

**CENTRAL EUROPEAN
POLITICAL SCIENCE
REVIEW**

**2018
Summer**

Quarterly of Central European Political Science Alliance

**Volume: 19
Number: 72**

CONTENTS

Introduction	11
---------------------	----

NEW CHALLENGES

Grigorij Mesežnikov: Achievements and Problems of Slovakia's Democratic Transition: Reflection by Public	15
Americo Saldivar: Mexico's Troubles and its long Road to Democracy	53
Julia Isabel Flores: The Processes of Legal Socialization in Mexico - Ethics and Social Behaviour of Children and Adolescents	63
Lia Maria Pop: Romani's bridge position – About the Romani's minority language	87
György Csepeli: The Making of the European Identity	95
János Kávássy: From Beacon of Democracy to Imperium Incorporated – The Contrast of US Involvement in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East	111
Tamás Bakó: Difficulties of Serbian Local Governments - The causes of operational and financial difficulties of Serbian local governments, and possible solutions of problems	129
Anita Faust: V4: The Geopolitics of Shared Interests	147
Csaba Káncz: Escalating Tension between the United States and Russia in the Northern Atlantic	165
Juan Rodolfo Rivera Pacheco: The Mexican Election	171

Reports and Conferences

Inauguration of John Harsanyi Research Center	177
Introduction of JHRC – Budapest - Hungary	189
X. Roma Life – International Docfilm Fest	191
XI. Roma Life – International Docfilm Fest	195
World Refugee Day	199

Book Reviews

Pál Koudela's book - by Alessandro Marengo	203
--	-----

Abstracts	211
------------------	-----

About the Authors	217
--------------------------	-----

Introduction

The Central European Political Science Review Volume 19. Number 72

It is our pleasure to present to our honored readers the **Vol. 19, No. 72 of Central European Political Science Review**. The title of **No. 72 of CEPSR** is: **NEW CHALLENGES**.

The current issue contains some chapters from the Great International Conference of John C. Harsányi. The Memorable Conference took place in the city of Budapest on the 1st of June 2018, organized by the new founded John. Harsanyi Reserch Center. Scientists from ten countries came together to pay homage to John Harsanyi who obtained the Economics Nobel Prize in 1994, together with John Nash and Reinhard Selten. His research approche was complex among othrs, in the field of economics, political science, international relation, law, philosophy, ethics, mathematics, or computer science is well-know. Most importantly his contribution to game theory, resulted in a fundamental shift in social sciences. The conference was not only a tribute to him but also a recognition of his achievements. At the Memprial Conference of John Harsanyi was presented papers about the different dimensions of the dictatorships, the democracies, the transition to democracy, the freedom fight and the successful regime changes. It positions into a different aspect the issue of national sovereignty, as well as the realist political approach and super powers' games.

The issue **No. 72 of CEPSR** containe short cersion of 4 chapter from John Harsanyi Memorable Conference (about Slovakia, Mexico and Romany population).

One of the main goals of the editorial board of **Central European Political Science Review** is to make it available to the broadest circle of readers from among experts and

persons with a serious interest in the issues of the unique space of Central Europe, from the different perspective of international relations, history, political science, sociology, anthropology and art-sociology, respectively. The main reason for publishing the Central European Political Science Review is to serve and to enhance Central Europe, to broaden and to spread the thoughts of Central Europeanism, and Europeanism.

We suggest you to read our web-site and contact our assistant if you have a paper, report or book review for **CEPSR** or any questions:

kossuth.borbala@gmail.com

marengo.alessandro@kodo.hu

János Simon
Editor-in-chief

Grigorij Mesežnikov

**Achievements and Problems of Slovakia's
Democratic Transition:
Reflection by Public**

1. Introduction: Slovakia's way of transformation

Slovak Republic is regarded as a remarkable example of democratic transition. Alongside with other Central European countries, Slovakia successfully carried out a process of wide social transformation. It passed through political transition from Communist authoritarianism to freedom, pluralism and democracy. It developed the functional liberal-democratic model and implemented the profound society's reforms. Being a country with the open market economy, Slovakia enjoys benefits from its full integration into the European Union. All achievements of democratic transformation are secured thanks to country's membership in NATO.

The overall country's socio-economic and political development has, of course, its public dimension. It is important to know how citizens perceive the general society's development, current politics, to what extent they are satisfied with social conditions of their life, how they understand democracy, what is their support for democratic norms and values, market economy and mechanisms of its functioning, the role of the state and its policies in particular areas as well as support for foreign policy and external security options and views on membership in integration groupings. No less important factor is how people perceive the role of different society's actors (NGOs, media, churches), what is majority population's attitude to different minority groups.

Sociological agencies and academic research institutions, including Institute for Public Affairs (IVO), monitor

and analyze public opinion in Slovakia on regular basis. Based on conducted surveys we can draw conclusions about main trends in population's reflection of transformation processes and the current state of society.

In this paper we focus on three basic areas – economy, political democracy and foreign policy – combining description of reform efforts during the transition and their outputs with analysis of findings from the representative opinion polls showing population's attitude to characteristics of current social order and political regime, perception of ongoing trends and views on relevant societal issues.

1.Economy: reforms, achievements, social impact

Economic transformation in Slovakia after 1989 resulted into creation of functional market economy fully integrated into European common market and international system of division of labor. The principle changes had place in Slovak industry's structure, ownership, shares of particular sectors (private, public) on GDP, regional distribution of producing facilities, size and location of foreign investments, external trade orientation etc.

As a result of economic transition the private sector produces more than 90% of country's GDP. In 2016 Slovakia's GDP per capita in purchase parity standard was 77% of the EU average (in 2005 it constituted 60% of the EU average).¹ According to the OECD statistics, in 2017 Slovakia's GDP per capita reached 32.119 USD.² The average nominal monthly salary in 2017 was 954 euro.³ Gini coefficient of income inequality in 2017 was 0,25.

Giving up the legacy of communist militarized economy, after successful process of conversion of defense industry, Slovakia became No.1 producer of cars per 1.000 inhabitants in the world with 192 pieces ahead of Czech Republic (127 pieces), South Korea (76 pieces) and Germany (71 pieces).

In 2017 1 040 000 cars have been produced in Slovakia by three companies (Volkswagen, Peugeot-Citroen and Kia-Hyundai; the fourth producer – Jaguar Land Rover – will start its operation in Slovakia in 2018 with the expected output of 300 000 cars per year).⁴

As far as external economic relations are concerned, 86.6% of the overall Slovakia's export went to EU-member-states and 65.9% of Slovakia's overall import was coming from the EU-member-states (March 2018)⁵. Only 1.99% of Slovakia's export went to Russia and 4.04% of Slovakia's import was coming from Russia (2016).⁶

Principle changes in economy have influenced the general social status of large parts of the population and as a result they shaped the public perception of the whole transformation process, attitude to main characteristics of national economy and social system, political preferences and voting behavior of people. Economic reforms created favorable conditions for improvement of everyday material life of citizens, for higher and qualitatively better consumption, however, the impact of liberal socio-economic reforms was uneven to different categories of people. The main beneficiaries at the beginning phase of economic transformation were relatively tiny groups of people, close or politically loyal to national-populist parties who used their "clientelistic" links to the ruling establishment for active participation in initial stage of privatization. As soon as the process of economic liberalization was taking more systematic character being based on efforts to incorporate the economic reforms into broader attempts to form the liberal democratic regime and to reach membership in European Union, the share of beneficiaries obviously widened and embraced masses of population. However some groups marked by some disadvantages (residence in the remote areas with insufficient infrastructure and lack of job opportunity, lower level of education, obsolete

professional skills, older age etc.) were not prepared to efficiently use the benefits emanated by the transformation.

Although these categories of people tolerated the fact of uneven distribution of the benefits from the transformation from the point of view of their social behavior and no social unrest or other examples of active resistance against the systemic changes were observed, political preferences of some part of these categories of citizens shifted to anti-systemic or even extremist forces.

What is Slovakia's population's attitude to market economy and capitalism?

The picture is not whatsoever rosy and cloudless. Quite the opposite: despite undeniable success of economic reforms and general efficiency of market economy which improved country's status and increased the living standard of people, according to sociological survey conducted by EBRD in 2016, support for market economy among Slovak citizens decreased from 35 % in 2010 to 29% in 2016. 35% of respondents believe that a planned economy might be preferable to a market-based one. 36% of interviewed Slovaks believe that "for people like me, it does not matter" which economic system is in place (see graph 1).⁷

Graph 1. Preference of market economy



▼ Transition region 2016

▼ Western Europe 2016

Source: EBRD, 2016.

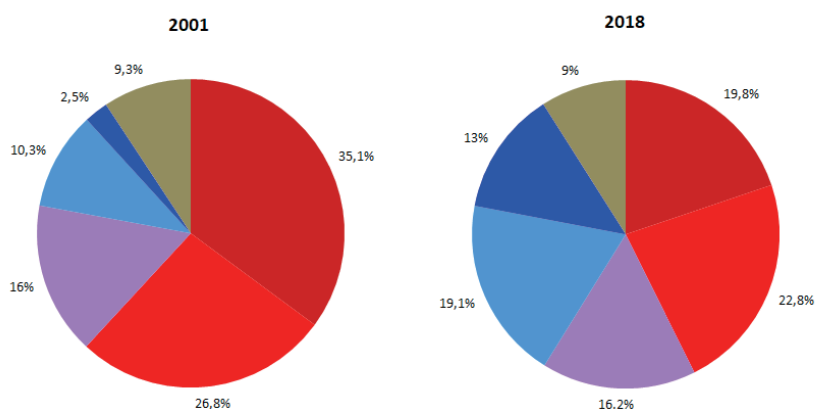
According to opinion poll conducted by FOCUS agency for Conservative Institute in April 2018, 31.4% of Slovak respondents preferred economy of free market with minimal state interventions, 38.6 % preferred the “social market economy in which the state substantially influence the economy” and 17.3 % preferred “the socialist economy which existed before 1989”.⁸

Capitalism as a social system did not enjoy positive attitude among people (albeit it needs to take into account the negative connotation of this term inherited by large part

of the population from times of communist propaganda). Socio-political nostalgia is still present in views of people. According to opinion poll conducted by Institute of Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in 2014, only 7.8% of respondents thought that capitalism is the “best social system for protection of human dignity”. 15.6% of respondents thought that socialism is the best system for such protection, however, the biggest share of respondents – 51.0% – thought that the best protector would be the mixed system (“something in between capitalism and socialism”).⁹

Nostalgia to the past is still influencing views of people on state of society and its development. According to results of survey conducted by FOCUS agency for M.R. Štefánik’s Conservative Institute in April 2018, life of people before radical changes in November 1989 was considered as better than life today by 42.6% of respondents; life before and after 1989 was the same according to 16.2% of respondents. According to 32.1% life was worse before 1989 than today; 9.0% did not answer (for comparison – in 2001 the share of people with nostalgia to Communist past was dominating – 61.9%) (see graph 2).¹⁰

Graph 2. Comparison of life before and after 1989



Life was much better before 1989

Life was a little better before 1989

Life was/is the same before and after 1989

Life is a little better after 1989

Life is much better after 1989

Do not know

Source: FOCUS, 2018.

Public support for idea of strong social policy and citizens' expectations of active role of the state regulating the basic social characteristics of society are high. According to ISSP (International Social Survey Programme)/CSES (Comparative Study of Electoral Systems) opinion poll conducted in 2016, 72.2% of respondents in Slovakia agreed with the statement that government should make decisions to reduce differences between people in income (7.1% of respondents disagreed with this statement and 17.3% neither denied nor supported the statement). Population's inclinations to active role of the state in economy and strong state social policy can be clearly seen in respondents' views on responsibilities of the government. According to the quoted survey, "it is responsibility of the government" to regulate the

prices (according to 84.6% of respondent), to help industry to develop (according to 89.8%), to reduce differences in income between rich and poor people (according to 83.8%), to provide good living standard for elderly people (according to 96.0%), to provide health care for sick people (according to 97.1%) and to secure job for everybody who wants to work (according to 90.6%).¹¹

2. Politics and democracy: institutional consolidation, human rights, minorities, civil society, media

After 1993, when Slovakia proclaimed its independence, Slovak Republic has passed the way of development typical for newly created state. An institutional model has been established which is favorable for adequate representation of the interests of various social groups. Based on the constitution, approved in September 1992, the system of institutions of legislative, executive and judicial branches of power was formed. Slovak Republic is a state with parliamentary form of the government, triple division of power (legislative, executive, judicial), standard system of checks and balances, efficient mechanism of protection of human and minority rights and multiparty system.

After gaining the independence in 1993, Slovakia, however, has undergone turbulent internal developments. The transformation process was anything but linear. During almost three decades Slovakia was (and still it is) an arena of sharp political competition between advocates of liberal democratic values and supporters of authoritarian approaches, between carriers of different concepts of social changes resulting into their rotation in power.

Generally, the country's institutional system during the transformation was functional; however, the compliance of its functionality and efficiency with the cornerstone principles of democracy and rule of law depended on variety

of factors. These factors included the prevailing trends in domestic political development, proportion of forces between main political actors, the internal character and ideological background of political parties that operated in power, the state of political and legal culture, and last but not least personal behavioral characteristics of individual politicians.

During the transformation, including the period after country's accession to the EU, there were discrepancies between formal and informal rules that formed the institutional environment and shaped politicians' behavior. Perhaps the most serious problem was the discrepancy between the established institutional foundations of country's political system and the way of executing power. Although Slovakia's political system is based on a consensual model of democracy and governments that implemented majoritarian model of governance at the end have been unable to change the basic institutional fundamentals and the principles of constitutional liberalism were relatively firmly anchored (largely due to a successful process of democratic consolidation after 1998 and membership in the EU since 2004), execution of power has drifted away from the consensual model of democracy on account of certain behavioral characteristics of dominant political players – authoritarian inclinations, clientelistic practices, populist appeal, ethnic nationalism.

Almost three decade of democratization and democratic development affected views of Slovak citizens on democracy. People could define them on the base of their practical experience taking into account achievements and deficiencies. Long-term persisting patterns of political culture, socio-cultural preferences and historic consciousness of the population influenced the process of formation of people's opinions too.

According to opinion poll conducted in 2017 the support for liberal democracy among Slovak citizens outweighs (60.0% of respondents), however, with visible inclinations to necessity to strengthen the institutes of direct democracy, for example, referenda (58.2% of respondents), that indicates the persisting lack of confidence to standard institutions of representative democracy (only 35.6% of respondents thought that deputies of parliament elected by people should decide about important things).

Popular support for governance of the “strong hand” is not insignificant: 32,4% of respondents – although a minority, but quite considerable – opted in the survey for such political system that at the expense of removing some civil liberties and concentrating power in the hands of strong leader would secure order in the country (see table 1).¹²

Table 1. Support for democracy

	Agreed (%)
a. For Slovakia would be the best to develop and further improve liberal democracy	60
b. For Slovakia would be the best to introduce such political system that at the expense of removing some civil liberties and concentrating power in the hands of strong leader would secure order in the country	32
a. Decision-making through direct democracy should be applied as much as possible; citizens should decide in referendum	58
b. Deputies of parliament elected by people should decide about important things	36

Source: FOCUS, 2016.

Views of population on the general direction of society's development serve as symptomatic indicator of people's attitude to state of affairs in particular sectors (economy, social policy), to outputs of practical measures implemented by executive power, however influenced by situational feelings generated by variety of specific factors (for instance ideological and value preferences, positions of political parties in power etc.). In June 2016, three months after the last parliamentary elections, social pessimism clearly prevailed among Slovaks: only 34% of respondents thought that society is heading in right direction while 62% were convinced that is going in bad direction.¹³ Although such results could be influenced by dissatisfaction of part of the voters with election outputs and unusual composition of new ruling coalition, formed after the elections, pessimism in perception of society's development is long-term trend in Slovakia with rather deviations. Usually, the most pessimistic are supporters of those parties which are operating in opposition as well as people with lower interest about politics.

The sources of general dissatisfaction with direction of country's development can be identified in respondents' perception of existing societal problems. The hierarchy in salience of particular problem is more than telling: 88% of respondents are worried by corruption, clientelism and thievery of public assets, 86% by low level of health care, 75% by possibility of arrival of bigger number of migrants, 69% by the unsolved problems in the regions of respondents' residence, 69% by backwardness of domestic school system, 68% by growing influence of extremists and 66% by persisting problems in coexistence of Roma and non-Roma citizens (see table 2).¹⁴

Table 2. Pressing problems

	Worried	Not worried	Do not know/ problem does not exist
Corruption, clientelism and thievery of public assets	88	9	3
Low level of health care	86	10	4
Possibility of arrival of bigger number of migrants to the country	75	19	6
Unsolved problems in respondents' regions	69	21	10
Backwardness of domestic school system	69	21	10
Growing influence of extremists	68	21	11
Persisting problems in coexistence of Roma and non-Roma	66	25	9
Difficulties of the EU in handling with current crises	65	27	8
Spreading of hatred, intolerance and conspiracy theories through social networks	54	27	19
Power expansionism of Putin's Russia	31	42	27

Source: Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)/FOCUS, 2016.

Sociological surveys revealed the low level of overall confidence among people in Slovakia also symptomatic phenomenon. In 2016, only 17% of respondents indicated that

most people can be trusted, while 81% felt the necessity to be cautious.¹⁵

Without further elaboration which would help to identify the deeper historical, socio-cultural and psychological roots of such low level of mutual trust among people in Slovakia we can argue that phenomenon of general distrust corresponds to prevailing low level of trust to political and state institutions. Around two-thirds of the population distrust to three branches of power: the government (63%), the parliament (62%) and the judiciary (67%). Political parties, the immediate actors of representative democracy, are untrustworthy for almost three fourths of citizens (71%).

An exception is position of the head of the state (incumbent president Andrej Kiska was elected in 2014 as an independent, non-partisan candidate) which enjoyed trust of two thirds of citizens (66%). Local self-governments are trustworthy for 60% of people. Another (and the last) institution which enjoy trust of citizens (though not majority) is ombudsman for human rights – 46% of citizens trust to this institution (43% distrust to it). Close to trust to ombudsman is trust to NGOs (45% : 46%). Lower level of trust than of distrusts was encountered by police (45% : 53%), trade unions (42% : 49%) and churches (42% : 53%) (see table 3).¹⁶

Table 3. Trust to institutions

	Trust (%)	Distrust (%)
President	66	32
Local self-government	60	38
NGOs	45	46
Police	45	53
Trade unions	42	49
Parliament	35	62
Government	35	63
Judiciary, courts	29	67
Political parties	26	71

Source: Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)/FOCUS, 2016.

Critical attitude to political institutions is boosted *inter alia* by anti-establishment sentiment of people based on persuasion that politicians do not serve to society, country or other people, but exclusively to themselves. Antiestablishment feelings, the natural reservoir for populist political forces, are usually supportive for spreading the conspiratorial way of thinking. There are three broader factors which contribute today to formation of favorable conditions for disseminating the conspiracy ideas and discourse in Slovakia:

- general radicalization of public and political life resulted into penetration of right-wing extremist political forces with conspiratorial credo into the mainstream politics,
- waves of conspiracy theories and hoaxes rolling into the country from outside (mostly from Russia) that find in the country receptive audience and committed multipliers,
- online information sources and social networks serve as efficient channels for dissemination of conspiracy contents.

Results of representative opinion polls show inclinations of considerable (sometimes even prevailing) part of the population to conspiratorial perception of reality. In representative survey conducted by IVO/FOCUS agency in 2017, 61.0% of respondents agreed with the statement: “Reality is mostly different than it is presented; the powerful secret groups govern the world in accordance with the secret plans”, while the statement “World is a complex, however we know substantial things about important events” was endorsed only by 34.2% of respondents (see table 4).

Table 4. Conspiratorial views on the world

Statement A	Agree (%)
World is a complex, however we know substantial things about important events	34
Statement B	Agree (%)
Reality is mostly different than it is presented; the powerful secret groups govern the world in accordance with the secret plans	61

Source: Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)/FOCUS, 2017.

Previously conducted surveys showed visible inclination of Slovaks to conspiratorial views on domestic political developments too (see table 5).

Table 5. “Actually, it is not the government that runs the country: we don’t know who pulls the strings” (%)

Agree strongly	20	63
Tend to agree	43	
Tend to disagree	16	25
Disagree strongly	9	
Don't know/no answer	12	12

Source: Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)/Political Capital Institute, 2013.

According to recent GLOBSEC Policy Institute survey 46% of Slovaks manifest their belief to conspiracy theories – the highest share among population of all V4 countries (see graph 3).

Graph 3. Belief in conspiracies in V4



Source: GLOBSEC, 2018.

Source: GLOBSEC, 2018

Efficient protection of human rights is inseparable part of democratic order. After more than four decades of absence of freedom and political repressions during the communist governance, restoration of respectful attitude of the state to human rights was the most valuable output of democratization. The efficient system of protection of human rights was constituted in Slovakia since 1989 that allowed the country to be a full-fledged member of the Council of Europe and later of European Union. Slovak constitution guarantees citizens the basic rights and civil liberties, proclaims the independence of judiciary and creates the framework for rule of law. Special laws including the antidiscrimination legislation regulate human rights agenda in specific areas (among ethnic minorities and people with disabilities, in media sphere etc.).

However, the practice often reveals the frequent difficulties, mostly referred to lower level of ability and willingness of state institutions to secure the regime of equality of people. Phenomenon of “selective justice” (ergo unequal approach of law enforcement organs to citizens) is one of the complicating factors. Unfriendly attitude to minorities, based on xenophobic approach, constitutes another one.

In the recent years the radicalization of political and public life of Slovakia served as breeding soil for activities of anti-systemic political forces. It appeared in several lines, in different contexts, it was influenced by various factors, both internal and external.

Some representatives of the mainstream political forces radicalized their rhetoric on issues linked to relations between majority population and minority communities. Radical, extremist and anti-system forces strengthened their positions on the political scene. The dissemination of discursive contents promoting ethnic nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, resistance to the principles of liberal democ-

racy, challenging pro-Western foreign and security policy intensified thanks to use of modern information technologies. Specific external factors (e.g. migration to Europe, Russia's hybrid war against the West) became more relevant in increasing the radicalization – both among the population and politicians.

Through populist appeal the extremist political forces are gaining support for their program from those parts of the population that are skeptical to results of social transformation, indifferent or negligent to democratic values and norms. Extremist openly employ rude social demagoguery, xenophobia and anti-Western moods to expand and strengthen their electoral base. In 2016 general elections, the neo-fascist party LSNS succeeded to qualify into the parliament. For the first time in the history of the post-communist Slovakia, the anti-systemic force whose activities and overall profile stand in contradiction to the fundamental principles of democracy is represented in the country's legislative body. It is one of the biggest challenges to liberal democracy, the country's Euro-Atlantic foreign policy priorities and civic coexistence inside.

Overall radicalization of public and political life in Slovakia in recent years has signed under the worsening attitudes of majority population towards minority groups. There was an unfortunate shift in direction of more xenophobic perception of minority communities. Compared to the recent past, the social distance of majority population has increased in relation to ethnic, religious and otherwise defined minority communities (see table 6).

Table 6. Social distance towards selected groups

I would not like to have as neighbors:	2008 (%)	2017 (%)
Roma family	70	79
Moslem family	32	73
Family of migrants from less developed countries	21	59
Gay couple	34	54
Lesbian couple	25	48
Bisexual	25	45
Asian family	22	43
African („black“) family	21	43
Jewish family	11	30
Ukrainian family	17	25
Long term unemployed person	11	23
Person with mental disorder	11	23
Hungarian family	17	17
Person with physical disorder	3	6

Source: Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)/FOCUS, 2008, 2017.

One of the specific indicators of attitude of majority population to people with other cultural and religious backgrounds are opinions of people on foreigners, migrants and refugees from abroad' in the current context also on the state and the EU's policy in this issue as well as the overall people's set-up toward openness to the surrounding world.

In the second half of 2015, a few months before parliamentary elections, in Slovakia, in a country which was de facto untouched by the refugee crisis on the practical level (especially in comparison with other EU member states, including neighboring Hungary), a social atmosphere was formed marked by fears of refugees, of arrival of migrants from other countries. There was a strong feeling of danger from the outside and hope that refugees at the end would not come, as well as the unequivocal refusal to accept refugees and to help them. The public attitudes were characterized by low acceptance of EU's policy on migration and refugees and, at the same time, by high support for Slovak government's policy. The public views were undoubtedly influenced not only by the publicized reports on events related to refugee crisis in Europe, but also by stances presented by political actors, in particular by intentionally spreading concerns about arrival of high number of foreign migrants.

Opinion polls conducted in June – December 2015 signaled the increasing importance of foreign migration issue perceived by Slovak citizens and increasing concerns about the possible arrival of refugees. This trend was also observed in other EU countries. The European-wide EUROBAROMETER survey on the perception of major societal challenges published in July 2015 has shown that the EU's population was seriously concerned about the migration from the outside (such concerns on average level across the EU were expressed by 38% of respondents). In Slovakia, 35% of respondents were concerned about immigration, despite the fact that, unlike some other countries, Slovakia did not experience any massive flow of refugees.¹⁷

Strengthening the migration flows to Europe from the Middle East, however, overlapped in Slovakia with political parties' preparation for parliamentary elections planned

for March 2016. The public views on the refugee crisis were thus the subject of special attention by political parties and their leaders. This was a topic inclusion of which into the pre-election mobilization arsenal gave parties opportunity to gain additional support from citizens.

In survey conducted by the agency 2muse, conducted in September 2015, more than 40% of respondents admitted that migration is a topic that would influence their decision in next year parliamentary elections.¹⁸ Data from other surveys showed that the readiness and willingness to accept refugees was quite low among Slovaks. In survey conducted in June 2015 by Polis Slovakia agency, up to 70.1% of respondents said they were not “in favor of receiving refugees from the Middle East and North Africa on the basis of quotas proposed by the European Union”. Among the then main ruling party Smer-SD’s supporters such respondents constituted 81.5%, compared with 67.9% among the supporters of the then parliamentary opposition parties. Asked “Do you think these refugees pose a threat to the security of Slovakia and its inhabitants?” 63.4% of respondents responded “yes”.¹⁹

As the second most serious problem for the country in Polis Slovakia agency survey (July 2015) respondents reported a “problem with migrants” (39.7%) after unemployment (43.1%) and before the health care (28.8%), low pensions (27, 5%) and low wages (25.8%).²⁰ Several months later, in September 2015, in survey conducted by the European Analytical Center (EAC), the largest share of respondents (34.3%) described refugees as the most serious social problem in Slovakia, before unemployment (17.5%) and corruption (16.0%).²¹

The setup of the population to the closeness of the country against the arrival of refugees and foreign migrants was confirmed by another survey conducted by Polis Slovakia

agency (August 2015) in which the majority of respondents (63.5%) positively evaluated the proceeding of the government of the neighboring Hungary, which started to build a “Schengen” fence on the border with Serbia in order to prevent refugees from entering the country; only 23% of the respondents did not endorse such a proceeding.²² FOCUS agency survey for daily newspaper *Sme* has confirmed that Robert Fico’s government managed to convince the vast majority of Slovaks about the correctness of their migration policy: up to 89% of respondents agreed with the government’s approach to the refugee crisis.²³

According to the mentioned 2 muse survey (September 2015), only 18% of respondents said that Slovakia would become a new home country for the refugees.²⁴ Inhabitants of the Slovak Republic were dissatisfied with the EU approach towards solving the refugee crisis: the EAC survey (September 2015) showed dissatisfaction of 82.6% of the respondents while only 9.9% were satisfied.²⁵

According to a survey conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and FOCUS agency in December 2015, up to 70% of citizens were afraid (“very” and “enough”) of the arrival of refugees to Europe, another 27.1% feared only a little, and about 2.5% did not worry. The survey also revealed certain peculiarities in the perception of the refugee issue. Although up to 70% of respondents said they were worried about the refugees’ arrival, only 7.1% admitted that refugees wanted to come to Slovakia, while up to 63.9% thought that refugees did not want to come. It was therefore a combination of realistic estimate of the low interest of refugees to come to Slovakia with high level of concern about their arrival. This particular, rather inconsistent pattern of consideration was accompanied by a steadily low rate of willingness to help refugees. Responding to the question “How do Europeans

have to treat those refugees who have already arrived?” 49.0% of respondents leaned to possibility of “helping only in absolutely necessary cases” and 19.4% to “not helping them at all”. “Helping to a limited extent” would want 23.5% and “helping significantly” only 1.5%.²⁶

The opinion of the population on migration in the context of the refugee crisis in Europe was surveyed by another EUROBAROMETER/PARLEMETER poll in September 2015. Data from this survey confirmed that Slovakia belonged to those European countries whose population was characterized by the highest level of resistance to acceptance of migrants and to common approach of EU member states in solving the problem.

The problem of immigration was seen in this survey as the main challenge for the EU by 49% of Slovak citizens, while on 2013 it was only 3% of respondents with the same opinion.²⁷ In terms of the importance of this problem, Slovakia did not differentiate from the EU28 average (47%). At the same time, however, the inhabitants of the Slovak Republic manifested the lowest level of support for pan-European solutions and the highest degree of closeness against arrival of refugees and migrants; compared to some Western European countries – Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and others – the difference was literally translucent. Only 40% of Slovakia’s population (the last place in the ranking among all EU member states) supported the idea of strengthening the decision-making process on immigration at the EU level (the EU-28 average was 66%). Only 45% of Slovak citizens (the last place in the EU) agreed that the EU should offer funds for the so-called “frontier states” to manage the arrival of migrants (the EU28 average was 62%). Only 50% of citizens of the Slovak Republic (the penultimate place in the EU) thought that the legal procedure for the acceptance of migrants

should be the same throughout the EU (the EU28 average was 79%). Only 53% of citizens of Slovakia (the penultimate place in the EU) supported the idea of simplifying the legal procedure for the acceptance of migrants for an effective solution of the problem of the “illegal migration” (EU28 average was 66%). Only 31% of Slovakia’s citizens (the last place in the EU) agreed that migrants should be more evenly displaced across the EU (the EU28 average was 78%). Only 19% of citizens of the Slovak Republic (the last place in the EU) agreed that some sectors of the country’s economy needed the “legal migrants” as labor force (the EU27 average was 51%). The closeness towards migrants from abroad was also reflected in the relation of Slovak citizens to migrants-citizens of other EU member states: only 31% of Slovak citizens (the last place in the EU) considered their presence as good thing for the country’s economy (the EU28 average was 56%) and only 39% (the penultimate place in the EU) considered them as good thing in terms of the diversity of the country’s cultural life (the EU28 average was 66%).

An area which encountered positive outputs of democratization is civil society. Civil society actors are the most committed and passionate defenders of democratic values, in the current context it is them who are capable to counterbalance the radical tendencies. After the collapse of communist regime civil society in Slovakia acted as the strongest supporter of democratic changes and European integration. Slovakia’s experience confirmed that the level of civil society development is one of the crucial preconditions for successful transitions to democracy and protection of democracy from recidivism of authoritarian tendencies. Civic sector in Slovakia is independent and diverse, enjoying generally favorable legal framework and reputable position in public. Besides registered nonprofit organizations

(civic associations, unions, foundations, non-investment funds etc.), many new informal initiatives, new leaders and new projects, often of small scope, enriching the quality of life in communities, emerged and become visible. Slovak NGOs are operating not only domestically but also as the constituent parts of international networks, developing the functional alliances with international partners and donors. At the same time, however the representatives of nonprofit organizations repeatedly express their concerns over financial sustainability of civil society organizations, free access to information, equality with the state sector in providing services, unfair pressure and defamation from politicians and insufficient participation of public representatives in policymaking process. NGOs continue to be actively involved into activities to strengthen and defend democracy, rule of law, human rights and constitutionalism and to cope with authoritarian tendencies, corruption, extremism and radical rhetoric.

Although the degree of embeddedness of different types of civil society organizations (service-providing organizations, advocacy groups, activist NGOs, watchdogs, human-rights organizations, environment protection groups, think-tanks etc.) is different, the overall reputation of NGOs among the population is positive despite the efforts of illiberal forces to discredit them (see table 7).

Table 7. Perception of non-governmental organizations

	2003	2005	2016
Positive and neutral associations with NGOs	57	65	70
Negative associations with NGOs	12	12	11
Non-informed response	31	23	19

Source: Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)/FOCUS, 2003, 2005, 2016.

NGOs continue to be actively involved into activities to strengthen and defend liberal democracy, rule of law, human rights and constitutionalism and to cope with authoritarian tendencies, corruption, extremism, xenophobia and radical rhetoric.

Media constitute important part of Slovakia's public sphere. Existence of free and independent media is one of the most spectacular achievements of democratization. During the transformation they represented the pluralist platform for different voices that reflected the existent opinion, political and value streams. Essential was a role of media in transition – both public and private (independent) media. Serving as an important channel of delivering the necessary information about socio-political life to citizens and enjoying generally favorable conditions for their work, media in Slovakia are affected by problematic or clearly negative elements (pressure to independent journalists from active politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats, and judges who sued journalists in courts, conflicts with state officials, uneven quality of journalism, “tabloidization” of the media outlets, lack of funds for investigatory activities, changes in ownerships in favor of domestic oligarchic business groups). Significance of individual types of media outlets for different segments of society is changing too causing serious implications for the whole public and political life. New media are competing with “traditional” ones for attracting the audience.

According to representative survey conducted by International Republican Institute in 2017, the main sources of daily social and political news for the population in Slovakia are: commercial TV and radio (33% of respondents), public TV and radio (30%), online news sources (23%) and major newspapers (14%) (see table 8).

Table 8. Sources of daily social and political news (average population; %)

Commercial TV and radio	33
Public TV and radio	30
Online news sources (e.g. newspapers, websites, blogs)	23
Major newspapers	14

Source: IRI, 2017.

However, big gap can be observed in proportion between different types of media as sources of information for younger and older generations. While among people in age of 60+ years there are 26% recipients of news from commercial TV and radio, 56% from public TV and radio, 16% from major newspapers and only 2% from online news resources, among the generation of 18 – 29 years the proportion is substantially different: 32% are recipients of news from commercial TV and radio, only 16% from public TV and radio, 9% from major newspapers and 43% from online news resources (see table 9).

Table 9. Sources of daily social and political news (selected age cohorts; %)

	Age 18-29	Age 60+
Commercial TV and radio	32	26
Public TV and radio	16	56
Online news sources (e.g. newspapers, websites, blogs)	43	2
Major newspapers	9	16

Source: IRI, 2017.

In IRI survey, 40% of respondents admitted they used social networks as sources of information every day, another 32% occasionally (once or twice per week). 11% of respondents used the “alternative” media outlets (“alt-right” with xenophobic and conspiratorial content – both online and printed), another 23% used them occasionally. Only 38% of respondents fully trust to major media and consider them professional and unbiased.²⁸

Foreign policy: pro-Western drive, membership in the EU and NATO

In spite the fact that pro-Western line in Slovakia’s foreign policy was officially declared by all country’s government since 1993, the way to the Western integration groupings was more than uneasy.

The Slovak Republic was the only V4 country that after the collapse of the communist regime in 1989 had to undergo a new struggle for democracy and principal democratic character of political regime. Due to its troubled domestic development between 1994 and 1998, Slovakia failed to comply with political criteria for the EU membership and was left outside the first, the so-called Luxembourg, group of candidate countries. In 1994–1998, the European Union warned the Slovak government many times that country demonstrated serious violations of the rule of law and signs of institutional instability as a result of practical steps by the cabinet and the ruling majority in the parliament. Since Slovakia was self-disqualified from the accession process in 1994–1998 due to non-compliance with the Copenhagen criteria, its integration ambitions and chances were restored only after the authoritarian forces were defeated by democrats in elections in autumn 1998. The accession process was thus re-launched in 1999 and completed in 2002. Many substantial reform measures, formally or in-

formally needed for membership in the EU, were implemented during this short period of time. Slovakia succeeded to complete the process of its accession to the EU in the same time as seven other post-communist states (the rest of the V4, Baltic 3, and Slovenia), although all these states started their movement to the EU much earlier and had more time for the reforms. In 2003 in referendum about membership in the EU, 92.46% of voters participated (with turnout of 52.15%) voted „yes“. In 2004 Slovakia became the full-fledged member of the EU. In 2007 country enter the Schengen zone of free movement of citizens and in 2009 it introduced the common European currency.

The troubling domestic political developments in 90s prevented Slovakia from entering NATO in the first wave of Alliance's enlargement after the collapse of the Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. Starting from 1999, country had to develop special efforts to catch up the enlargement process. As a result it succeeded to complete the accession procedures in November 2002 and subsequently reached the membership in 2004.

There is an official national consensus between main political actors about pro-Western foreign and external security and defense policy of the state (exclusion is the neo-fascist ĽSNS party, which is openly anti-Western and pro-Russian). However, the degree of firmness of particular parties in expression of their pro-Western stances is different: some parties are clearly pro-EU and pro-NATO, other present rather ambivalent or even controversial attitudes.

What are Slovakia's citizens' views on issues of foreign policy and overall external orientation, including external security policy? Sociological surveys indicate that they are marked by certain ambivalence, although the ultimate shift towards the membership in Euro-Atlantic organizations prevails.

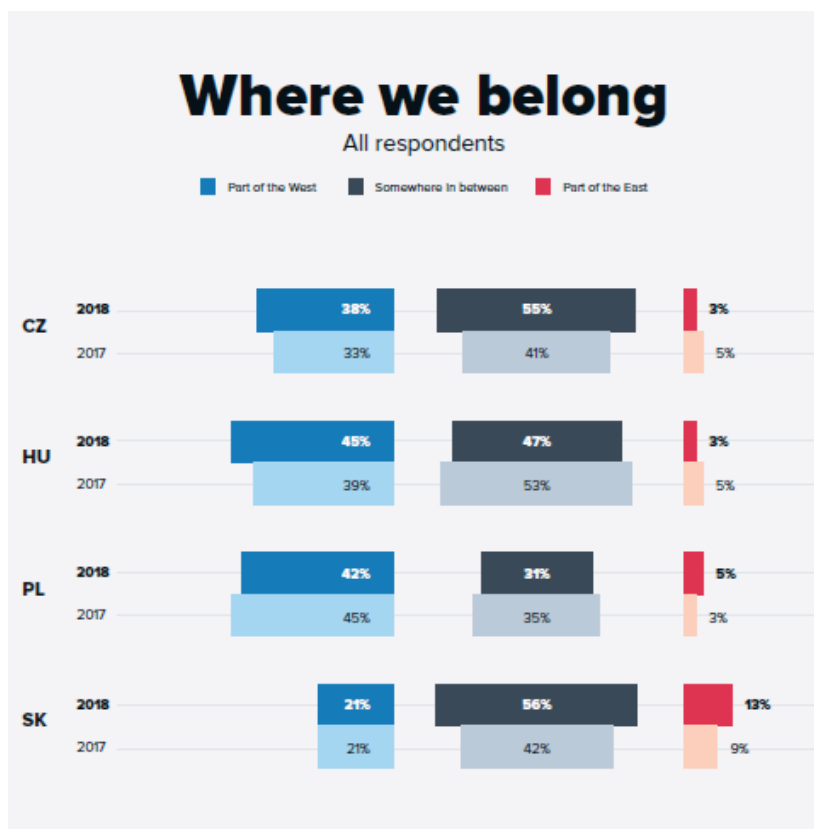
It needs to say that there some peculiar circumstances existed related to country's history which were supportive for appearance and persistence of "geopolitical ambiguity" in population's views on foreign policy. They included, for example, activities of reputable national political and intellectual circles of 19th and 20th centuries emphasizing necessity to build special relations with Russia on the basis of linguistic and cultural closeness of Slovaks and Russians. These circles were drawing image of Russia as a genuine defender of small Slavic nations in Central East and South East Europe from their alleged historic "enemies" or "oppressors" (Germans, Hungarians, Turks). This kind of narratives elaborated in style of "political Russophilia" is still relevant in country's public discourse and in certain degree it counterbalances the influence of pro-Western views.

Another factor is related to substantial part of the population's contextual perception of Communist regime, which functioned in Slovakia in the second half of 20th century in conditions of the delayed modernization. The gradual equalizing of differences that existed between Czech and Slovak parts of the common Czechoslovak state in socio-economic area, the process of Slovakia's industrialization and urbanization, technological achievements in agriculture, building of the developed state education and health system – all these elements of country's modernization under the Communism rule created preconditions for less critical perception of undemocratic nature of the regime, which was implanted and supported from the outside (USSR), and its clear anti-Western drive. A process called "normalization" (i.e., cadre purge and removal of the Prague Spring 1968 reformist legacy) after Soviet invasion in August 1968 chronologically coincided with the process of federalization of Czechoslovak state that also influenced the perception of socio-political developments by the pop-

ulation. This led to the softening of opposition against the regime and Soviet occupation, and created more favorable environment for less critical or even positive perception of Soviet Union (Russia) with long term implications for views on foreign policy orientations.

According to public opinion survey conducted by GLOBSECc Policy Institute in March 2018, 21% of respondents indicated that they consider Slovakia part of the West, while 56% think their country is placed in somewhere between the East and the West. 13% of respondents consider Slovakia a part of the East (the rest – 10% – does not have an opinion).²⁹

Graph 4. Population’s geopolitical orientations



Source: GLOBSEC, 2018.

Despite the ambiguity concerning the geopolitical placement of the country, population remains prevalingly pro-Western-oriented in issues of practical implementation of country's foreign policy and external priorities as well as participation in European integration.

In survey conducted in 2016, 57.0% of respondents declared that membership in NATO is an important for the country's security. In hypothetical referendum about Slovakia's membership in the EU 68.0% of respondents would vote for "remain" option and only 18.8% would vote for "leave" (13.3% could not answer the question). In hypothetical referendum about membership in NATO 52.9% of respondents would vote for "remain" option and 27.6% would vote for "leave" (19.5% could not answer the question).³⁰

In survey conducted by FOCUS agency in April 2018, 74.7% of respondents agreed with Slovakia's membership in the EU while only 22.3% disagreed (3.0% did not know answer).³¹

3. Conclusions

The process of democratic transition in Slovakia was undoubtedly successful as far as its outputs are concerned as well as their long term sustainability. Transition was implemented in relatively favorable geopolitical situation – effectiveness of Western "soft power" (supportive behavior of the West and its openness to accept the reformed post-communist countries as constituent parts of its integration groupings) vis-à-vis weakness of the post-Soviet Russia which tried to oppose to integration of Central European states into the EU and NATO. The pro-reform and pro-Western segments of national political elite succeeded to work out and to introduce reforms, used the window of opportunity opened after governance of illiberal

authoritarian forces for quick and massive movement in transition process and integration in 1998 – 2006. Reformists also succeeded to persuade population about strategic choice for the country – necessity of reforms and membership in the Western groupings. They did it despite the doubts and ambiguity in views of large parts of the population concerning characteristics of the new society, the fundamentals on which it should be built, on country's positions and interactions with the outer world. Empirical findings from opinion polls about public reflection of transition indicate the shifts in positive direction in some areas, at the same time show persisting problematic (from the normative point of view) attitudes and approaches in other ones.

In democratic society public opinion is an important element providing feedback to political actors and policy makers that signals the overall setup of the social environment towards policies. For skillful competent reformists public opinion is a challenge that should not discourage them from implementation of the reform, however controversial or unpopular they can be, but conversely, should lead them to more inventive and efficient approaches – if reformists are convinced that reforms will have sustainable positive implications. Slovak path of transition confirms it.

Note

- 1 Slovakia in Figures 2018. ECENTER/AmCham Slovakia, 2018, p. 3.
- 2 Selected indicators for Slovak Republic, OECD – <https://data.oecd.org/slovak-republic.htm>
- 3 [http://statdat.statistics.sk/cognosext/cgi-bin/cognos.cgi?b_action=cognosViewer&ui.action=run&ui.object=storeID\(%22i94C7052B240A492FB3BE8C7A487D-337B%22\)&ui.name=Priemern%C3%A1%20mesa%C4%8Dn%C3%A1%20mzda%20v%20hospod%C3%A1rstve%20SR%20%5Bpr0204qs%5D&run.outputFormat=&run.prompt=true&cv.header=false&ui.backURL=%2Fcognosext%2Fcps4%2Fportlets%2Fcommon%2Fclose.html&run.outputLocale=sk](http://statdat.statistics.sk/cognosext/cgi-bin/cognos.cgi?b_action=cognosViewer&ui.action=run&ui.object=storeID(%22i94C7052B240A492FB3BE8C7A487D-337B%22)&ui.name=Priemern%C3%A1%20mesa%C4%8Dn%C3%A1%20mzda%20v%20hospod%C3%A1rstve%20SR%20%5Bpr0204qs%5D&run.outputFormat=&run.prompt=true&cv.header=false&ui.backURL=%2Fcognosext%2Fcps4%2Fportlets%2Fcommon%2Fclose.html&run.outputLocale=sk)
- 4 Slovakia in Figures 2018. ECENTER / Am Cham Slovakia 2018, p. 4.
- 5 Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic – www.statistics.sk
- 6 <http://www.economy.gov.sk/uploads/files/7C-JsvqIC.pdf>
- 7 Slovak Republic in: Life in Transition. A decade of measuring transition. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development – <http://litsonline-ebrd.com/countries/slovak-republic/>
- 8 Napriek nostalgii by ľudia návrat k socialistickej ekonomike nechceli May 16, 2018 – <http://www.konzervativizmus.sk/article.php?6187>
- 9 Časť 2. Porovnanie percepcie súčasnej a minulej situácie obyvateľov Slovenska (ppt) – <http://sociologia.sav.sk/en/podujatia.php?id=2038&r=1>
- 10 Viac ľudí preferuje život v socializme pred súčasnosťou, May 11, 2018 – <http://www.konzervativizmus.sk/article.php?6185>

- 11** http://sasd.sav.sk/en/data_katalog_abs.php?id=sasd_2016002
- 12** Oľga Gyárfášová: Názory slovenskej verejnosti na otázky integrácie, medzinárodnej politiky a demokracie. Bratislava: GLOBSEC Policy Institute, 2017, p. 9.
- 13** Zora Bútorová: Občianska spoločnosť očami verejnosti. Správa zo sociologického výskumu in Stav, trendy, potreby a možnosti rozvoja občianskej spoločnosti na Slovensku. Bratislava: IVO, 2016, p. 177 – http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs//publikacie/subory/Stav_trendy_potreby_moznosti_rozvoja_OS_na_Slovensku_2016.pdf
- 14** Ibid., p. 179
- 15** Ibid., p. 182.
- 16** Ibid., p. 185.
- 17** Prieskum: V rámci EÚ sa Slováci najviac boja migrácie – SITA, 31. 7. 2015
- 18** Prieskum: Slováci nechcú, aby v SR utečenci našli druhý domov – SITA, 16. 9. 2015.
- 19** Prieskum: Slováci odmietajú prijať utečencov, vidia v nich hrozbu – Pravda, 17. 6. 2015, <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/358731-slovensko-by-nemalo-prijat-utecencov-mysli-si-70-percent-respondentov/>.
- 20** Najväčším problémom Slovenska je nezamestnanosť – SITA, 29. 7. 2015.
- 21** Prieskum: Najväčším spoločenským problémom sú momentálne utečenci – SITA, 23. 9. 2015.
- 22** Ľuďom sa pozdáva maďarský plot proti utečencom – SITA, 29. 8. 2015.
- 23** Krbatová, Lucia: Bezpečnosť hlása už aj opozícia – Sme, 5. 1. 2016.
- 24** Prieskum: Slováci nechcú, aby v SR utečenci našli druhý domov – SITA, 16. 9. 2015.
- 25** Prieskum: Slováci sú nespokojní s postojom Bruselu k utečencom – SITA, 16. 9. 2015.

- 26** Bahna, Miloslav – Klobucký, Robert: Slovenská verejnosť a utečenci v decembri 2015. Tlačová správa Sociologického ústavu Slovenskej akadémie vied – http://www.sociologia.sav.sk/cms/uploaded/2297_attach_tlacova_sprava_SU_SAV21122015.pdf.
- 27** All the quoted data in this paragraph are from the following source: Parlemeter 2015 (EB/EP 84.1). Migration Issues and Economic Perspectives. Public Opinion Monitoring Unit, October 2015.
- 28** All quoted data in this section are from Opinions of the National and Regional Context (ppt. presentation). Center for Insights in Survey Research. International Republican Institute 2017.
- 29** Globsec Trends 2018. Central Europe: One Region, Different Perspectives. Globsec Policy Institute, Bratislava 2018, p. 13.
- 30** Ibid, Olga Gyárfášová: Názory slovenskej verejnosti na otázky integrácie, medzinárodnej politiky a demokracie. Bratislava: GLOBSEC Policy Institute, 2017, p. 3 – 4.
- 31** http://www.focus-research.sk/files/246_Suhlas%20s%20clenstvom%20SR%20v%20EU_april%202018.pdf