Profile of a Country in Transition*, (IVO, Bratislava, 1998) p.177-178.

investments in the modernisation of armed forces in order to reach compatibility/interoperability, experts agree that NATO will be a cheaper alternative for would-be members than, for example, neutrality.[33]

The burdensome legacy of the Meciar years – and the challenge for the post-1998 government – is clear.  For most of the first post-communist decade very little headway was made in resolving the ambiguities, contradictions and tensions running through Slovak politics and Slovakian society.  Indeed, the reinforcement and perpetuation of ambivalence, in both domestic and international affairs, was the HZDS leader's style.

On the international plane, therefore, Meciar's bequest was a country 'isolated at the heart of Europe' (in one western commentator's formulation) and, at least temporarily, out of the running in the integration stakes.  In its first year, the Dzurinda administration did much to end Slovakia's isolation and made up lost ground. Meeting EU and NATO accession criteria will not be straightforward, however, for a country not yet recovered from its culture shock. – and nowhere more so than in the security arena, where embracing transparency and developing 'democratic control' as well as civilian direction of the armed forces are prerequisites for the membership of both organisations.

It is to this theme that the remainder of the study is devoted.  How have civil-military relations evolved in Slovakia?  How has the country's political culture affected that evolution?

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[33] See I. Pirek, 'NATO levnejsi nez neutralita' ('NATO Cheaper than Neutrality'), in: *Profit* (No. 33, 1997).

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## IV. A BRIEF HISTORY OF SLOVAK CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

The Slovak historical experience in building the Army as an institution must be understood within the context of Slovak political history over the past 150 years. Slovakia, relative to its Visegrad neighbours, lacks the tradition and experience that the Poles, Czechs and Hungarians have in governing and administering foreign and military affairs. The army's role in Slovak society has ranged along a vast continuum from Slovaks serving predominantly as enlisted soldiers forced to learn Hungarian during the time of the Dual Monarchy (1867-1918) to its position today as the most trusted and respected public institution and one well regarded outside the country as a capable and professional military force.[34] It is important to digest and understand Slovakia's very unique and storied past, and the difficulties the Slovaks have had building civil-military relations in an environment of forced Hungarian assimilation, two World Wars, frequent changes of government and survival under Nazi and Communist regimes.

### 1. Survival under the Hungarian Empire (1848-1918)

Slovakia became a part of the Habsburg Empire after the defeat of the Turks at the battle of Mohacs in 1526. By means of a series of calculated political marriages, the Habsburg Empire grew into one of the most diverse and wealthy in all of European history. However, the Empire's acquisition of vast and different crowns and dynasties sowed the seeds of its disintegration by the time the 19th century arrived. The Habsburgs had evaded the problem of accommodating the many nationalities living under their rule. Indeed, 'the fundamental problem of the 19th century, the bringing together of peoples into some sort of mutual and moral relationship with their governments – the problem of which nationalism, liberalism, constitutionalism and democracy were diverse aspects – remained unconsidered by the responsive authorities of central Europe'.[35]

Benedict Anderson defines official nationalism as the 'anticipatory strategy adopted by dominant groups that are threatened with marginalisation or exclusion from an emerging nationally-imagined community'.[36] The Latin-speaking Hungarian nobility felt the pressures of marginalisation already in 1780 when the Habsburg Emperor, Joseph II, attempted to make German the sole imperial language. To the Hungarians, the one reasonable counter was the creation of a Magyar administration.[37] This impulse grew stronger in the revolutionary decade of the

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[34] The Slovak Army has consistently over the past few years been regarded as the most trusted public institution according to data from the government's statistical office and the independent research company FOCUS.

[35] R.P. Palmer and Colton, *A History of the Modern World,* (A.A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1978) p.471.

[36] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* (Verso, New York, 1992) p.101.

[37] Ibid., p.102.

1840s. It was then that the Magyar nobility – a class of about 136,000 landed gentry with a monopoly on property and political rights in a country of 11 million people – became seriously committed to this expedient.[38]  Following the February Revolution in Paris, Lajos Kossuth´s impassioned speech to the Hungarians on 3 March 1848 precipitated the fall of the Metternich government in Vienna.[39]  This paved the way for the 1867 Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* (Compromise).[40]  Austria, which had been seriously weakened after its defeat at Koniggratz in 1866, felt threatened by the newly-founded Germany.  In an attempt to preserve what was left of the Habsburg Empire, Franz Joseph and the Hungarian nobles (led by Andrassy) concluded the accord which gave significant portions of the Empire to Hungary.  A new partnership was created between Vienna and Budapest.  Each had autonomy in its own lands while they jointly pursued overarching foreign, military and economic policies.[41]  The *Ausgleich* might have been the first step in the creation of a true Commonwealth of States; but that idea, which was truly on the cards in 1867, was never carried through. The Hungarian nobles who negotiated the agreement would never have allowed it.[42]

Slovakia was destined to become Felvidek under Hungarian rule after the 1867 compromise.  To prevent being marginalised in the future, and to ease the difficulties of governing lands in which 50 per cent of the inhabitants were not ethnic Hungarians, a revival of official Magyar nationalism was instituted under the governments of Count Kalman Tisza (1875-1890) and his son Istvan (1903-1906) based on the Nationalities Act of 1868.  What this meant for non-Magyars, and Slovaks in particular, was a disintegration of national artefacts and the intelligentsia: the Slovak language, schools, newspapers, cultural and other institutions were all repressed.[43]

The Slovak national movement was in a state of crisis after the closing of Matica slovenská[44] and three Slovak-speaking gymnasiums in 1875.  The Hungarian government sought to weaken the national consciousness of all minorities and severely limit their political participation.  A National Congress of Rumanians, Serbs, and Slovaks met in Budapest on 10 August 1895 and issued a 22-point decree on co-operation in pursuing national and political rights in the interest of all the suppressed nationalities.  The Hungarian answer was persecution of some participants, increased monitoring of the political activity of non-Magyars and a tightening of censorship.[45] Only 20 per cent of citizens had voting privileges.  District functionaries, who sometimes decided themselves whom they would allow to vote, controlled elections. Slovaks elected to the Hungarian Parliament in Budapest numbered four in 1901, two

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Palmer, Colton, p.471.

[40] The Habsburg Empire split into two halves in 1867.  Vienna administered Austria (with South Tyrol), Bohemia, Moravia, part of Silesia, Galicia, Bukovina, Istria, Carniola, and Slovenia. Budapest administered Hungary, Dalmatia, Croatia, Vojvodina, Transylvania, part of present day Romania, Slovakia, and Ruthenia.

[41] A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy,* (Penguin Books, London, 1990) p.142.

[42] R. Rickett, *A Brief Survey of Austrian History,* (Prachner, Vienna, 1966) pp.100-101.

[43] See more in: L. Lipták, *Slovensko v 20.storocí,* (Kalligram, Bratislava, 1998) pp.25-46.

[44] Matica slovenská, the preserver of Slovak literary artifacts and culture in Martin, was closed by the Hungarians in 1875 and many of its assets confiscated.

[45] *Dejiny Slovenska III (od roku 1848 do konca 19.storocia),* (Neografia, Martin, 1992) pp.689-691.

in 1905, seven in 1906 and three in 1910. Slovaks held only 2 per cent of civil service positions in the year 1910.[46]

The experience under Hungarian assimilation challenged Slovak political identity. At the beginning of the 20th century, Slovakia was an underdeveloped country, largely agrarian in nature, with hardly any cultural or scientific institutions. It was at this time that Slovaks living in the United States became an important voice in the call for autonomy. The 700,000-plus emigrants helped create a national identity outside Slovakia itself.[47] The Cleveland Agreement, signed in October 1915, pledged to 'connect the Czech and Slovak nations into a federal union of states with complete national autonomy'.[48] The Pittsburgh Pact, concluded in May 1918, further strengthened the movement for an independent nation-state.

From the Slovak perspective, civil-military relations in the period from 1848-1918 stagnated under the stifling, non-democratic Magyar regime. Slovaks served in the Empire's Army as mere conscripts. The only Slovak achieving high military rank in the First World War was General Milan Rastislav Štefánik, thanks to connections with the French Army and the Czechoslovak Foreign Legion in France.[49]

## 2. Rediscovering Slovak Identity – The First Czechoslovak Republic

The Allied victory at the end of the First World War witnessed the collapse of central and eastern Europe's great multinational empires and the beginnings of the Russian revolution. The aspirations of the Slovak Diaspora in America were realised when Czechoslovakia emerged from the Paris Peace Negotiations in 1918. President Woodrow Wilson´s fourteen Points, specifically Points V and X, guaranteed that the principle of national self-determination would be applied among the newly-created nations from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Central Europe would acquire a Wilsonian instead of a Bolshevik flavour.

The merging of Czechs and Slovaks was a political calculation on both sides because it allowed them to form a voting majority within the constitutional framework of the First Republic.[50] The Czechs looked to the Slovaks as a counterweight against

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[46] L. Lipták, *Slovensko v 20.storocí,* (Kalligram, Bratislava, 1998) pp.21-22.

[47] I. Gawdiak, *Czechoslovakia – a Country Study,* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C, 1989) p.90.

[48] J. Chovanec, *Historické a štátoprávne korene samostatnosti Slovenskej republiky,* (Procom, Bratislava, 1994) p.94.

[49] The highest ranking Slovak officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army was Major Alexander Cunderlik, a graduate of the Budapest Kadetky. He served as a captain on the Italian front and latter commanded the 9th Artillery Regiment in 1923. Major Anton Pulanich served on the Russian and Italian fronts and also participated in the fight against the Hungarian invasion of southern Slovakia in 1919. He later commanded the 41st Infantry Regiment in 1923. A handful of other officers served in the army of the monarchy while Rudolf Viest, Emil Geryk, Ferdinand Catloš and Augustín Malár served in the Czechoslovak Legion. All would later play key roles in the Army of the First Republic. See M. Hronský, A. Krivá, M. Caplovic, *Vojenské dejiny Slovenska 1914-1939,* (Ministerstvo obrany SR, Bratislava, 1996) pp.151-152.

[50] 1921 census figures reveal 8,819,455 (65,5 per cent) citizens of Czech or Slovak nationality out of a total population of 13,613,172 Czechoslovak inhabitants. Slovaks comprised 1,913,792 of this figure.

the Sudeten Germans living in Bohemia, while the Slovaks regarded the Czechs as Slavic brothers and a protector against Hungarian assimilation.  Both sides benefited from the creation of Czechoslovakia.

The Czechs were much better prepared than Slovaks to undertake the enormous administrative and governing functions required.  The Czechs benefited from their experience under Habsburg Austria which allowed them to draw from a trained cadre of bureaucrats and intelligentsia to man positions as state administrators, diplomats and military officials.  Slovakia basically had to invent brand new institutions after shedding the yoke of Hungarian rule.  The 're-Slovakisation of Slovakia' got under way: an entire school system was founded, publication of Slovak newspapers and journals greatly increased, a radio broadcast industry was started and cultural institutions began to flourish.  However, the richness and talent of the Czech experience gave way to a tendency for Czechs to assert a more pronounced role in governing the new democracy, and a perception from the Slovak side that the country was developing into a centralised state controlled from Prague instead of an equal federal republic.  This feeling penetrated the military ranks as well.

The First Czechoslovak Republic was founded as a parliamentary democracy led by President Thomas Masaryk, and Prime Minister Eduard Beneš.  Both were well versed in how the military operated within a democratic framework and were staunch supporters of an apolitical military controlled by parliament through a civilian-staffed defence ministry.  Both emphasised the civic responsibility and moral duty parliamentarians must assume in directing and leading the military as an institution.  They also called for increased public awareness in defence matters.  They believed that the defence of the nation was not only a responsibility of the uniformed military, but also the entire Czechoslovak society.  Addressing a class at the General Staff School in 1936, Beneš said: 'The entire nation must be behind the army and its work.  That means that the country's political leadership must have an understanding and expertise in defence work, and that the entire nation must have strong nerves, collected calm and uncompromising motivation strongly believing in its stands and by this to help the army.  Besides this moral preparation, we must of course do everything, in order that we prepare a well-equipped army of the strongest technical ability'.[51]

The Ministry of National Defence (MND) was created on 15 November 1918 with a General Staff subordinated to it.[52]  It faced the huge task of building and organising the entire armed forces.  General M. C. J. Pellé became the first Chief of the General Staff on 4 June 1919 while Václav Klofác became the first Minister of Defence.  The passage of Defence Law 193/20 on 19 March 1920 (which would be amended four times over the next 20 years) assured parliamentary supervision of the army and the regulations governing its internal operations.[53]  The Czechoslovak Constitution, passed on 29 February 1921, made the President Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.  He was assisted by the Military Office of the President which

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A significant number of Germans, 3,218,005 (23,4 per cent), also resided within the First Republic's borders.  See *Dejiny Slovenska IV,* (Neografia, Martin, 1992) p.32.

[51] A. Krivá, 'Slovak Society and the Army at the End of the 1930´s', *Vojenské obzory,* (Ministerstvo obrany SR, Bratislava, Vol.3, No. 3/1995) p.49.

[52] Hronský, Krivá, and Caplovic, p.135 and p.141.

[53] Ibid., p.141.

comprised a small group of experts who were entrusted with purely an advisory function.

The army turned to France to help structure its military forces. A French military mission became an integral part of the MND. It provided leadership in the ministry, directed the general staff, designed and built the military school system and helped craft the legislation that became the defence law. A military academy was founded in Hranice in 1920 which trained officers in the basic branches (infantry, artillery, cavalry, engineers and communications) over two years. A college offering a three-year course of instruction to prepare officers for general staff duties and higher command was founded in Prague in 1922.[54] Initially, French officers were named to the highest positions – command of divisions, brigades and regiments.

The officer corps during the First Czechoslovak Republic comprised many officers who had served in the Austro-Hungarian Royal and Imperial Army and the Czechoslovak Foreign Legions which operated in France, Italy and Russia during the Great War. Because they had not been able to achieve the highest ranks under the Habsburg monarchy, nearly all officers were ill prepared to assume the duties of leading large manoeuvre units and fill key positions on the general staff. A significant number of well-qualified officers and non-commissioned officers who did gain valuable wartime experience were outside Czechoslovakia – in the Russian legion caught behind Bolshevik army lines as the legion made its epic journey across Siberia.[55] Many of those officers chose not to continue service once they did return home.

The shortage of qualified officers became apparent in 1919 when the Czechoslovak army was rushed to southern Slovakia to counter attacking Hungarian army units (when Hungary failed to recognise the international border separating the two countries which was negotiated in Paris). This was a problem that plagued the army throughout 1920s until the military school system started regularly producing officers capable to filling command positions at the battalion and higher level and fill key staff openings on higher headquarter staffs. The French military mission started scaling back its influence in the late 1920s when it became apparent that Czechoslovak officers could assume the tasks that until that time were performed by French officers.

The army of the First Republic had in its ranks all the nationalities in Czechoslovakia's diverse population: Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Ruthenian, German, Polish, Roman and Russian soldiers were represented. Slovaks comprised 15 per cent of the peacetime Army, but only 2.5 per cent of its officers.[56] Given the nature of the

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[54] Other specialty schools were founded throughout the 1920s: artillery school in Olomouc, transportation school in Bratislava, engineer school in Litomerice, railroad school in Pardubice and an air force school in Cheb (later Prostejov) which indicated an increasing level of professionalism within the military. See Hronský, Krivá and Caplovic, pp.149-150.

[55] Hronský, Krivá, and Caplovic, p.137.

[56] Ibid., p.150.

system – the reliance on personal contacts and knowing the right people for entry and advancement (a very central European trait still evident today) – the officer corps was dominated by Czechs, and continually had a shortage of Slovak officers. This underrepresentation existed throughout the government but was most alarming in the military.[57]

The data on Slovak representation speak for themselves. Some 9,500 out of an approximate total of 85,000 soldiers served in the foreign legions. In the mid-1930s Slovaks were only 443 out of 17,703 or 2.5 per cent of army officers (for comparison Czech Officers numbered 16,126 or 91.3 per cent). They accounted for only 74 out of 1,561 graduates of the military academy in Hranice, between the years 1922-1930[58]; 8 out of 159 graduates of the higher command and staff college between the years 1933-37. At the end of the First Republic in September 1938 the spread distribution of Slovak officers by rank was as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Slovak Officers, 1938 (by rank)

| RANK | TOTAL NUMBER | SLOVAK |
|---|---|---|
| GENERAL | 139 | 1 (divízny) |
| COLONEL | 436 | 0 |
| LT COL. | 1,041 | 3 |
| MAJOR | 1,429 | 11 |
| CAPTAIN | 4,164 | 107 |
| LIEUTENANT | 5,583 | 313 |

Source: M. Hronsky, A. Kriva and M. Caplovic,
*Vojenske dejiny Slovenska: IV diel (1914-1939)* (MO SR, Bratislava, 1996) p.226.

Slovaks were allowed qualitatively better conditions for pursuing their own identity during the First Republic than had been allowed under Hungarian rule. Great effort was focused upon rebuilding and reforming Slovak society and national institutions. The low representation in the officer corps can be explained by the fact that many Slovaks males were involved in this effort, and by the fact that the officer corps, as an institution, was the domain of the Czechs who dominated its ranks through their system of cronyism. Another factor worth to mention is the concept of 'Czechoslovakism'. This ideology proclaimed Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks were one 'Czechoslovak' nation, a brotherhood led by a strong central government in Prague. Over time, the view of Slovakia from Bohemia became myopic: the Czechs tended to think *they* were able to determine what was the best for the country.[59]

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[57] In 1936, 6 out of 1294 workers in the Ministry of Defence were Slovak. Data from the year show 14 out 150 Slovaks working in Bratislava's post office directorate while 1935 data have 73 out of 583 Slovak railroad employees in Bratislava regional offices. See Krivá, p.48.

[58] Krivá, p.55.

[59] Ibid., p.46.

## 3. Changing International Political Situation (1933-38)

The Czechoslovak reaction to international events in the 1930s caused significant changes in civil-military relations. The rise of Fascist Italy and Germany pushed Czechoslovak foreign policy towards seeking some type of security guarantee from France, the Soviet Union, Romania and Yugoslavia. Public opinion regarding defence matters strengthened. The citizenry of Czechoslovakia throughout the 1920s had been quite pacifistic and disinterested. Opinion was tainted by the horrors of the First World War and the role of the army under Austro-Hungarian rule, which was often used to quell Slovak demands for national recognition, and on a larger scale to preserve the imperial reach of the monarchy. In the 1930s, however, Masaryk and Beneš´ earlier efforts to raise public awareness and convey to the citizenry that the army served a vital role in the republic finally took effect.

In 1933 Parliament created a State Supreme Defence Council whose charter was to better co-ordinate defence policy.[60] Following the May 1935 elections, the legislature approved a new law in April 1936 (131/1936) that gave the government and the Council wide latitude concerning defence issues. The law is regarded as the most important piece of security legislation written during the First Republic. It was the result of a year-long debate and intense inter-ministry negotiation. The law usurped the participatory role of parliament in military matters and strengthened the hand of the executive. Practically all questions of state defence were put in the hands of the President and the Supreme Defence Council. This was an acknowledged weakening of civil control over the military: the legislature willingly ceded some of its powers to the executive branch. The executive became more authoritarian, but only because it faced the urgent task of preparing the country to face Fascist aggression.[61] What needs to be emphasised is that the giving away of power was done in the halls of parliament as part of the democratic process, and was a conscious decision taken by the deputies to prepare the nation for war. It is a good example of the ebb and flow in civil-military relations and specifically which side gained influence. In this case the military, through the executive branch of government, asserted a more pronounced role in defence policy decision making.

## 4.The Tiso Government and the Second World War (1938-45)

The signatories of the Munich Agreement of 29-30 September 1938 sealed the fate of the First Republic. A new government was formed in Czechoslovakia after Benes resigned on 4 October 1938. Dr. Emil Hacha, the chairman of the Supreme Court, became the new president and nominated Dr. Jozef Tiso administrator of the autonomous Slovak government.[62]

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[60] Krivá, p.44.

[61] Ibid., p.46.

[62] J. Letterich, *Dejiny novodobého Slovenska,* (Archa, Bratislava, 1993) p.102.

Confusion reigned after Munich on how an autonomous Slovakia fitted into the structure of the Federal Republic. It became clear that German intentions were to form a Protectorate in the Czech lands, thus accommodating the Sudeten Germans living there, and to allow Slovakia to exist as a separate state albeit controlled by Berlin. On 21 December 1938, the Chief of the German General Staff signed an amendment to an order earlier given by Hitler on 17 December calling for the liquidation of Czechoslovakia.[63]

Slovakia's pledge to stay within the governing framework of a Czechoslovak state became hopeless in early March 1939 when Dr.Tiso was summoned to Berlin for a meeting with Hitler and Foreign Minister Ribbentrop. On 13 March he was officially informed about the Hitler/Keitel liquidation order. If he did not accept Slovak independence, his homeland would be carved up between Poland and Hungary.[64] Tiso returned to Bratislava on 14 March and proposed the creation of a 'independent' Slovak state. A government was quickly formed with Tiso as President, Dr. Vojtech Tuka as Prime Minister, Dr. Ferdinand Durcansky as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Karol Sidor as Minister of the Interior and General Catlos as Minister of Defence.[65]

General Catlos faced the immediate task of building a Slovak army. Drawing from the Hlinka Guard, the Ministry of National Defence began forming individual Slovak units, expanding the Slovak officer corps (from 400 to 10,000), opening-up schooling and training opportunities for junior officers and non-commissioned officers, instituting Slovak as a standard operating language and overseeing the re-location of Slovak soldiers from Bohemia and Moravia.[66] General Catlos also had to find civilian workers to staff the MND in Bratislava. Many of the civilian specialists in the MND in Prague were Czech and chose to remain in Bohemia after the break-up. This personnel turmoil caused considerable difficulty because it left some units leaderless; there simply were not enough qualified Slovak officers to fill the number of billets.[67]

Tiso's government introduced legislation on creation of a Slovak army. It was never passed.[68] Germany began directing Slovak foreign and military policy shortly after the March declaration of Slovak independence.[69] This was evident during the German invasion of Poland in September 1939. Slovak units participating in the

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[63] A. Lipták, *Slovensko v 20.storocí,* (Kalligram, Bratislava, 1998) p.174.

[64] Ibid., p.175.

[65] J.Letterich, *Dejiny novodobého Slovenska,* (Archa, Bratislava, 1993) p.102.

[66] V. Štefanský, 'Ferdinand Catloš a armáda na Slovensku od októbra 1938 do augusta 1944' in: *Vojenské obzory,* (MO SR, Bratislava, Vol.3, Nu.1, 1996) p.68-69.

[67] Anger, p.69.

[68] Štefanský, p.72.

[69] Slovakia signed a Treaty of Protection Assistance on 23 March 1939, the terms of which allowed Germany to lead Slovak foreign policy and for the organisation of Slovakia's armed forces in secret consultation with the Wehrmacht. The treaty was to last 25 years. See Anger, pp.78-80.

invasion received orders from General von Engelbrecht. From that point onward, Slovak units took instructions from the German high command.

After combat actions with German units on the eastern front (1941-44), Slovak soldiers were returned to Slovakia in October 1943 to help with the harvests. The Germans deemed the Slovak units unreliable for combat operations against the USSR. Disagreeing with this assessment, Catlos wrote: 'the officer corps was forced together too quickly. Many leaders did not have necessary training and experience to lead units in combat'.[70] This confirmed the problem which had plagued the Slovaks during the First Republic – a shortage of qualified officers.

## 5. The Slovak National Uprising (1944)

The Slovak National Uprising was the defining moment for the Slovaks during the Second World War. It is one of the most important events in Slovak history and is a gallant portrayal of the individual patriotism and sacrifice of both soldiers and civilians who participated in the struggle to defeat Nazi Germany. Volumes have been written about it in recent historiography. This is not the place for a full account of what transpired in 1944 and caused the Uprising to begin prematurely only to be defeated later by the arrival of German army reinforcements. Brief mention of it is called for, however, because of its place in the development of Slovak civil-military relations.

Different groups began to realise in 1943 that if Slovakia wanted to be included on the side of the victors when War ended, some effort of revolt against German occupation and the semi-independent Slovak Republic had to be manifested. Lieutenant-Colonel Ján Golian was the mastermind behind the military aspects of the Uprising. The civilian participants included the illegal Slovak National Council (SNR) comprised of both communists and democrats, President Beneš´ exiled government in London, and the Communist party in Russia.

Golian faced the extremely dangerous task of planning and organising the Uprising and the delicate task of keeping all the political players informed. Twice he met with the illegal SNR in the summer of 1944 and briefed them on the operational schemes of the Revolutionary Army. He maintained contact with the Red Army via liaison officers parachuted into Slovakia on 26 and 27 June 1944. He also communicated regularly with General Sergej Ingr, the exiled Minister of Defence in London, for planning guidance and approval of who would lead participating units in the Uprising. It seems clear today that Golian respected the final decisions made by the exiled government in London, and recognised President Benes as the legitimate political authority and commander-in-chief.[71]

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[70] Ibid., p.75.

[71] J. Jablonický, *Povstanie bez legiend,* (Obzor, Bratislava, 1990) pp.11-20.

## 6. War's End, the Communist Coup and Stalin's Purges

The Czechoslovak Republic was re-created on 4 April 1945 in Kosice under the leadership of exiled President Eduard Benes. At the conclusion of the elections held one year later a concerted effort was made by the Czechoslovak Communist Party to penetrate key ministries of government and begin laying the groundwork for an eventual take-over.[72] Communists gained control of the ministries of information, internal trade, finance and the interior and began activities to suppress any political opposition.[73] Communists also gained key positions in the Ministry of Defence, the General Staff, central military offices and other organisations and units in the army.[74]

The struggle to re-create a new Czechoslovak Army became a contest between the Communist and Democratic parties, a struggle for which the Democratic Party was simply not prepared. The communists owed much of their success to pioneering work in the intelligence services of the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps, under the direction of a long-time member of the party and an orthodox Bolshevik, named Lieutenant Bedrich Reicin. The first task was to neutralise the army as a potential threat to party ambitions.[75] Using typical party procedures prevalent throughout the period of Stalinisation in eastern Europe, Reicin worked at discrediting the Democratic Party, intimidating key officers who had led the Slovak National Uprising and co-opting to the party side disgruntled mid-ranking officers.

The communist coup on 25 February 1948 effectively tore apart any sort of independent military identity in Slovakia.[76] The speed of the Democratic Party collapse surprised everyone. The communists immediately took control of the state security apparatus and began Stalin-inspired purges and show trials. Between 22 February-1 March 1948 173 people were arrested, the majority of which were Democratic Party members.[77] The army endured its share of purging and persecution. On 29 February 1948 a letter was sent to the Ministry of Defence requesting that over 30 generals be released from service because of their negative position towards the 'People's Democratic' government. The Central Committee of the Communist Party formed a special body (*Preverovacia komisia*) which cleared the army of all undesirables.[78]

## 7. Civil-Military Relations under Communism (1948-68)

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[72] In Slovakia, the Democratic Party gained 62 per cent, the Communists 30.4 per cent, the Workers Party 3.1 per cent and the Freedom Party 3.7 per cent of the vote. See M. Ïurica, *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov,* (SPN, Bratislava, 1996) p.213.

[73] Ibid., p.214

[74] J. Havlícek, 'Politický zápas o armádu na Slovensku v rokoch 1945-48', *Od diktatúry k diktatúre*, (VEDA, Bratislava, 1995), p.41.

[75] M. Barnovký, 'Preberanie moci a pofebruárová ocista', *Od diktatúry k diktatúre,* (VEDA, Bratislava, 1995) p.89.

[76] J. Štaigl, 'K miestu a úlohe armády na Slovensku v druhej polovici 40. a na zaciatku 50.rokov', *Od diktatúry k diktatúre*, (VEDAS, Bratislava, 1995) p.116.

[77] Barnovský, p.89.

[78] On 31 July 1948 160 officers were put on permanent vacation and by the end of 1949, 426 officers (19.4 per cent) were forced out of service. In 1952, 128 soldiers were arrested and sent to labour camps while six were sentenced to death and executed. See Štaigl, p.122.

Czechoslovak civil-military relations during communism were dominated by the country's alignment with the Soviet Union and its membership in the Warsaw Treaty Organisation.  In political terms, Soviet military domination in eastern Europe was the ultimate guarantee of Soviet hegemony in the area and essential for the pursuit of its interests there.

Theorists analysing the period point to five distinct stages which the civil-military relations dynamic underwent:

1.    1944-47, the consolidation of power;
2.    1948-52, Stalinisation;
3.    1953-59, the rationalisation of Soviet control;
4.    1960-68, the effort to define a new military purpose and to build formal institutions
5.    1968-89, normalisation and the reorganisation of the military command.[79]

The Czechoslovak political system was forced internally into the Stalinist mould and subordinated to the pursuit of Soviet interests in Europe.

In the initial post-war years, the national communist parties and the USSR wanted eastern European armed forces to remain emasculated.  A relatively strong army had emerged in Czechoslovakia.  The Communist Party (KSC) encouraged its dismantling, as an institution potentially powerful enough to interfere with them once they seized power.  When the communists were satisfied that the military command structure was in 'neutral hands', the communist leadership concentrated their efforts on placing party activists in key indoctrination and other political control positions within the armed forces.[80]  Even more important they strove to gain control over and then build up the internal security apparatus, including sizeable forces.  These 'military security' forces were distinct from the regular forces and under the control of their interior ministries.  They played a pivotal role in backing up the explicit or implicit threat to employ force to repress 'anti-democratic' political forces.  Military command positions were filled with communist officers who usually had little military training or experience.  The militaries were modified to conform to the Soviet model.

During and after the period of Stalinisation, the Czechoslovak officer corps was populated by a new type of soldier, of modest origin, trained in the USSR or under Soviet auspices, who owed his professional stature to the alliance with the Soviet Union.  After Stalin´s death in 1953, however, the officer corps gradually regained its corporate identity, increased its level of professionalisation and increased its prestige.  Moreover, it started to resent the Czechoslovak position within the Soviet scheme for eastern Europe.[81]  Officers disliked the amount of time required for political education, sought greater input on Warsaw Pact planning and strategy

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[79] R. Johnson, 'An Overview of Soviet East European Military Relations' in: *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems* (edited by D. Herspring, I. Volgyes, Boulder, Westview Press, 1978) p.258.

[80] Ibid., p.264.

[81] I. Gawdiak, p.224.

(especially as it appeared likely that Czechoslovak lands would become a nuclear flash point in any battle with NATO).[82]  In general, they grew dissatisfied with the constraints placed on them by Moscow.  This urge to take over more control of the People's Army manifested itself within the reform movement of Alexander Dubcek's government, and culminated with the Prague Spring of 1968 when army commanders drafted plans to democratise the armed forces.

## 8. From 'Normalisation' to the Velvet Revolution (1968-1989)

Czechoslovakia was invaded by Warsaw Pact Forces on 21 August 1968. The action was in response to Dubcek's pledge to democratise socialism which by that time had moved from outside the confines of the party intelligentsia and had started to become a popular movement.

Gustáv Husák become Communist Party Chairman in early 1969 and immediately began to re-establish party control over the armed forces.  A new purging of the officer corps began in earnest.  Around 11,000 officers and 30,000 non-commissioned officers were dismissed.[83]  Nearly three-fifths of all army officers aged 30 and under resigned and by June 1969 it is estimated that one-half of all cadets attending military academies had left studies.  Even the Klement Gottwald Military Political Academy in Bratislava was temporarily closed.[84]  A Slovak, General Martin Dzur, remained Minister of Defence and took advantage of the fact that the liberalisation efforts were concentrated in Prague to increase the number of Slovak officers within the higher echelons of the People's Army.  More generally the Slovaks initially gained greater recognition within a federal Czechoslovakia and benefited in the short term economically from Soviet planned industrialisation during the period of normalisation.  However, the purging of the armed forces and redoubling of propaganda efforts in military schools and training programmes did not completely shake the apathy that affected the military after the Stalin-like crushing of the Prague Spring.

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[82] Soviet military doctrine was revolutionised in the 1960s.  It placed increased emphasis on strategic rocket and mobile armoured forces.  Satellite country ground forces were given a more substantial role and equipped with the latest Soviet hardware. See Johnson, p.248.

[83] Gawdiak, p.227.

[84] Ibid.

# V. THE CURRENT STATE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARMY AND SOCIETY

There is no theory that explains how to build effective civilian control of the military in a country that has been under communist rule for 40 years and overnight begins a transition to liberal democracy. Much can be learned from analyses of the western approach to civil-military relations, but they do not offer a simple checklist of developments which a country can mark off one at a time and when the list is exhausted proclaim healthy civil-military relations. It is a process that takes time and effort. It evolves according to each country's unique endeavours to create democratic institutions, embrace the rule of law and strike a balance in the relationship between the armed forces and society.

Throughout the later 1990s political discourse in Slovakia was dominated by discussion related to Slovakia's exclusion from the transatlantic and Western European integration processes. Especially emotional was the inability of Slovakia to join NATO in the first wave of its enlargement together with the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary. While it has been often stated that Slovakia's accession was thwarted due to political reasons rather than shortfalls in the military's readiness, there were (and are) problems in the area of civil-military relations.

The case of Slovakia is peculiar because the general problems connected to the transformation of the army into a democratic institution in a fast-changing global security environment – the shift from a bipolar to a multi-polar international system or the shifting focus of security policy from classical state-based military conflict to dealing with supra-territorial issues such as terrorism – have been further complicated by the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. As a result of the split and the creation of an independent Slovak state in 1993 a new army had to be built.

The post-1998 Slovak government is indubitably committed to the principles of democratic control of the armed forces. Whereas Meciar governments espoused these principles only verbally, the coalition government led by Mikuláš Dzurinda took office determined to correct past error. The hope is that this will enhance Slovakia's chances of re-entering the Euro-atlantic integration processes.

In what follows I look at the formal/legal framework for civil-military relations in Slovakia and at the practical implementation of reform since 1994. The top-level actors involved are: Parliament, the President, the Government, and the State Defence Council. At the next level are various ministries related to the military through their specific responsibilities: the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Transformation as well as other ministries and offices. The analysis deals mainly with the top-level actors and the Ministry of Defence.

## 1. The Constitutional Framework

Slovakia has established a framework for civilian control of the military involving a system of checks and balances between the three branches of government. The Constitution was adopted on 1 September 1992 and effected on 1 January 1993, the birthday of Slovak independence.

**The National Council of the Slovak Republic** (Parliament) is the supreme authority of the state; and in relation to defence it is empowered to amend the Constitution, pass constitutional and other acts, decide on important defence-security documents, and approve the annual budget. Furthermore, Parliament solicits and deliberates on reports submitted by the State Defence Council and prepares and is responsible for the defence readiness of the state.[85] (The Speaker of the Parliament can take part in the Council's sessions.) The Parliament also takes resolutions on declaring war in case of invasion or as a result of international commitments and on sending armed forces abroad.[86] It has its own Committee on Defence and Security.

Thus, the legislature is set up to provide political and legal legitimacy to the armed forces. Democratic control is realised mainly through the Committee on Defence and Security and a Committee on Finance, Budget and Currency. The basis of civil-military relations in this framework can be summarised in the following points:

- Parliament ensures transparency based on mutual exchange of information between society and the military establishment on issues such as state security and defence, building of the armed forces, the amount and allocation of the military budget.
- It realises control through the budget.
- There is now formal recognition that civil supervision is exercised over policy on state defence and the development of the armed forces.
- The legislature controls the executive power responsible for defence in the person of the Minister of Defence who as a member of the Government is answerable Parliament.

In short, the basic formal requirements for sound civil-military relations – transparency, budgetary control, civilian direction and accountability – are all properly provided for.

**The President of the Slovak Republic** is the supreme commander of the armed forces. Based on the decision of the Parliament he or she has the right to declare war in case of an attack or as a result of international commitments. Furthermore, the President may declare a state of emergency based on a constitutional act. He or she also appoints and promotes generals, and authorises concessions to

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[85] Constitution of the Slovak Republic, Article 86, in: M. Cic, *Komentár k Ústave Slovenskej republiky,* (Matica slovenská, 1997).

[86] Ibid., Article 86, paragraph k.

Slovak citizens for military service in foreign militaries.[87]  Therefore, the President is the personification of civilian control of the armed forces.

**The Government** is the highest authority of executive power in the Republic. It secures the fulfilment of tasks in the area of defence and security.  It also decides on draft acts, governmental decrees, policy documents and their fulfilment, draft state budgets and draft state final accounts, international treaties, and principal domestic and foreign policy pronouncements.  The Government also submits any declaration of war proposal to the President and decides on other vital issues of state defence and security as defined by the legislature.[88]

**The State Defence Council** is a special authority of the government.  It takes the necessary measures to prepare and organise state defence.  Among its main functions are, for example: defining principal concepts regarding the building of a defence system and approving primary measures to prepare ministries in time of emergency or military readiness.  It also proposes measures to the Government on economic support of defence and measures for securing the national interest, co-ordinating the activities of lower authorities.  In addition, it discusses and approves measures for providing internal security, peace and public order in the territory of the Slovak Republic in peacetime.

**The Ministry of Defence** (MOD) is the central authority of state administration for the provision of defence and the general direction of the army.  It co-ordinates the activities of state central administrative authorities, authorities of local self-administration and legal entities in preparation of the nation's defences.  The MOD also elaborates concepts and long-term plans of development of the armed forces and implements them.  Numerous specific responsibilities are formally assigned to the Ministry.  Thus, it secures the inviolability of Slovak air space and co-ordinates military and civilian air traffic.  It directs military intelligence services, military districts and military forests.  It conceptualises and prepares plans for territorial defence.  In co-operation with other central authorities, the MOD selects and assigns objects important for defence, including the mode of defending them.  Last, it develops the draft distribution of funds earmarked for complex defence support.  Civil direction and democratic control are ensured by the fact that the Minister of Defence is a civilian – a member of the government, responsible and accountable to the legislature – and by the day-to-day co-operation between civilian staff at the ministry and the military.

Clearly the legal and formal bases for democratic control of the military are well established in Slovakia.  However, in practice there are serious shortfalls that reflect, on the one hand, the general problems connected with transformation and the building of a new state, and, on the other, the lack of a robust tradition of 'democratic' civil-military relations.

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[87] Ibid., Article 102, paragraphs a, j, k , l.
[88] Ibid., Article 119.

## 2. Formal versus Informal Rules in Building Democratic Institutions

The fundamental issue here is the legacy of the 'Meciar years' – best expressed in the 1997 evaluation of Slovakia made by the European Commission in its Agenda 2000: 'Although the institutional framework defined by the Slovak constitution responds to the needs of a parliamentary democracy where elections are free and fair, the situation is unsatisfactory in terms to which extent are the democratic principles implemented in political life'.[89] This evaluation applied also to the field of civil-military relations. In the mid-1990s there were no serious doubts regarding the institutional design and process of building democratic institutions within the army. The concern was the stability of these institutions and the implementation of democratic principles, reflecting a lack of the 'spirit of democracy' among ruling elites and among quite a large portion of the population as well. This brings us back to the old controversy about where democracy really lies – in institutions or in culture; and about where the substantial force of a democratic political regime can be found – in its 'hard' institutional or 'soft' cultural attributes.

There is a large contemporary scholarly literature on the many different understandings of democracy, prospects for democratisation and democratic transformation/transition (and on the breakdown of democracy as well). However, at the end of 1990s writers became quite obsessed with conditions favouring and obstacles to democratic *consolidation*.[90] Different definitions of regimes which can be labelled as consolidated democracies have been offered, trying to find a conceptual and comparative framework for countries of Latin America, Southern and post-communist Europe. There is a broad agreement on at least one matter: 'only democracies can become consolidated democracies'.[91]

Although in the empirical and theoretical literature on democracy there is a disturbing lack of conceptual clarity, most analyses acknowledge the influential 'polyarchy' concept of Robert Dahl. Polyarchy requires not only extensive political competition and participation but also substantial levels of freedom (of speech, press,

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[89] *Agenda 2000 – Commission Opinion on Slovakia's Application for Membership of the European Union,* (Brussels, 15th July 1997), part C: Summary and Conclusions/1. Political Criteria.

[90] Only a selection of 'democratic consolidation' studies can be cited here: P.C. Schmitter and T.L. Karl, 'The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go', *Slavic Review* 63 (Spring 1994) pp 173-85; J.J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Postcommunist Europe*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1996); R. Gunther, P.N. Diamandorous and H.J. Puhle, (eds.), *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1995); J.J. Linz and A. Stepan, 'Toward Consolidated Democracies' *Journal of Democracy*, (April 1996, Vol.7, No.2) pp. 14-34; G. O'Donnell, 'Illusions About Consolidation'*, Journal of Democracy*, (April 1996, Vol.7, No.2) pp.34-52; the debate on democratic consolidation in *Journal of Democracy*, (October 1996, Vol.7, No.4) pp. 151-168; S. Mainwaring, G. O´Donnell and J.S. Valenzuela, (eds.)*, Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*, (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); P.C. Schmitter, 'The Consolidation of Democracy and Representation of Social Groups', *American Behavioral Scientist* (No.35, March-June 1992) pp. 422-49.

[91] J.J. Linz and A. Stepan, 'Toward Consolidated Democracies', *Journal of Democracy*, (April 1996, Vol.7, No.2) p.15.

and the like) and pluralism that, enabling people to form and express their political preferences in a meaningful way[92]. This understanding of democracy reflects the traditional priority given to *democratic institutions* or in other words to *formal* or *procedural democracy*. However, there is a growing number of authors holding a complementary view that stresses *substantive*[93] or *informally institutionalised democracy.*[94] These two approaches are found also in the theories of consolidation, although some authors are reluctant to use even the term consolidated democracy.[95]

There are many ideas about how to achieve democratic consolidation. Some authors focus on political culture, saying in essence that if we want a robust system we must educate as many people as possible to be democrats. However, the creation of a comfortable majority of solid democrats is a long-term project, while the hazards that many new democracies face are immediate. This may be one reason why nowadays institutionalist solutions prevail among those keen to foster democracy.

Political institutions can be designed with varying degrees of imitation and originality, and can be created fairly rapidly. In the well-known formulation of Ralf Dahrendorf: basic political transformation and installation of a pluralist political system can be done in six months; the creation of a market economy needs six years; developing a civil society and democratic political culture lasts at least sixty years. In other words, we have to wait for a new generation to fulfil today's expectations.[96] The complexity of – and the diverse, frequently even contradictory, patterns in – research and practice in democratic political culture education only strengthen the view of 'serious institutionalists who know that institutions, like fine wines, travel well, if at all, only under very special conditions. They also know that institutions are only part of the story in the consolidation of democracy'.[97] Nevertheless, the most influential definition of 'democratic consolidation' is that offered by Linz, who calls it a state of affairs 'in which none of the major political actors, parties, or organised interests,

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[92] R.A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition,* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1971) p.3.

[93] See, especially, M. Kaldor and I. Vejvoda, 'Democratisation in central and east European countries', *International Affairs*, (73/1, 1997) pp.59-82.
The authors distinguish between formal (procedural) democracy and what they call substantive democracy. Formal democracy refers to a set of rules and procedures attributed to 'procedural minimal conditions' of democracy originally draw up by Dahl. Substantive democracy is '…a process that has to be continually reproduced, a way of regulating power relations in such a way as to maximise the opportunities for individuals to influence the conditions in which they live, to participate in and influence debates about the key decisions which affect society'. Ibid., p.62.

[94] Guillermo O'Donnell distinguishes between highly- versus non-institutionalised (or poorly-institutionalised) democracies, or consolidated versus unconsolidated democracies, with most of the old polyarchies belonging to the first terms of these pairs, and most of the new ones to the second. He opted '...for labelling the first group *formally institutionalised* and the second *informally institutionalised*, but not without misgivings: in the first set of countries, many things happen outside formally prescribed institutional rules, while the second set includes one highly formalised institution, elections.' See G. O'Donnell, 'Illusions About Consolidation' in: *Journal of Democracy*, (April 1996, Vol.7, No.2) p.48, note 2.

[95] Ibid., p.37-38.

[96] See R. Dahrendorf, *Úvahy o revoluci v Evropì v dopise, který mìl být zaslán jistému pánovi ve Varšavì,* (Evropský kulturní klub, Praha, 1991).

[97] G. O'Donnell, 'Do Economists Know Best?', in: *Journal of Democracy*, (January 1995, Vol.6, No.1) p.24.

forces, or institutions consider that there is any alternative to democratic processes to gain power, and...no political institution or group has a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers...To put it simply, democracy must be seen as the *only game in town*'.[98]

My own view is that the core of democracy and even more of consolidated democracy is embodied in an institutional package – a set of rules and institutions – which are supposed to guide how individuals in institutions, and individuals interacting with institutions, are expected to behave; but in order to understand the 'spirit of democracy' or the 'quality of democracy' we have to pay attention to the informal rules that behaviour and expectations follow. Noting the extent to which the behaviour and political incentives of the entire population and their leaders fit or deviate from formal rules is not enough. When there is a relatively weak or practically non-existent link between formal rules and actual political behaviour it seems to be necessary and correct to try to discover and elucidate the informal rules, political values, attitudes, norms and expectations influencing the institutions from both inside and outside the formal structures. 'Classical' or 'traditional' institutionalists would define such a situation negatively, emphasising the gap between formal rules and observed behaviour. However, day-to-day politics confirms that there are in many transition societies ingrained informal rules, widely shared and deeply rooted to the extent that some authors regard them as institutionalised.[99] Many countries belonging to the so-called 'third wave of democratisation'[100] are disposed, for instance, to tolerate *clientelism* – embracing patronage, nepotism, and favours for actions – that, under the formal rules of democratic institutions, would be considered corrupt.

Identifying consolidated democracy with 'the only game in town' refers undoubtedly to the formal rules of democracy and implies a close fit between formal rules and actual behaviour. One possible misunderstanding of a 'new game' theory is recognition that there are also 'games' with special rules played inside democratic institutions which can differ from those dictated by their formal rules. This raises further questions concerning the formal rules. Who must accept them? How deep must the acceptance run? Does the adherence to democratic principles concern only certain leaders or must most of the country's people acknowledge no feasible alternative to democracy? Is it enough to scrutinise the formal institutions of the regime, or should we examine other areas, such as broadly-shared values, norms, behaviour patterns and political culture as a whole?

My thesis here is that political culture and its development is one of the most important aspects of East Central European democratisation. Along with changes in economic, legal or institutional frameworks and political systems in general, the historically formed and historically variable attitudes to politics and practices in

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[98] J.J. Linz, 'Transitions to Democracy' in: *Washington Quarterly* (13, 1990) p.156.

[99] For instance see G. O'Donnell, 'Illusions About Consolidation' in: *Journal of Democracy*, (April 1996, Vol.7, No.2) p.40.

[100] See detailed examination of 'third wave democratisation' and the 'imperatives of consolidation' in: L. Diamond, 'Is the Third Wave Over?' in: *Journal of Democracy*, (July 1996, Vol.7, No.3) pp.20-28.

politics have to be taken into account in appraising transition and the movement to consolidated democracy. The next sub-sections of the study develop this view.

## 3. President-Prime Minister Tensions/Relations

It is axiomatic that civil-military relations mirror the society and the political regime in which they are built, and democratic control of the military can only be as good as a country's democratic institutions.[101] Recent analysis of the political transformation in post-communist countries, however, reveals that transition is dominated more by personalities than institutions. Personality, prestige and power certainly influenced the genesis of the Slovak constitution. Its creation became a political contest, and it was written to ensure that parliament held the strongest hand in the system of checks and balances. At the same time it contained ambiguities regarding the respective powers of the Presidency and the office of Prime Minister.

Efforts to usurp presidential authority were a feature of the mid-1990s and at times impacted on the president's constitutional powers and his role as commander-in-chief. The Head of State is elected by a secret vote in parliament requiring a three-fifths majority of deputies (90 votes out of 150).[102] He can veto laws approved by parliament, but a simple recount entitles the vetoed bill to become law. No threshold requirement of, say, two-thirds parliamentary approval is needed to override a presidential veto. (Only constitutional amendments require another three-fifths majority vote.)

The president is an important player in the civil-military dynamic. He is the commander-in-chief of the Slovak armed forces. He chairs the State Defence Council (Rada Obrany Štátu created in January 1995)[103]; and in time of war this body would direct the country's strategic efforts and order the general staff.[104] The constitution gives the president the power to promote general officers within the armed forces. The Law 166/95 Zb. amended the constitution and returned this power to the cabinet in an attempt to weaken the president's role vis á vis the government and the military.[105] The Constitutional Court later ruled that this act was in fact unconstitutional and the president retains the power. The president also nominates the members of the State Defence Council, but it is an open question what influence the president would have over the council and as commander-in-chief if, in the case of war, there was tension between the Head of State and the government.

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[101] R. Joó, p.20.

[102] Constitution of the Slovak Republic, Article 101.

[103] The State Defence Council's members include the prime minister, most cabinet officers, i.e. finance, economy, interior, foreign affairs and defence, the chairman of the parliamentary defence committee and the chief of the general staff.

[104] In peacetime the government directs the general staff through the defence ministry.

[105] *Zbierka zákonov SR,* (Ministerstvo spravodlivosti, Bratislava, roc.1995) p.1538.

The president has at times been rendered ineffective by the parliament and the government. There is no act the president can undertake that does not require the endorsement of an appropriate member of the government.

The disconnect or 'intolerance' between the president and the government revealed a stress in the constitutional structure and was one of the systemic problems plaguing Slovak politics in the 1990s.[106] It carried over into parliament, affecting the relationship between the ruling coalition and opposition parties, polarising Slovak politics, producing relations which were often very bitter, antagonistic and combative. Accommodation, negotiation and the search for middle ground were often lacking in the political process. This division into camps threatened the goal of objective control of the military and the professionalisation of the officer corps: political orientation and cronyism, instead of an objective assessment of career credentials, began to affect who got promoted to the highest ranks and who did not.

Even more important, it led to an interlude when Slovakia did not have a President. For a time an important component of civil-military control was missing. The duties of the Supreme Commander fell on the shoulders of the Prime Minister and the Chairman of Parliament.

## 4. Ministry of Defence and General Staff Discord

The Ministry of Defence-General Staff relationship also blemishes civil-military relations. Before the collapse of the Berlin wall, Trencin was the Headquarters of the former Czecho-Slovak Eastern Military District. It was transformed into a General Staff in 1994. After the split of the Federal Republic, the military command here was not as thoroughly lustrated as the Czech army, because the Slovaks needed the manpower to build the army after the break-up. When the MOD was founded in Bratislava, the long-serving officers in Trencin resented younger personnel and civilians telling them what to do.

Tensions soon developed as General Staff officers considered their counterparts to be politicians in uniform trying to usurp their authority, whereas they themselves were the 'real' soldiers. In addition, the General Staff perceived the MOD as incompetent, lacking sufficiently trained and knowledgeable civilian employees. The MOD personnel, meanwhile, felt that the General Staff did not need them.[107] This tension is still alive and well at the time of writing, and it is responsible for a duplication of effort, overlap and ill-defined roles and responsibilities. The physical separation of the General Staff and the MOD also causes problems. There are no

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[106] For a brief description of events that transpired between President Kovac and Prime Minister Meciar – including the president's refusal to confirm Ivan lexa as the minister of privatisation in March 1995 and the kidnapping of the president's son in August 1995 – see: J. Simon, *NATO Enlargement and Central Europe: A Study in Civil-Military Relations,* (National Defence UP, Washington D.C, 1996) pp.263-267.

[107] Discussion with officers and civilian experts of MOD in the framework of a project led by Professor Dutkiewicz at the Carleton University, November 1998.

regular meetings at the working level, but rather on an ad hoc basis or only when necessary.  Frequent changes within the MOD – Slovakia has had several changes of government and defence ministers – also damages its reputation with the military.

## 5. The May 1997 Referendum on NATO Membership

A clear illustration of the conflicting relationship among Slovak political institutions was the obstructed referendum of 1997.  In February of that year, the Parliament passed a resolution directing President Kovác to call a referendum on Slovakia's membership in NATO.  The ruling coalition of Meciar scheduled the referendum a little more than a month before the NATO summit in Madrid, in order to shift responsibility to citizens for the imminent failure of its own integration efforts.  At the same time, there arose the issue of presidential selection, when representatives of several opposition parties introduced a bill to amend the Slovak Constitution to provide for direct election of the president.  Following the refusal of Parliament's Chairman to schedule debates on this proposal, opposition parties launched a petition for a referendum that eventually gathered more than 500,000 signatures.  Its organisers encouraged voters to support both NATO membership and direct election of the head of state.  Opinion polls showed that a majority of eligible voters would have been willing to take part in a simple combined referendum and to answer 'yes' to the key questions.[108]

The three government parties were united in opposition to direct election of the president, however, and repeatedly condemned the combination of two distinct issues into a single referendum.  The Central Referendum Commission (CRC) – the official body responsible for organising this event – decided in April 1997 to prepare one ballot with four questions (three on NATO, one on direct presidential election).  A group of the government coalition's deputies requested a ruling from the Constitutional Court on whether the Slovak Constitution could be changed by a popular referendum.  While this was pending, the CRC approved a ballot with four questions, plus an appendix setting-out a suggested constitutional law on direct election of the president.  The government, however, ordered Minister of the Interior Krajci not to distribute ballots with four questions.  Two days before the start of the referendum the Constitutional Court ruled that on the one hand the Constitution of the Republic did not prohibit its amendment by referendum but on the other hand the appendix to the fourth question was inconsistent with the *Law on referendum*, and that an affirmative vote on this question would not be legally binding.

On the eve of the ballot, the chairmen of eight opposition parties issued a joint appeal to citizens not to vote if they did not receive official ballots with all four questions.  In the event, voters were offered papers with only three questions on NATO.  The vast majority of those who turned out refused to vote; many more stayed

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[108] Z. Bútorová, 'Public Opinion' in: M. Bútora and W. Skladony (eds.), *Slovakia 1996-1997. A Global Report on the State of Society*, (Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava) p.74.

at home.   The turnout was only 9.35 per cent of registered voters and the CRC declared the 'referendum' obstructed, and immediately demanded a criminal indictment of Minister of the Interior Krajci.[109]

In February 1998, the Interior Minister was found guilty of thwarting the referendum, but Prime Minister Meciar issued amnesties in the kidnapping of Michal Kovác Jr. and referendum cases that stipulated 'not to start, and if started to halt' any criminal proceedings in these cases.   After the 1998 parliamentary elections Prime Minister Dzurinda revised the terms of these amnesties saying: 'With my decision I am trying to open the door of justice and defend the citizen's interests.   My decision opens up possibilities for the police and the prosecution to investigate the cases.'[110] The action was controversial.   On the one side a number of lawyers stressed that 'there was, unfortunately, no constitutional reason to apply the (revision) proceedings the way Premier Dzurinda did'; and on the other side a group of lawyers and governmental officials supported Dzurinda's decision, saying that ´this was the only way in which the truth of the cases could be revealed and those guilty of crimes convicted and punished'.[111]


## 6. Depoliticising the Ranks and Education Efforts


The first chore the Czechoslovak army faced after the Velvet Revolution was to depoliticise the military and sever ties to the communist party.   This process was largely successful.   It involved dissolving the main political departments, finding new duties for military-political officers, disbanding party cells at the unit level, breaking the link between political-military officials and the military security/judicial branches, and revamping the curriculum of military academies.[112]   However, the first civilian defence minister, Lubos Dobrovsky, was not appointed until October 1990, almost a year after the fall of the communist regime.   This only happened after an accusation that the then uniformed Defence Minister, Lieutenant General Miroslav Vacek, had not been progressive enough in de-communising the armed forces.   Nevertheless, the shift from a military to a civilian defence minister was a significant indicator of the new democratic orientation of the country.

In early 1990, then Minister Vacek had ordered all professional soldiers to halt all political activity and quit political parties.   The majority of officers complied.   The larger and tougher problem with regard to ending communist influence in the military was the need to differentiate between those officers loyal to the Party and those loyal

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[109] See more in G. Meselnokov, 'Domestic Politics' in: M. Bútora and W. Skladony, (eds.), *Slovakia 1996-1997. A Global Report on the State of Society*, (Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava) pp.17-18.

[110] I. Remiaš, 'Revised amnesties open old wounds. Thwarted referendum, Kovac kidnapping to be investigated', *The Slovak Spectator*, (International weekly, Bratislava, Vol.4, No.32, 21 December-10 January 1998) p.1.

[111] Ibid., p.1.

[112] A. Bebler, 'The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in Central and Eastern Europe', in: *NATO Review,* (NATO Office of Information and Press, Brussels, August 1994) p.28.

to the state.  The process of thus distinguishing communists from non-communists was both a symbolic and a practical business.  In 1991, to weed out communist leaders and collaborators at the district levels of government and in the military, Czechoslovakia introduced its Lustration Law.[113]  This was largely successful, however, the lustration did not continue in Slovakia after January 1993.  This allowed certain figures from the pre-1989 army to remain in service which prevented younger officers from being promoted.  It also aggravated the tension between the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff.  Even in today's Slovak army many junior officers think senior officers are simply hanging on until a new retirement law guarantees them a decent pension.[114]

More positively, in the early 1990s a vast education project was undertaken to expose and explain civil-military relations within the context of liberal democracy. There was a need to overcome the understanding of civil direction as 'simply subordination of the armed forces to the democratically elected political authority'.[115] The concept of civil-military relations was not entirely new since the Czechoslovak military was controlled by civilians within the communist system.  But the idea of transparency and extending civilian involvement to parliamentarians and the public was a new concept.  Because the administration of military matters was not codified into law and the details of running the armed forces were known only to those in uniform, the military had to overcome its obsessive concern for secrecy and get used to sharing information with civilians.  An initial uncertainty or even distrust on both sides had to be overcome.  The idea of compromise – the very essence of the democratic process – had to be accepted as a way of doing business in an institution which had previously regarded compromise as a sign of weakness.  The military had limited experience of working with civilians; and, likewise, very few parliamentarians, civil servants, academics or journalists were well versed in military subjects.[116]

Since 1993 too, there has been an effort to teach Slovak academics, politicians, civil servants and soldiers about pluralistic society, market economics and civil-military relations.  NATO and western universities and research centres have sponsored seminars.  Mobile teams of instructors from western European and American institutions have visited Slovakia.  Exchange programmes with a host of foreign military schools, colleges and defence universities have been run.  Slovak officers have attended courses at the George C. Marshall Center.  Domestic programmes have been laid on by a variety of Slovak institutions and universities, both private and public, including the Slovak Foreign Policy Association and the Politological Cabinet at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, plus the local offices of organisations like the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer

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[113] 'Lustration' is the process by which 'light' was cast on the role played by officers under the old regime and on their attitudes to the new system.  The process was not limited to the armed forces – it was implemented in all walks of life.

[114] Sentiment collected from many discussions with junior officers.

[115] C. Rose, 'Democratic Control of the Armed Forces. A Parliamentary Role in PfP', in: *NATO Review,* (NATO Press and Information Office, Brussels, October 1994) p.13.

[116] R. Joó, 'The Democratic Control of Armed Forces', in: *Chaillot Paper 23,* (Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 1996) p.22.

Foundation. Finally, the Faculty of Arts and the Law Faculty at Comenius University (specifically, the Department of Political Science and the Institute for International Relations), the University of Matej Bel in Banska Bystrica and University of P. J. Safárik in Presov are all now engaged in the study of democratic government and civil-military relations.

In terms of formal military education, it is now possible for future officers to study at civilian universities; and the Military Academy of the Slovak National Uprising at Liptovsky Mikuláš, allows civilians to attend courses at the college.

Military education in this region has a rich tradition; there were established here several schools for officers of the first corps of the Czechoslovak army.[117] In the 1950s the school of the air force amalgamated with the Military Academy of the air force. A new polytechnic college was created in Liptovský Mikuláš, for all training activities in the field of anti-aircraft systems and air defence.[118] Later, a new air force institution was set up in Kosice (Military Aviation College of General Stefanik).[119] The polytechnic college after this change became a technical college and all activities in the region were concentrated in Liptovsky Mikulas. In the late 1960s the school attained university status and the Military Technical University was formally established there in 1973. Because of the unpopularity of the army it was difficult at first to find qualified commanders and teachers for the institution. However, it succeeded in retaining scientists and researchers. In 1979, the establishment had four different faculties which are more or less the same today (the Faculty of Air Defence, the Faculty of Army, the Faculty of Command Communication and Intelligence, the Faculty of Logistics). From 1982 it also started to prepare specialists in the field of microelectronics and laser science for industrial needs.[120]

Just after the *Velvet Revolution* in December 1989, a new rector was freely elected by the Academic Senate and military education started to meet different requirements. Liptovsky Mikulas became the only institution of higher military education in Slovakia (as a result of fusion with the Political Academy of Klement Gottwald in Bratislava). Then, after 1993, it had to prepare all specialists which were trained before in Bohemia, with the exception of the air force personnel trained in Kosice.

The programme is divided in two stages. The first lasts three years and offers a Bachelor degree. The second is an additional two years for a Magister degree. There is a possibility for the best students to continue in PhD study. All degrees are valid and recognised in the civil sector. The number of students is about 1,300 today,

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[117] See Krivá, p.46.

[118] Unofficial sources say a strong lobby from the Liptov region was active in the Communist Party in Prague and Bratislava in the 1950s. From a small village, Liptovsky Mikulas became gradually a small town.

[119] Divided today in ten departments: automated command systems; aviation activity, repair and security techniques; aviation engineering; avionics and weapon systems; flight preparation; physical training, sport and parachute training; physics and mathematics; radiotechnical security; tactics and military preparation. See more in: F. Coulon, *Problems and Prospects in the Reform of the Defence Establishment in Slovakia: The Case of the Military Academy of Liptovsky Mikulas in Central Slovakia*, (North Atlantic Fellowship Programme, Bratislava, Summer 1996) pp.23-26.

[120] As stated in the report of Francois de Coulon, the Czechoslovak arms industry was in this field an equal or even in advance of major countries in the world. See Ibid., p.25.

among them girls and civilian students. There are about 100 teachers and researchers on the academic staff which includes 11 full-time Professors.[121]

## 7. Parliament's Role in Defence Budgeting and Economic Control

Controlling the defence budget is one of the most effective ways for parliament to influence civil-military relations. Control means more than simply voting yes or no when a proposed defence budget is submitted. There is still a perception in Slovakia that this is the major duty parliament fulfils, and that by fulfilling this role civilian control of the military exists. This is very clear in the following view: 'The principle of democratic and civilian control of the armed forces is, in general, understood as the subordination of the army to the democratically-elected legislative organs; it means that all decisions concerning state defence must be approved by elected representatives…. Our parliament *ratifies* all laws, which relate to the armed forces, army doctrine and the army budget.'[122] Note also the opinion that while it is important 'to create mechanisms as a check against the army in order that it does not exceed the charter given to it by society...the *government* is the highest functioning organ of executing power in the Slovak Republic and it secures tasks related to state defence and strengthening state security'.[123] Thus an active parliamentary role which does more than pass laws is missing in the analysis of Slovak writers.

The Slovak parliament is certainly limited in its influence over the budgeting process. This is because the budget submitted by the MOD is very much planned and programmed as it was under the Soviet system. Then, the budget was designed to be 'impenetrable', consisting of many chapters none of which detailed defence expenditures in total.[124] The whole idea of the military having to buy equipment and pay for training was a foreign notion under the command-directed Soviet economies. Installing the ideas of cost awareness, promoting efficiency and eliminating waste and fraud is a continuing and challenging effort. However, the budget is still planned by the General Staff and MOD, modified by the government and presented to parliament as a *fait accompli*. One reason for this − or maybe it is a consequence − is that Slovakia does not have a network of external consultants, auditors and civilian experts such as is deemed central to parliamentary control of defence in established democracies. The military remains the unchallenged decision-maker in the defence planning and budgeting process. Parliament's role can be described as reactive.

According to Colonel Jozef Zadzora of the Defence Ministry Economic Policy

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[121] Ibid., p.25. For more on higher military education in the Slovak Republic, see O. Doornbos, *Educating Slovakia's Senior Officers*, (Centre for European Security Studies, Groningen, 1999).

[122] E. Tomáš, 'Demokratická a civilná kontrola ozbrojených síl je podmienkou na prijatie za clena NATO' in: daily *Slovenská republika*, (25 February 1997) p.10.

[123] D. Geisbacherová, 'Civilná kontrola armády v Slovenskej republike', *SAMO,* (Trencín, LudoPress, January 1996) p.24.

[124] See R. Szemerkenyi, 'Central European Civil Military Reform at Risk', *Adelphi Paper 306*, (Oxford, Oxford UP, December, 1996) p.28.

Section, budgetary oversight does not yet exist, therefore, and it is not yet possible to determine how much money is allocated per soldier, platoon, or company.[125]  The post-1998 team at the defence ministry has promised more transparency in the process of defence planning and budgeting but results have yet to be seen.

The level of defence expenditures assigned to the Slovak MOD in 1993 was approximately one-third of the expenditures of the Czech and Slovak federal army. The authorities considered the structure, allocation of forces and resources of the Army of the Slovak Republic did not correspond with the needs of defence of a sovereign state.[126]  Military transformation required increased infrastructure, including housing for personnel transferred from the Czech Republic.  Price liberalisation caused higher operational expenses, mainly in such principal areas as food, utilities, spare parts, equipment and materiel.  Changes in the tax system meant that the army lost its exemptions in purchasing special kinds of goods and services. New kinds of expenses were introduced, for instance legal insurance of motor vehicles.  These measures – brought in without additional budgetary resources – resulted in the abandonment of modernisation of equipment and weapon systems and decreased standards of training, technical support and care for weaponry and equipment.  Investment expenses were mainly concentrated in building the infrastructure.  In addition, the restrictive measures adopted by the Government for overall budgetary management affected the defence ministry.  Not until 1995 were these relaxed.[127]

The share of defence expenditures in GDP nevertheless fell in the second half of the 1990s, as Table 4 here shows.

Table 4. Defence Budget 1995-1998

|  | **DEFENCE BUDGET** **(IN BILLION SK)** | **GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT** **(IN BILLION SK)** | **% OF GDP** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1995** | 12.053 | 518 | 2.496 |
| **1996** | 13.412 | 581 | 2.307 |
| **1997** | 14.339 | 654 | 2.193 |
| **1998** | 14.053 | 732 | 1.921 |

Source: State Budget Slovak Republic (1995-1998),
Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, 1998

Although this defence/GDP proportion is no lower than in some other states, the Slovak military authorities regard the resource allocation as inadequate.  On the other hand, as Jeffrey Simon has noted: 'Despite the 1996-defence budget squeeze, Slovakia's financial commitment to PfP remained impressive.  In 1994, the year PfP was announced, Slovakia committed one per cent from the defence budget for the

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[125] Colonel Jozef Zadzora interview, *Obrana,* (Bratislava, 16 March 1996) p.6.

[126] See *White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic,* (unpublished material prepared by MOD in Autumn 1998) p.50.

[127] Ibid., p.51.

programme. This doubled to 2 per cent in 1995; and again doubled to 4 per cent in 1996'.[128]

Be that as it may, at the outset neither adequate transparency was secured, nor were efficient instruments for democratic control of the armed forces created. The entire sector of defence was considered as one budgetary unit. The draft budget was prepared for a one-year period without direct linkage to spending in the preceding years and projections for future years. Mutual linkage in planning between individual elements of the defence budget was missing, as well as the linkage between plans and funds. The registration of assets was conducted only in material units, not in value units. Bookkeeping and registration of assets were conducted mainly manually, without any use of computer facilities.

In 1994, the model of a new system was developed based on practice in NATO countries and the political, economic and legislative norms of the Slovak Republic. Its primary objective was integration of other control systems, mainly those of strategic planning, operational planning, logistics and procurement, command and control, in a coherent system for resource allocation and resources management. Several principal steps were realised in the next four years:

- transformation of united MOD budgetary organisation to 18 units;
- military expenditures for the army separated from other expenditures (science, education, sports and so on), making financial flows more transparent and creating conditions for their effective control;
- number of financed units decreased from over 200 to 19;
- conditions to improve professional skills in financial service created; and
- new accounting practices introduced.

Finally, work was begun on building an economic information system scheduled for completion in 2001.

In 1997, the State Defence Council approved the 'new model' and adopted a resolution to continue implementation of the System of Planning, Programming and Budgeting, initially with pilot planning cycles leading to full implementation after 2000.[129]

## 8. Parliament, the Public and Information

Parliament's ability to influence civil-military relations is also inhibited by a lack of information. Parliamentarians are poorly briefed on defence issues and they do not have full-time professional staff to assist them. Generally, there are insufficient

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[128] J. Simon, p.274.

[129] Ibid., pp.52-54.

knowledgeable civilians to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship between the army and society in general. Information comes from political parties and from some independent sources, like Pavol Vitko, a reporter for the daily newspaper *Pravda*, a respected journalist who covers the military debate and provides good, objective analysis. The political parties which do have staff following the armed forces often just have one person devoted to the task. Some parties simply do not see a need to finance and support such expertise. Public discussion and pressure are, therefore, missing from the civil-military relations process. As the Slovak army modernises to make it more compatible with NATO forces, the public is ill-informed about the country's armament programme and lacks answers to many key questions: What equipment is needed? How much needs to be purchased? Who are the potential suppliers? What foreign partners and companies might be part of the effort?[130]

Despite this, the Slovak army has consistently been regarded as a most trusted public institution, according to data from the government's statistical office and an independent polling firm.[131] Confidence of the citizens in the Army of the Slovak Republic was at the level of 70 per cent in the mid-1990s. This was the highest approval rating among state authorities and the highest also compared to perceptions of the army in neighbouring European countries.

## 9. Professionalisation of the Officer Corps

Some basic changes which would help in the professionalisation of the officer corps and its detachment from politics are stymied by a lack of funds. This money shortage plagues professionalisation and is felt mainly in three areas: salaries, training/maintenance and housing.[132]

The fact that professional soldiers are not paid enough causes many, especially younger officers who have been exposed to the West and have a marketable skill, to leave the service in search of better opportunities. The way soldiers are currently paid should also be looked at for possible change, especially the practice of department chiefs being given money to pay in the form of bonuses to subordinates.

A lack of money to conduct regular training and maintain equipment prevents soldiers from honing their combat and peacekeeping skills. This makes soldiers wonder what degree of government support there is for them when they are not given the resources to do their jobs. Some contend that the MOD spends money very inefficiently and that the government, defence committee and parliament are not assertive enough in restructuring the armed forces. One late-90s plan to reshape the

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[130] I. Cibula, 'Civilná kontrola armády SR', *Konferencia Slovensko a NATO*, (Demokratická únia, Bratislava, 5 March 1997).

[131] *Rocenka 1997, (Annual Report 1997)* (Ministerstvo obrany SR, Bratislava, VITA 1998); *Názory. Informacný bulletin (Opinions Information Bulletin),* (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, Vol.VIII, No.1, 2, 3, 4); *Current Problems of Slovakia at the Turn of the Year 1995-1996,* (FOCUS, Bratislava, 1996).

[132] A matter of fact repeated in a number of official and unofficial sources, interviews and discussions.

military called for 60 per cent professional soldiers, but the political leadership was not energetic in pursuing defence reform.

One of the biggest problems affecting Slovak society in general – a lack of money for adequate housing – is perhaps the biggest obstacle to military reform. The dire housing situation makes it impractical to implement a functioning Career Service personnel management system that would rotate officers periodically among assignments. Right now there simply are not apartments available for officers to move into if they change assignments. Some newly arrived officers working on the General Staff in Trencin or the MOD in Bratislava live in central or eastern Slovakia and may commute to work for as long as a year. Because many married officers rely on working wives to help support their families, finding work for the spouse after a move can be difficult. This situation inclines officers to keep the job they have and hope that they never have to move. Further complicating matters, retiring officers or those leaving service who already live in apartments have the right to retain them. Given the severity of the housing situation, that is precisely what the vast majority does. Single officers have almost no luck in obtaining adequate housing and either live in extremely modest dormitory-like quarters or with their extended families. This predicament aggravates tensions between the General Staff in Trencin and the MOD in Bratislava. Officers stay in position for long periods and devote themselves to the causes of the office in which they work. Some officers in the MOD working with civilians have said that their leadership style has actually become 'civilianised': they have lost the soldier's perspective simply because they have been cut off from life with the troops for so long.

Lastly, a comment on the army and its relation to Slovak political parties is warranted.[133] Slovak soldiers may be members of political parties, but they are not authorised to participate in party events during working hours or in uniform. This rule has been adhered to since 1993, although army officers and retired soldiers organisations are starting to be louder voices in their demands for reform. Not that one should be surprised if the political climate at the national level is reflected in the higher ranks of the army. At the very highest levels, it is difficult to separate politics from the military even in a democracy. Retired General Colin Powell remarked on his experience in Washington D.C. within the President's inner circle of key decision-makers – that 'There is not a general in Washington who is not political, not if he is going to be successful, because that is the nature of our system'.[134]

The question facing the Army of the Slovak Republic – to what extent must officers sacrifice their professionalism in the name of politics in order to be successful – hinges largely on the degree of political pluralism that is established within Slovak society itself. It is hoped that a distinction between professionalism and politics will be maintained, and that the Slovak Army will continue to enjoy its widespread and consistent public support while improving itself daily as an enduring institution in the country's political process.

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[133] P. Vitko, 'Cakanie na zákony', Interview with Chief of the General Staff Jozef Tuchyòa, (daily *Pravda*, 18 March 1997) p.1 and 4.
[134] B. Woodward, *The Commanders*, (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1991) p.155.

## VI. SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICIES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The basic role of security policy in Slovakia is to create conditions for exploiting the existing, strengths and compensating for the contingent weaknesses, which are linked with the expanse of the territory and the geopolitical and economic position of the country. The national interest as defined in official documents is 'to secure sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, security, economic prosperity, social stability and international recognition'.[135] A text entitled *Fundamental Objectives and Principles of National Security of the Slovak Republic* defines the objectives of security policy: guaranteeing sovereignty together with good friendly relations with neighbouring states; creating an inter-linked system of security and state defence interoperable with the European security system; gradual integration of the country in the transatlantic and European collective political-security, economic, and cultural structures and institutions; guaranteeing the security of individuals and protection of the interests of the society as a whole.

At the practical policy level, the efforts of the state are aimed at active participation in the system of collective security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Basic elements of this system relevant for Slovakia include the internal and external adaptation of NATO, realisation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU with the prospect of a common European defence, as well as the efforts of member states of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to adopt a common platform for European security in the 21st century.[136]

The Slovak Republic, under current conditions, cannot contemplate independent national defence of its territory. It considers obtaining security guarantees through full NATO membership to be the best way to safeguard its security.[137] The most important benefits of collective defence for which Slovakia looks within the framework of NATO are:

- participation in common exercises of units and formations;
- financial assistance in restructuring of the military;
- exploitation of modern military technologies;
- exploitation of expert consultations and information;
- establishing the access to strategic intelligence;
- strengthening co-operation in the area of defence production;
- extending interoperability with NATO members and introducing the process of standardisation.[138]

At the same time, the country attaches importance to active participation in all measures of the international community aimed at protection of peace and stability in Europe and geographically adjacent regions. It sees such participation as an integral

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[135] According to *White Paper* (cited at note 126) p.12.

[136] *Rocenka 1996 (Annual Report 1996)* (Ministerstvo obrany SR, VITA, Bratislava, 1997).

[137] *White Paper* (cited at note 126) p.15.

[138] Ibid., p.16.

part of defending and implementing its national interest. Consistent realisation of commitments in the area of arms control and disarmament plus measures for strengthening confidence and security are seen as an important part of the emerging new security architecture in Europe. Indeed, in security policy Slovakia prefers political objectives to military ones. It respects the principle that using force and threatening force in international relations are generally unacceptable and at odds with the provisions of the UN Charter and the principles of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Security risks and threats, however, might make it necessary to deploy the armed forces in order to preserve peaceful development in the world or in Europe, or to defend the state sovereignty of the Slovak Republic. So absolute exclusion of use of the armed forces is unrealistic, and the need for a sound defence policy remains.

The defence policy of the Slovak Republic compromises a complex of objectives, principles and measures adopted by the authorities for all-round preparation of the state and the whole society, but mainly the armed forces, for countering aggression against the country. The main principles of the policy are set out in the *Defence Doctrine of the Slovak Republic.* This emphasises participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme and the transition to a coalition model of defence.[139]

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[139] Ibid., pp.19-26.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study has sought to explain the current state of civil-military relations in the newly-independent Slovak Republic using the *political culture* approach. It has shown, first, that armed forces are a reflection of the society they serve and their position is largely dependent on the political system and regime they serve. Second, political culture and its development must be seen as one of the most important aspects of East Central European democratisation. Along with changes in economic, legal or institutional frameworks and political systems in general, the historically-formed and historically-variable attitudes, evaluations and practices of politics are major indicators of transformation in the context of nationally specific factors of *longue durée*. Third, the study demonstrates that promoting democratic civil-military relations as a part of vital civil society is an evolving dynamic that takes time and experience and is dependent on all participants in the process: soldiers, civil servants, journalists, academics, parliamentarians, government officials, both elected and appointed, and an informed public. The fourth conclusion of the work is that the Slovak civil-military dynamic is in danger of being jeopardised by a lack of funding, cautious defence reform, inadequate information and the threat of a politicised officer corps.

It is important to emphasise that countries in East Central Europe are still in transition and need time to build a civil society cemented by the rule of law. Indeed, scholars re-examining the democratisation process have argued that a 'particular variant of democracy that is specific to the region' may yet emerge.[140]

Slovakia's turbulent political history over the last 150 years is marked by an absence of democratic culture and participative pluralism, often due to no fault of its own. In turn, the development of civil-military relations has suffered, and one cannot expect the Slovaks to arrive at a perfect civil-military balance immediately. The Western observer should recognise this when studying the Slovak case; and that 'democracy is not reducible to its institutions, rules and procedures, but rather, is a way of life for the individual citizens'.[141]

The position at the turn of the millennium is that the legal basis for democratic control of the military is established in Slovakia. However, in practice there are serious shortfalls that reflect, on the one hand, the general problems connected with transformation and the building of a new state, and, on the other, the lack of tradition in civil-military relations. Specifically, there are four main problems.

First, through the mid-1990s the Parliament and the Committee on Defence and Security were passive and it could be argued actually hindered the implementation of security and defence policy goals outlined by the government. Having said that, the defence and security policy of the Meciar government was ambiguous to say the least. This ambiguity had several sources among which a vague concept of neutrality (propounded by the Slovak National Party) and the mistrust or unwillingness to co-operate with the West on the latter's terms (generally expressed by Meciar) were just a couple. This ambivalence was evident in the Parliament where

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[140] M. Kaldor and I. Vejvoda, 'Democratisation in central and east European countries', *International Affairs* (73/1, 1997) p.61.
[141] Ibid., p.66.

the leading coalition government had majority support and complete control over the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security. As a result, issues related to NATO accession and associated questions of civil-military relations were either not discussed at all or only inadequately.

Second, the absence of informed communication was exacerbated by lack of well-informed MPs. Indeed, it has been a bone of contention that not only the public but also the civilians meant to reform civil-military relations through their participation in democratic institutions were denied the necessary information to effectively carry on their jobs. Therefore, Slovakia has yet to develop the civilian professional expertise necessary for a mutually beneficial relationship between the army and society. This is still missing from the Parliament and the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security – with obvious negative implications for civilian control, including budget deliberations, and well-informed discussion generally.

Third, the rules and regulations of parliamentary democracy in Slovakia were in the process of consolidation during 1993-98 – and complicated by a serious conflict between the President and the Government headed by Prime Minister Meciar and a docile Parliament controlled by the ruling coalition. As stated before, the tensions between the main organs of power resulted in a situation where for a time Slovakia did not have a President.

Fourthly, another problem that developed in the Slovak military was a sharp conflict between the Minister of Defence and the General Staff. There is no clear separation of functions between the two and their activities are often duplicated. Once again, among the prerequisites of a democratically-controlled army is a clear separation of responsibilities between the civilian component of the military establishment and the professional one.

Comparing the real situation in Slovakia – based on sources from MOD and Parliament – with the theoretical framework of democratic civil-military relations, it is clear that while Slovakia has the formal and legal basis for oversight of the military, in practice control is minimal. This must change, since Slovakia's accession to NATO partly depends on the success of the post-1998 government in addressing these shortcomings. Happily, it is doing so.

Civil-military relations in Slovakia will always mirror the general political and economic situation. The democratic deficit of the Meciar years showed in the sphere of civil control of the military. As other things change, so there should be reform in this field. However, the Dzurinda regime needs help, notably in the training and education not only of military personnel but also of MPs – and especially the members of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security – so that they can constructively contribute to civil-military discussions. Also, information should be spread throughout civil society as well, so that the public can contribute to the debate. Towards this goal, media and NGO activities could be encouraged to improve understanding of the characteristics of a modern democratic army.

These and other problems notwithstanding, Slovakia is doing better than many of its neighbours in struggling with its difficult legacy of 41 years under the socialist regime.

The United Nations' 1998 National Human Development Report ranks countries based on what it calls the Human Development Index (HDI), which evaluates conditions in a nation based on three indicators: life expectancy, education, and real income. According to this calculation, Slovakia belongs to countries with a high level of human development. Slovakia took 42nd place out of more than 100 countries surveyed, which places it just behind Slovenia (37) and the Czech Republic (39), but ahead of Hungary (47), Poland (52), and all other former Soviet-controlled countries.

On the other hand, the report also says that the quality of life for the average person worsened in the mid-1990s. In opinion polls, people said they felt the nation had taken steps back in the fields of education, health care, international status, environmental pollution, criminality, unemployment and politics, as well as in the financial situation of their households.

Six years after the dissolution of the former federation of Czechoslovakia, the report found the standard of living 20 per cent lower in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic. Slovak women earned approximately 80 per cent of the average male wage, despite the fact that their average educational attainment level was higher than that of men. A high number of young people were unemployed, and 84 per cent of the population believed that their safety was more threatened. Slovak universities' annual expenditures per student remained below US$ 100, though the overall educational achievements of Slovak citizens were growing moderately.[142]

The fact is that Slovakia, unlike the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, is still at a crossroads. The process of transition has not been accomplished and a struggle for the rules of the game continues even though democratic institutions and procedures do exist. The outcome of this may be, on the one hand, a more or less consolidated democracy, or, on the other hand, a new form of 'muddling through' model. At least the crises and conflicts of the 1990s did not mean the fatal end of democracy, as some 'prophets of doom' once feared.

I believe that developments in Slovakia will confirm this conclusion and that its citizens will *not* become mourning survivors, wailing over the grave of democracy. What remains of Slovakia's 'democratic deficit' lies mainly in the configuration and attitudes of the national elites who make strategic decisions. The power in Slovakia is highly concentrated in the hands of politicians. The future will probably depend more upon the responsible behaviour of these elites, the degree of their consensual unity over the 'rules of the game' regarding both domestic and foreign policy and less upon the direct participation of the citizens in politics. But that is a reflection of the political culture of the society – which will continue to evolve, but slowly.

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[142] The data are based on *National Human Development Report – Slovakia 1998*, (United Nations Development Programme, Bratislava, 1998).

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