

A House Divided Against Itself:
National Issues and Political Party Competition in Slovakia

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To an observer of Slovakia's politics it is paradoxical that the country has undergone so many significant changes while the responses of ordinary Slovaks on surveys of public opinion have remained remarkably stable. The paradox is particularly sharp on questions related to the "nation," questions that have dominated Slovak politics since 1989 and that appear to have played a key role in Slovakia's political *instability*. Yet Slovaks responded to a 1999 survey on national questions much the way they did in 1992. This paper offers an explanation to the paradox based on the interrelationship among opinions on national questions and their links to political party support. Although overall opinions on national issues changed little between 1992 and 1999, the underlying dynamics of opinion at both the elite and mass levels changed in dramatic ways that sharply affected political outcomes in Slovakia. The paper examines the full range of nation-related issues in Slovakia's public discourse during the 1990's as expressed in party political programs and shows that opinions on nearly all of these issues either remained stable during the entire period or followed a stable trend. Yet the stability conceals considerable changes in the configuration of opinions. Closer examination shows two distinct changes: 1) a steady convergence of opinions on a variety of national-related issues into three particular configurations, and 2) a sharp increase in the relationship between these three configurations and support for particular political parties. In its conclusion the paper offers speculations on why these changes came about and how they affected Slovakia's turbulent process of democratic consolidation.

Identifying national issues

Any analysis of the role of national issues in Slovakia's political life must begin with a process for identifying what issues actually play a role in Slovakia's public life. This paper casts its net among the programs of major political parties. Programs are far from a perfect instrument. They tend to over-represent the perspectives of party elites regarding the importance of particular issues and to may omit whole issue areas which are not considered appropriate for a formal campaign document or which arise during the course of a campaign. Nevertheless, parties do have strong incentive to discuss those issues on which they might be able to gain political advantage. In an environment dominated by party competition--as the Slovak party system was during the 1990's--a complete set of party programs offers at least an entry point from which to understand the issue landscape.

Beginning with the set of programs issued by those parties which gained sufficient votes to win entry into parliament in 1992 and 1994 and 1998,¹ I adopted the framework of Budge and Farlie [Budge, 1983 #658] for content analysis based upon the sentence as the basic unit of analysis for counting the number of references to particular issues. In order to assemble the broadest possible list of issues for later analysis, I cast a broad net and included any reference to groups which could be referred to in ethnic or national terms, any broader reference to ethnicity or nationality, any reference to the statehood Slovakia in regard to any other political unit, and any reference to relationships between inhabitants of Slovakia and non-inhabitants.² During the process of counting, I subdivided references according to a pre-established list of specific issues that was based on a previous analysis of the 1994 programs [Krause, 1996 #200]. When statements did not fit in one of these categories, I made a brief summary of the statement and included it in a separate list. At the end of the counting process, I created new issue areas for any issue on the residual list which had received more than five references during any given year. At the same time, I also eliminated those pre-established categories that had not proven relevant and shifted the few references to those categories to the residual list. In this way, I arrived at a list of thirty-five specific topic areas. Since thirty-five issues is far too many for convenient reference, it is necessary to look for a more limited number of underlying themes. From the full list, I divide the topics into those that are primarily domestic and those that concern relationships between states or trans-state actors such as international organizations and

¹Absent from the set are the 1992 program of Coexistence (ESWS), the 1994 program of the Slovak National Party (SNS), and the 1998 program of the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK). In each case, I have taken certain steps to compensate for the absence. In lieu of the 1992 ESWS program I have included the program of the Hungarian Civic Party (MPP), a party that in 1992 did not gain enough votes to enter parliament but that in 1994 campaigned together with ESWS and the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (MKDM). While it is in no means identical to ESWS, MPP at least broadens the sample of programs from Hungarian parties. In lieu of the 1994 SNS program I have used the party's 1995 program. The party did not undergo any significant leadership changes in the 1994-1995 period or convene party congress--the body officially charged with approval of changes in party "program documents"[, 1995 #192, 19]--and the 1995 program can therefore be assumed to be similar, if not identical to the 1994 version.

²It is important to say a few words about terminology here since this paper deals with the problem of translation among several languages regarding terms which themselves are given multiple meanings. In my own usage in this paper, I make a distinction between "ethnic" and "national" which has roots in the work of Weber. By "ethnic," I will refer to the broad "notions of common descent and of an essential, though frequently indefinite, homogeneity" which frequently include characteristics of culture and language. By "national" I refer to those characteristics related tendency of an ethnic community "to produce a state of its own"[Weber, 1964 #696, 171-177]. I will therefore describe Slovakia's population in terms of Slovak, Hungarian, Romany and other *ethnic* groups and describe the political activities of such groups in terms of *national* issues. Translations from Slovak create further problems since the Slovak word "*národ*" is used to cover both of these meanings as well as others. Furthermore, "*národ*" must be distinguished from "*národnosť*" which in some cases overlaps "*národ*" as the description of an ethnic group but which often includes connotations of minority status as compared to a majority "*národ*". To simplify these issues, I will include the original Slovak word in translations wherever it is relevant.

multinational corporations. Table 1 lists the most frequently cited issues by category in order of frequency of mention.

Both this counting method and attention to the actual content of statements suggest the need for further disaggregation. Parties representing Slovakia's Hungarians exhibited a dramatically different set of references and, and the Slovak and Hungarians also frequently expressed strikingly different concepts with otherwise similar phrases. The types of references also changed significantly from one election period to the next. Table 2 shows the distribution of references in each of the eight categories according to year and the ethnic group represented by the respective parties. As might be expected, Hungarian parties place consistently high emphasis on Hungarian-related and general minority issues while largely ignoring questions of the Slovak ethnic community, Slovak national identity, and even Slovakia's independence and image. By contrast, Slovak parties all but ignore Hungarian issues and focus on questions involving Slovaks and "other" national concerns.

Table 1. Nation-related themes and specific topics in election programs of parties in Slovakia, by category, 1992-1998

Category	International Politics	Domestic Politics
Slovak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence of Slovakia • Image of Slovakia in the world • Slovaks living abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slovak self-awareness and culture • Slovak language • Slovaks in southern regions • Education of Slovaks • Territorial administration concerning Slovaks • Slovak ethnic economic concerns
Czech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal structure of Czechoslovakia • Slovakia-Czech Republic relations • Methods for deciding internal structure of Czechoslovakia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None of significance
Hungarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slovakia-Hungary relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial administration in southern regions • Education of Hungarians • Hungarian language • Slovak-Hungarian tension • Hungarian social and economic concerns • Hungarian self-awareness and culture • Other Hungarian rights
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European integration • Foreign investment • Relations with non-European countries • International security structures • International organizations • Diplomacy and diplomatic corps • General international agreements • Relations with Russia and CIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General minority rights • Romanies • Minority self-awareness and culture • Other minority groups • Nationalism or national extremism • Tolerance

Table 2. Nation-related themes and specific topics in election programs as a percentage of total content for Slovak and Hungarian parties in Slovakia, by category, 1992-1998

Party type	Category	International			Domestic		
		1992	1994	1998	1992	1994	1998
Slovak Parties	Slovak	.01	.02	.02	.02	.03	.03
	Czech	.08	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Hungarian	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Other	.06	.07	.07	.03	.04	.02
Hungarian Parties	Slovak	.02	.01	.02	.00	.00	.00
	Czech	.05	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Hungarian	.02	.03	.01	.12	.17	.13
	Other	.08	.06	.13	.02	.06	.04

From the forty-eight pieces of information in Table 2 created by eight categories across three election periods and two ethnic orientations it is possible to undertake a radical simplification. References to Slovakia's international relations in almost every case involve obtaining and preserving Slovak independence. In this they closely parallel the references grouped here under international relations between Slovaks and Czechs, and the two can be grouped together without significant loss of meaning, especially since the Slovak-Czech questions almost entirely disappear after 1992. Although Slovak parties made extremely few direct comments regarding Slovakia's Hungarian minority, many statements in the Other-Domestic category referred to "minority groups" in ways that indirectly identified Hungarians as the object of the remarks. Likewise, although Hungarian parties also made numerous references to relations between minorities and majorities, these too referred almost exclusively to their own circumstances. The Hungarian-Domestic category can therefore be combined with the Other-Domestic category. Furthermore, both Hungarian and Slovak parties view Slovakia's relationship with Hungary as inextricably related to its relationship between the majority and minority groups in Slovakia. The list of topics thereby reduces to four: Slovak-international, Slovak-domestic, Hungarian-

international/Hungarian-domestic/Other-domestic and Other-International. In more descriptive terms that summarize the issues included in these categories, these themes can be restated as: Slovak independence, International actors (primarily Europe and investors), Slovak identity, and the Hungarian-minority. The actual content of these four themes and their change over time deserves a brief description here:

- *Slovak independence.* Many of the references prominent in 1992 concern the degree to which the Slovak Republic should be independent of the Czechs within the CSFR and a concern for Slovakia's "international subjectivity" and its image in the rest of the world. Although those elections ultimately brought a radical change in the country's status, almost identical concerns appeared again in 1994 and 1998 phrased in terms of the reaffirming Slovakia's independence and improving its image in the rest of the world.
- *International actors.* With the disappearance of major Slovak-Czech issues, concerns about Slovakia's place in the international context take on their most concrete form in references to Slovakia's relationship to European Union and other international institutions. In each case, the program references exhibit a tension between the desire for integration and the desire for a recognition of Slovakia as distinct and independent. A similar tension shapes many party statements on the question of foreign investment, which express to varying degrees a desire for foreign investment tempered by concerns that such investment might be thought to undermine the country's sovereignty if transferred to foreign hands.
- *Slovak identity.* Although this theme appears relatively infrequently, it receives strikingly regular mention in the programs of particular parties. Although it is intertwined with the aforementioned themes of Slovak independence and the dangers of internationalization, it cannot be reduced to either of them. This theme appears most prominently in the form of references to the "national pride" of Slovaks in their own country. The theme of Slovak national feelings resembles the other two themes in that it can evoke a sense of threat to national identity or national statehood, but this theme ultimately differs from the two above in that it identifies a source of concern that is located within rather than outside of the Slovak ethnic group. Many references allude to the danger of "disloyal" Slovaks.
- *The Hungarian minority.* The 1992 programs of the parties of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia express considerable concern about the rights of Hungarians within the Slovak Republic of the Czechoslovakia in the areas of language, education, territorial administration

and culture, but these same concerns did not emerge in detail in the programs of Slovak parties until 1994. In that year and again in 1998, the programs of many Slovak parties rivaled those of their Hungarian counterparts in the extent and vehemence with which they discussed questions of local and regional autonomy, language, education and culture, though Slovak parties almost never made specific mention of Hungarians.

Beyond these general statements, however, it is difficult to draw more detailed conclusions since emphasis in particular categories can show dramatic from election to election even within the programs of a single party.³ Furthermore the statements of parties only indirectly reflect the feelings of Slovaks, as parties attempt to guess at those feelings and incorporate them into their programs. The popular understanding of these issues, their relationship to one another and to party support form the basis of the next three sections.

Stabile opinions ...

Regular surveys of public opinion offer at least partial insight into the opinions of Slovaks on national the national issues discussed in the previous section. The insight remains partial because survey-takers face sharp restrictions on the number and type of questions they can ask/ The use of surveys to measure change over time also depends on the repetition of identical questions from one survey to the next. Furthermore, since surveys involve only a small percentage of the population, results may reflect the opinions of a unrepresentative sample of the population or of a brief but intense swing in public mood. Given these limitations, it is remarkable that surveys offer any help at all, but in fact the record of Slovak opinions during these periods is strikingly well-documented and, viewed over time it offers a compelling story that corresponds to and supplements other accounts of Slovak society during this same period. In general, overall opinion in Slovakia shifted little on any individual national issue, a point best made by examining survey results for each of the themes discussed above.

- *Slovak independence.* One of the most widely measured themes and yet one of the most difficult to interpret, views toward Slovakia's independence exhibit a period of sharp instability between 1992 and 1993 followed by a period of slow and steady shift in favor of

³ In part this may reflect questions of style and strategy apart from the salience of particular national issues. Over time the variation in the length and style of electoral programs has increased dramatically. In 1992 the electoral programs under study ranged from 105 to 376 sentences; in 1994 they ranged from 82 to 610 sentences; in 1998, they ranged from 310 to 1,965 sentences.

Slovakia's independence. The measurement is made particularly difficult by the absence of a single, standardized question. Figure 1 reports the results of five interpretations based on questions about Slovakia's independence. Before 1993, different questions yield apparently contradictory results. A January 1992 survey conducted by FOCUS shows only 13% of respondents supporting an independent state over other options, while a survey by the same company in September of the same year shows that more than 50% of likely participants in a referendum on Slovakia's independence would have voted in favor. The discrepancy can be resolved to some degree by Wolchik's argument that focusing solely on those who supported Slovakia's independence ignores the significant share of the population that sought some sort of change in the position of Slovakia within Czechoslovakia, many of whom might have chosen independence in a referendum if it had been offered as the only alternative to the status quo [Wolchik, 1994 #251, pp 178-179]. Accordingly, surveys conducted during this period by the Sociological Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences show a considerable increase in support for a "yes" vote on such a referendum. After 1993, however, the surveys show a high degree of both consistency and stability. In surveys conducted by both Central European University (CEU) and FOCUS, support Slovakia's independence begins in the neighborhood of 30% in early 1994 and rose by an average of four to five percentage points per year through 1999. The share of respondents who claim to have supported independence in 1992 also rose, but at a much slower pace, reinforcing the validity of the 30% figure for support of independence in 1992-1993.

- *International actors.* Most surveys regarding international actors show a significant degree of overall stability. Two survey questions in particular allow for a long-term assessment of changes in Slovakia's national climate: 1) "To what extent do you trust the European Union?" and "Should foreign firms have an open field for investment in this country?" Figure 2 presents the results obtained with these survey questions between 1990 and 1999, and shows a high degree of consistency. The range of average responses the EU question varies by less than ten percentage points over the decade and the trend-line for the results suggests a change of only slightly more than one-third of a percentage point per year. Results for trust in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) show an almost identical pattern. Questions of foreign investment show significantly greater annual change--in the direction of

less support for foreign investment--but the shifts level out by 1996 and remain stable thereafter.

- *Slovak identity.* How Slovaks feel about their own national history and identity is considerably more difficult to evaluate because of insufficient resources. Various surveys include questions about sources of national pride and shame but these are in most cases isolated occasions with no potential for time-series analysis. Three questions asked by Central European University surveys between 1992 and 1996 come closest to measuring such feelings: 1) Is nationalism always harmful? 2) When choosing a politician do you prefer a patriot to an expert? and 3) To what extent do you favor strengthening patriotism? As Figure 3 shows, responses changed sharply during 1992 but thereafter remained extremely stable. [A comparison of similarly phrased questions on sources of pride used on the 1995 ISSP survey and the 1997 FOCUS survey also shows considerable stability.]
- *The Hungarian minority.* Opinions regarding Slovakia's Hungarian minority show only moderate variation over time. A variety of surveys, but particularly those of FOCUS, provide a variety of potential measures of the feelings that ethnic Slovaks held toward the ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia. Unfortunately, however, many of the questions did not remain consistent from one survey period to the next. The question used most consistently during the 1990's asks "Would it bother you to have Hungarian neighbors?" As Figure 4 indicates, the level of "No" responses rose between 1993 and 1994 but remained fixed thereafter at approximately 80%. A responses series of other questions on Hungarian-related issues--bilingual street signs, the danger of Hungarian irredentism, the patriotism of Hungarians, the status of rights for Hungarians--confirm that this pattern of high stability over time extends beyond neighborliness. The same pattern appears in a more general question concerning whether "The majority should have the right to decide at the expense of the minority." Here too, the mean respondent in Slovakia supported minority rights at a level well above the mean, edging higher at an average rate of less than two percentage points per year.

Thus in the period after Slovakia's birth at the end of 1992, respondents on surveys conducted in the country exhibit a stable range of opinions on questions involving the European Union, patriotism and the Hungarian minority, and consistent--but small--movement in acceptance of an independent Slovakia, foreign investment and minority rights. The stability covers not only the

average score on these questions but also the distribution of responses that comprise those scores. Distribution, as measured by standard deviation, shows no consistent movement on any of the questions cited above over the full eight year period of FOCUS surveys, and nearly all exhibit the expected single-peak pattern.

... but changing configurations...

Although national-related opinions changed little in Slovakia during the 1990's, the configuration of opinions did exhibit significant changes over time. Although the themes discussed above share a common national focus, the relationships between opinions on questions related to these themes in 1992 were extremely weak, in many cases below the threshold of statistical significance. By 1999 the strength of these relationships had increased dramatically and two particular clusters of opinions had emerged as dominant.

Determining the strength of relationships among opinions over time makes even higher demands than the previously discussed search for trends. Not only must questions appear regularly, but they must appear regularly *together*. Questions asked repeatedly on FOCUS and CEU surveys allow for at least a glimpse at the connections among the opinions of Slovakia's citizens over an eight-year span. The lack of direct connection between the two surveys allows only partial conclusions, these are nevertheless quite revealing. Five questions asked repeatedly on FOCUS exams between early 1992 and early 1999 allow for a measurement of the relationship among three themes: Slovak independence ("Do you prefer an independent Slovakia?"), International actors ("Do you trust the European Union?", and "Should foreign investors have an open field?") and the Hungarian minority ("Would you mind a Hungarian neighbor?" and "Should the majority have the right to decide at the expense of minorities?"). Three questions asked repeatedly on CEU surveys allow for a rough measurement of the relationship between Slovak independence ("Do you oppose the separation of Czechoslovakia?") and Slovak identity ("In politics do you prefer a patriot to an expert?" and "Is nationalism always harmful?") Tables 3 and 4 present the correlation between responses on these issues for each available survey. On the FOCUS surveys, all ten of the correlations among the five questions show increases during the 1990's, and by 1999 all ten correlations were statistically significant at a level of $p > .01$. On the CEU surveys, all three of the correlations among the three questions show increases as well, though for one of the pairings the increase is a mere 5%.

Figure 5 provides a visual display of the relationships and the change in correlations among particular sets of opinions over the period under study.

A variety of methods also permit an assessment of internal consistency among responses on a large number of questions at the same time. Table 3 and 4 also shows the results of one of these tests--Cronbach's alpha--on the full set of five FOCUS questions and the full set of three CEU questions. The results for FOCUS show a strong consistent increase from near .30 in late 1993 and early 1994 to nearly .60 in early 1999. The same test on the CEU questions shows a similar rise from .33 in 1992 to .55 in late 1994 followed by a moderate drop to .45 in 1996.

By either of these measures, opinions on nation-related issues converged significantly between 1992 and 1999, but did the convergence hold any meaning? It is of course possible to find underlying principles for almost any set of questions, but in this case the rationale is immediately obvious. The emerging alignment on all five of the FOCUS questions obeyed a principle of either sympathy or antipathy for non-Slovaks. One emerging cluster rejected Czechs as neighbors within Czechoslovakia, Hungarians as neighbors within Slovakia, minorities as a protected category, openness to foreign investment or trust in the European Union. The CEU survey (particularly the broader, extended survey conducted in late 1994) suggests that those same sets of opinions became closely correlated with questions of patriotism. Opposite this cluster stood its mirror image, an increasingly coherent group whose members did not reject--and in some cases even welcomed--non-Slovak influences.

...and marked politicization

As the nation-related opinions of Slovakia's inhabitants became more coherent, they also became ever more closely linked to political party preference. In 1991 and 1992 only the supporters of certain small parties deviated noticeably from the population-as-a-whole on national questions. By 1999 the voting base of almost every major party fit easily into one of the two categories defined in the previous section. Certain parties continued to occupy niches that deviated from the overall pattern, but even these distinctions began to disappear over time as party supporters sorted themselves into two opposing camps.

The relationship between national themes and party support increased consistently on all four major themes identified above. The patterns become apparent both in the emergence of

Table 3. Correlations between responses on nation-related questions in Slovakia on FOCUS surveys, 1993-1999

Correlation	Oct-93	May-94	Dec-94	Dec-95	Jan-97	Jan-99
Trusts EU and Opposes Slovak Independence	0.061	0.041	0.118**	0.161**	-	0.181**
Trusts EU and Pro-Foreign-Investment	0.245**	0.229**	0.341**	0.348**	0.406**	0.397**
Trusts EU and Pro-Majority Rights	0.122**	0.100**	0.183**	0.276**	0.354**	0.331**
Trusts EU and Accepts Hungarian Neighbors	0.083*	0.058*	0.152**	0.082**	0.243**	0.173**
Pro-Foreign-Investment and Opposes Slovak Independence	0.046	0.065**	0.058*	0.125**	-	0.097**
Pro-Foreign-Investment and Pro-Majority Rights	0.022	0.061**	0.105**	0.137**	0.206**	0.256**
Pro-Foreign-Investment and Accepts Hungarian Neighbors	0.068*	0.06**	0.147**	0.051	0.105**	0.113**
Pro-Majority Rights and Opposes Slovak Independence	0.209**	0.191**	0.233**	0.265**	-	0.238**
Accepts Hungarian Neighbors and Pro-Majority Rights	0.202**	0.190**	0.191**	0.217**	0.244**	0.258**
Accepts Hungarian Neighbors and Opposes Slovak Independence	0.163**	0.200**	0.136**	0.203**	-	0.177**
Cronbach's Alpha for 5 variable set	0.35	0.33	0.45	0.48	-	0.59

Table 4. Correlations between responses on nation-related questions in Slovakia on CEU surveys, 1992-1996

Correlation	Jun-92	Oct-93	Nov-94	Jan-96
Prefers Expert to Patriot and Thinks Nationalism bad	0.12	0.13	0.27	0.21
Opposes Slovak Independence and Thinks Nationalism Bad	0.23	0.25	0.36	0.21
Prefers Expert to Patriot and Opposes Slovak Independence	0.06	0.15	0.22	0.21
Cronbach's Alpha for 3 variable set	0.33	0.40	0.55	0.45

differences among individual parties' supporters and in the relationship between nation-related opinions and individuals' sympathy for parties:

- *Slovak independence.* Of the four main national themes, Slovakia's independence was the first to exhibit a strong relationship to political party support. Nevertheless, changes in the composition of certain major parties produced a further politicization of the issue during 1992 and 1993. Figure 5 shows the mean scores of the supporters of each major party on three related questions concerning Slovakia's independence. With only one minor exception, the degree of support for an independent Slovakia follows the same pattern in every survey, but the distances between parties change in significant ways. Two parties occupied stable positions at opposite ends of the political spectrum during the entire period: supporters of the Hungarian Coalition (MK) parties prove consistently to be the least favorably disposed toward an independent Slovakia, while supporters of the Slovak National Party (SNS) expressed consistently high support for independence. Between these but considerably near to the Hungarian Coalition stood a cluster of four parties: the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), the Party of the Democratic Left (SDP), the Democratic Union (DU) and the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS). Support for Slovakia's independence among these voters remained stable over the period under study. Only supporters of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) exhibited significant change over time, gradually shifting from a position at the center of the opinion scale to a pro-independence position that ultimately rivaled that of SNS. This same pattern also appears on responses to questions on whether respondents preferred--in the present tense--independent Slovak statehood to other alternatives.

The relationship between party support is apparent not only in the distinct profiles of party supporters on the issue but also in the relationship between individuals' support for separation and their sympathy or antipathy toward particular parties. Figure 6 shows the levels of correlation between parties and questions about Slovakia's independence on both CEU and FOCUS surveys. As the table indicates, ...

- *International actors.* As with the question of Slovakia's independence, the array of party supporters' opinions toward western integration and international organizations widened significantly during the 1990s. Unlike opinions toward independence, opinions toward these other international actors among party supporters did not begin to crystalize until

considerably later and involved several key reversals in relative position. Figure 7 shows the mean positions of party supporters relative to the population mean on questions about the EU that were asked in separate surveys by separate firms.⁴ For the Slovak National Party (SNS), early positions near the population mean gave way in 1994 to a sharp increase in distrust and negative feeling toward the EU. Surveys also show a trend of increasing opposition to the EU among supporters of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), though two key surveys differ significantly in the magnitude of the change over time. Supporters of the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS) in both polls show an initial antipathy toward the EU which rises gradually over time. Other party supporters moved in the opposite direction. Supporters of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and the Democratic Union (DU) show moderate support for the EU in 1993 and 1994 that rose to much higher levels in 1995 and 1996. Only Hungarian party supporters demonstrated a consistently high level of support for the EU, but their support rose even further during the second half of the 1990's. Whereas the movements of all of these parties represents an intensification of their initial position, the position of supporters of the Party of the Democratic Left (SDP) slashes across Figure 7 from a position of sharp opposition to the EU in 1992 toward moderate support of the Union by 1999. Questions concerning NATO yield almost identical patterns among supporters with notable the exception of SDP, whose supporters did not warm to NATO as they did to the EU.

Questions of foreign investment show signs of even greater changes over time, though the resulting pattern, displayed in Figure 8, bears a striking resemblance to results on EU questions. The two sets of surveys asking whether foreign firms should have an open field of operation in our country show several important shifts including a gradual but almost unbroken shift in SDP voters from relatively strong disapproval toward foreign investment toward the population mean and a shift in KDH voters from marginal disapproval toward foreign investment to strong support relative to the population mean. At the same time, supporters of both SNS and HZDS shifted from positions near or above the population mean of support for foreign investment to positions well below the mean, with much of the change

⁴The first question asked about respondents' 'Trust in the EU' while the second asked respondents whether their impressions of the EU were "positive," "negative," or "neutral." Despite their different formulations, the two questions produce nearly identical results in the case of most parties and show distinct trends.

coming abruptly during and after 1994.⁵ By the 1997 the question of foreign investment produced the same set of relative positions among parties that had emerged earlier on questions of Slovakia's independence and integration, except to the extent that supporters of HZDS rather than those of SNS were most extreme in their opposition to foreign firms, and that the supporters of SD´ did not on balance express support for foreign investment until the 1999.

On questions of integration and investment the broad correlations between opinion and support for parties exhibit similar patterns. Between 1994 and 1997, survey respondents who opposed integration and foreign investment became sharply more likely to express support for HZDS, SNS and the small Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS) and sharply less likely to support KDH, DU or the Hungarian Coalition. By 1997, only SD´ lacked sharp correlation between party support and opinions on integration and investment issues; by 1999 the correlations placed SD´ near the other pro-integration parties.

- *Slovak identity.* Few public opinion survey questions speak directly to the topic of national feeling, but the few questions that are available provide at least a rough approximation. Particularly relevant are two questions on patriotism asked in surveys conducted by Central European University (CEU) between 1992 and 1996. Figure 9 shows the mean responses of party supporters measured against the population mean to the statement: “The government should strengthen patriotism (*vlastenectvo*).” The results show the degree to which even relatively neutral concepts such as patriotism have taken on over time in the Slovak political system. From a relatively narrow distribution among Slovak parties in 1992, the extent of the gap between Slovak parties more than doubles over the four year period and exhibits the same clustering found in other questions on national issues. Virtually identical and even more pronounced patterns emerge on a more nuanced question asking respondents to state whether they prefer “a strong patriot (*vlastenec*) to an expert” when choosing among politicians.
- *The Hungarian minority.* Responses on questions related to Slovakia's Hungarian minority display similar patterns to questions based on Slovak identity or the split of Czechoslovakia, but the positions of Hungarian party supporters differ significantly from even the most

⁵FOCUS surveys show a shift among supporters of Hungarian parties from strong support for foreign investment toward more marginal levels of support. This trend is apparent only in the surveys by FOCUS, however, and the other surveys do not include a sufficiently large number of Hungarian party supporters to support these results.

sympathetic supporters of Slovak parties. Figure 10 tracks the mean position of party supporters on the broad question of whether majorities have an absolute right to decide or whether minorities should retain certain fundamental protections. Changes in the phrasing of the question between the first and second surveys suggest caution in the interpretation of the early period shown on the results, but beginning in 1993 the mean positions of party supporters show a clear and stable distinction: supporters of Hungarian parties support minority rights by an overwhelming margin and form a stable extreme, while supporters of the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) stand at the opposite extreme and directly between the two stand supporters of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), the Democratic Union (DU), and the Party of the Democratic Left (SDĽ). Almost identical results appear on questions concerning the desirability of street signs in the Hungarian language, the dangers of Hungarian irredentism, the patriotism of Hungarians, and their position within Slovakia's society. Although changes in these positions were not as regular or easily discernable as with questions on the EU or foreign investment, certain trends do emerge: the Hungarian parties remained consistently at the outer extreme of possible pro-Hungarian responses; SNS and HZDS moved consistently further from the mean toward the other extreme, especially between 1994 and 1995; and SDĽ, DU and KDH made a similar but even more significant shift away from the mean in the direction of the Hungarian parties, though the gap remained quite large even as late as 1999. The same trifold division emerges in correlations between the same sets of issues and each respondent's feelings toward each major party. Respondents who support majority rights, oppose Hungarian-language signs and neighbors and fear Hungarian irredentism tend to be the same respondents who have warm feelings toward HZDS and SNS. Those with less antagonistic views toward Hungarians (including Hungarians themselves) look more kindly on KDH, DU, SDĽ and, to an even greater degree, the Hungarian Coalition.

Together, the positions of party supporters in these four areas produce a picture of realignment that is essential for understanding political developments in Slovakia during the 1990's. Though the overall responses on these questions changed little, configurations of opinion among party supporters changed dramatically. Figure 11. Depicts each major party's supporters' positions on four representative questions as found by surveys conducted in 1992-1993 and in 1996-1999. In the figure a symmetrical diamond pattern represents equal intensity of feeling on all four issues;

a large diamond represents greater intensity of feeling than a small one. Figure 11a. shows supporters of the Slovak National party to hold strong feelings on questions representing all four themes, a set of positions that changed little over time. Figure 11b shows a similar pattern of high intensity for HZDS, with likewise low levels of change except for the striking increase of distrust toward the European Union. At the other extreme, Hungarian Coalition supporters showed minimal support for any of the views that comprise the figure and moved little. Supporters of SD´ and KDH (later incorporated into the broader Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)) both stand between SNS-HZDS and the Hungarian Coalition on all four axes and show signs of movement show more signs of movement in the direction of. For KDH/SDK the shifts occur relatively evenly on questions related to all four major themes. For SD´ the shift is less dramatic in the areas of Slovakia's independence and minority rights, but significant in the areas of trust in the European Union and, to a lesser degree, patriotism. Figures 12 and 13 array the parties together on the same axes for 1992-1993 and 1996-1999 and a comparison of the two shows the full magnitude of the change. Whereas relative positions in 1992-1993 show little coherent pattern of shape or relative position, the positions in 1996-1999 more closely resemble concentric, symmetrical diamonds, with an outer ring of HZDS and SNS separated by a considerable margin from an inner ring of SD´, SDK and MK at the center. The relative positions of these three party formations deserve closer consideration. As Figure 13 shows, four different issues produce three configurations: on questions of minority rights and Slovakia's independence, SD´ and SDK supporters resemble one another more than they resemble Hungarian voters; on questions of international actors, the it is SDK and Hungarian coalition voters who stand closely together while SD´ voters show less enthusiasm (though not as little as they did in the 1992-1993 period). Only on questions of increasing patriotism do the supporters of the three parties hold nearly identical views. As the following section shows, these two sets of conflicts--the bi-polar opposition of HZDS-SNS and SD´-SDK-MK and the internal tensions on national questions that characterize the relationships between supporters of SD´, SDK and MK--played a critical role in shaping Slovakia's politics during the 1990's.

Conclusions

The emergence of increasingly coherent views on national questions and the ever stronger relationship between nation-related opinions and political parties are intimately bound

up with Slovakia's turbulent political development in the 1990's. The two concentric diamonds of Figure 13 correspond directly to differences between coalition and opposition parties between 1991 and the present and to inclinations of party supporters toward the use of authority. The coincidence of these two sets of attitudes raises important questions about their causal relationship. Experience with fascism and particular with Germany's National Socialism has yielded an oft-repeated assumption that nationalism causes authoritarianism. More recent experience of post-Communist transitions, especially in Yugoslavia, blames authoritarian leaders for inflaming national sentiments for political gain. The experience of Slovakia suggests that the dynamics can be far more complicated, since the parameters of what could be considered "national" changed significantly over time in the ways discussed above. A brief look at the chronology of developments in Slovakia offers insight into possible causal relationships. The available evidence tentatively suggests that the sharpened profiles and increased politicization of national issues described above occurred more as the result of authoritarian efforts among certain Slovak elites than as cause, but that the existence of unresolved national issues—particularly Hungarian issues—provided crucial raw materials for the appeals of authoritarian politicians.

Opposition politicians expressed fears of authoritarianism in Slovakia as early as the 1992 election of a HZDS-dominated government led by Vladimir Meciar, but Meciar's government did not begin to use its power to attack foes in public life until late 1993 at the earliest and it did not begin its attacks in earnest until the fall of 1994. Nor were the attitudes of Meciar's supporters markedly authoritarian in 1992. These began to change slowly between 1992 and 1994 but did not begin a marked increase until a vote of no confidence removed Meciar and his party from government. After a drop from this initial spike, levels of support among HZDS supporters for "firm hand leadership" rose steadily through 1997 and dropped only slightly in the period after HZDS's 1998 electoral defeat.

The emergence of the Slovakia's independence as an important differentiating characteristic among party supporters predates the emergence of authority differences between HZDS and the rest of the population. In fact, early supporters of HZDS, while generally favorable to a revision of Slovakia's status within Czechoslovakia, were not deeply committed to Slovakia's independence. Between January and September of 1992, support for independence among the party's supporters increased far more dramatically than for the population as a whole, and survey evidence suggests that much of this change came only *after* the Meciar had reached

agreement on separation with his Czech counterpart Vaclav Klaus. Those who claimed to have voted for HZDS in June 1992 held significantly less favorable opinions about the split than those who supported the party in September.

Mass opinion lagged behind elite changes in other ways as well. During the early years of Slovakia's independence, HZDS and SNS showed a willingness to seek political gain by labeling their opponents as anti-Slovak, and by 1994 these efforts had developed into an explicit strategy of justifying authoritarian political strategies as necessary to protect Slovakia from other political forces who would sacrifice Slovakia's statehood for their own political gain. Along with independence, HZDS and its allies also began to emphasize questions of identity and patriotism and threats from non-Slovaks. Parties differed in their opinions toward Hungarians and minority rights from the earliest surveys, but these differences became increasingly intense and became increasingly tied to questions of authority, especially as Slovakia's independence reduced the tensions involved in the Slovak-Czech relationship. After independence both HZDS and SNS experienced considerable internal tensions regarding the threats posed by Hungarians and others. Factions in both parties suggested a moderation of national appeals and focus on other issues. By early 1994 these factions had failed left their respective parties and the leadership of both HZDS and SNS took increasingly sharp positions against perceived threats from Hungarians and other sources. By late 1994 the targets included foreign investors and agents of international integration such as the European Union and the United States, who found themselves accused of seeking to undermine Slovakia's statehood and take advantage of its citizens. The nature and timing of the criticism, however, suggest strong ulterior motives on the part of SNS and HZDS: by late 1994 European and American diplomats had begun to criticize the HZDS-led government for attempting to silence opponents; and the HZDS-led government had begun a process of selling key industrial assets to political allies rather than potential outside investors.

A brief lag between the pronouncements of leaders and the response of party supporters is apparent in many of the figures presented above. The views of HZDS voters toward Hungarian neighbors between 1992 and 1994 (though there is little evidence in the interim to suggest any major changes during that time period). The views of HZDS voters toward the rights of the majority over those of the minority show an even clear pattern, remaining stable between 1992 and mid-1994 and then increasing significantly in the period thereafter. The same

pattern emerges for questions of integration and foreign investment, though not beginning until 1995.

The actions of party elites in HZDS and SNS produced a nearly equal and opposite reaction among elites and supporters of other parties. Supporters of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), the Democratic Union (DU) and the Hungarian Coalition parties moved in the opposite direction from those of HZDS and SNS, creating the mirror image effect apparent in Figures 6 through 10 above. As the HZDS-led coalition's authoritarian actions and national appeals became increasingly intertwined, supporters of opposition parties became increasingly likely to endorse minority rights and to accept Hungarian neighbors. Supporters of both Slovak and Hungarian opposition parties also looked increasingly favorably on the European Union and foreign investors as potential help in their political struggles with the Meciar government. It is thus change on the part of opposition party supporters as well as coalition party supporters that explains the increasingly strong correlation between feelings toward HZDS and feelings toward a variety of nation-related issues.

The crystallization and politicization of Slovakia's bipolar split on national issues did not appear from nowhere—rival positions had clear roots in Slovakia's history and these became represented to some degree even in the early developments in Slovakia's politics—but they did increase dramatically as certain parties sought to use them for political advantage. As I argue elsewhere, the HZDS-led coalition deliberately raised national issues and attempted to link questions of independence with those of identity, investment, integration and irredentism into a coherent whole. Slovakia's opposition parties thus became, according to coalition rhetoric, willing accomplices in combined effort by Czechs, Hungarians, Americans and Europeans to destroy Slovakia's statehood and identity and exploit its citizens. In the struggle against such an enemy, the HZDS-led coalition could dismiss accusations of authoritarianism as foreign propaganda even as they justified other authoritarian actions as the simple price of independence. For many the arguments were a compelling ones, and they succeeded in attracting some voters and holding many others. But it seems that the efforts went too far. The results of the 1998 election suggest that the ever tighter focus on the struggle against traitors left little room for those with moderate national feelings, many of whom migrated to other parties and thereby prevented HZDS and its allies from returning to government.