NATIONAL AND RIGHT-WING RADICALISM IN THE NEW DEMOCRACIES: SLOVAKIA

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1. Introduction

The collapse of the communist regime in former Czechoslovakia in 1989 created favourable conditions for implementing thorough systemic changes within the society – in political, social and economic areas as well as in the field of inter-ethnic relations and the organization of government. The reintroduced model of pluralistic democracy along with practical implementation of fundamental human rights and civil liberties was accompanied by different opinions and various ideological concepts. They involved the possibility of free expression of views, establishment of social organizations (including political parties) based on commonly shared views, values and visions as well as aspiration for public support (including an ambition to participate on political power) within limits stipulated by the constitution and other laws.

Immediately after the fall of the communist totalitarianism, the newly restored free socio-political discourse soon included an opinion stream that in various proportions combined ethnic nationalism, historical revisionism, xenophobia, non-liberal concepts of power execution, anti-minority sentiments, isolationism, etc. Efforts were made to integrate some of them into the regular political system (i.e. the political ‘mainstream’), portraying their representatives as authentic political upholders of Slovak ‘statehood’ nationalism. The activities of others were rather on the borderline between the official landscape and the ‘forbidden area’, i.e. in some kind of ‘twilight (gray) zone’, using the existing legislative framework and founding civic associations or political parties to advertise their views and concepts that were in clear contradiction with liberal-democratic principles and often with the law. Those holding the most radical nationalist views embraced an activist approach, promulgating racial intolerance, subscribing to international fascism and Nazism and its domestic historical legacy, using radical and extremist

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1 The author hereby wishes to thank Sergej Danilov, a blogger and reporter with Radio Expres, for his help and valuable advice in making of the present study.
methods including intimidation, violence and physical assaults on foreigners, members of ethnic and racial minorities and advocates of other opinions streams.

The social transformation following the fall of communism caused de facto tectonic displacements in the society’s development, particularly in the socio-economic structure of the population. It changed the social status and living conditions of large groups and catalyzed people’s different reactions, ranging from endorsement and active support through passive acceptance to overt opposition and protest. In this situation, nationalism serves as a classic mobilization tool. To more moderate upholders of the ‘nationally-oriented’ opinion stream, it gives a chance to capitalize on the discontent of various population groups to gain political influence and participate in official power. For radicals, extremists, overt racists, fascists and neo-Nazis, it means an opportunity to strengthen their ranks, recruit new members, penetrate particular socio-demographic groups more deeply and increase their activities in places where the social problems caused by the transition process and the combination of newly-emerged and old but long-neglected social problems created a breeding ground for the local community’s ad hoc endorsement of certain solutions advocated and proposed by extremists.

The fact that the country has become much more open with respect to the outer world enabled extremists and radical nationalists to communicate with representatives of the far right abroad, take over certain activity patterns and even coordinate specific policies and activities.

There are some important peculiarities in Slovakia’s modern history and socio-political life that may help one understand the issue of local radicalism, ultra-nationalism, extremism and far-right movement. They include the creation of independent statehood in 1993 as a direct result of the split from former Czechoslovakia, the ideological and political legacy of domestic fascism dating back to the first half of the 20th century (including the so-called ‘first Slovak statehood’ of 1939-1945), the multi-ethnic composition of the population (in fact, up to 20% of the country’s total population are members of various ethnic minorities – Hungarian, Romany, Czech, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, German, Polish, Croatian, Russian, Bulgarian, Jewish, etc.), changes in the population’s ethnic structure in the 20th century (i.e. expulsion of non-Slovak ethnic groups via extermination, repatriation or deportation), a high degree of political mobilization of the largest
(i.e. Hungarian) ethnic minority and last but not least, the critical situation of the Romany minority that has never been truly integrated into the majority society.

2. **Factors catalyzing the recent activation of nationalists and right-wing radicals**

Radical nationalist and extremist groups in Slovakia intensified their activities in recent years. This may be illustrated by the increased frequency of public as well as non-public events organized by extremists and ultranationalists, their thematic scope and increased attention received from domestic media. It may be also documented by the steady increase in the total number of racially motivated crimes. According to official statistics supplied by the Slovak Police Force and the Ministry of Interior, 79 such crimes were recorded in 2004, 121 in 2005, 188 in 2006, 155 in 2007 and 213 in 2008.\(^2\) Apart from these figures, non-governmental organizations specialized in monitoring activities of far-right and extremist groups recorded a number of other assaults on immigrants, foreign students of dark complexion, Roma people, members of other subcultures and/or ideological opponents to whom neo-Nazis refer as ‘white trash’ or ‘traitors of the white race’. These attacks did not appear in official statistics either because the victims do not report them to the police or because they formally do not fall within the category of racially motivated criminal offences. The generally disturbing trend may also be illustrated by the recent increase in the number of news reports on displays of extremism in Slovak media that was statistically documented in an annual report published by the Slovak National Human Rights Centre (SNSĽP) in the summer of 2009.\(^3\)

The increased activation of extremist groups does not merely show in their members using greater aggressiveness with respect to other citizens but also through efforts to penetrate established social structures. In the middle of the current decade, one extremist political organization tried to infiltrate into the country’s political system via registering an official political party. Although the attempt itself was futile, it did not seem to deter extremists from pursuing further political activities.

\(^2\) Danilov, Sergej: “Rok 2008: stalo sa najviac rasových trestných činov v tomto miléniu” ['2008 Marks the Greatest Number of Racially Motivated Crimes in This Millennium']; available at: http://danilov.blog.sme

\(^3\) “SNSĽP: Počet správ o prejavoch extrémizmu vlani rástol” ['SNSĽP: Number of Reports on Displays of Extremism Increased Last Year'], SITA news agency, June 2, 2009.
The factors encouraging radical nationalists and extremists to pursue more intense and publicly perceptible actions include the following:

- **Strengthened overall position of nationalist forces in ‘mainstream’ politics.** After the 2006 elections, the radical-nationalist Slovak National Party (SNS) became part of the incumbent administration. Its government participation and especially public statements by its top officials marked by strongly nationalist and anti-minority rhetoric have contributed to a generally deteriorating situation in the field of interethnic relations. However, obvious elements of ethnic nationalism may also be observed in actions and public statements by individual leaders of other political parties, including the dominant ruling party of Smer-SD. A number of adopted administrative measures as well as proposed and enacted legislative amendments and declaratory documents of a symbolic nature passed by parliament clearly showed that the incumbent administration practically preferred the concept of ethnic nation to that of a political or civic one. Naturally, this approach creates more favourable conditions for the activities of extremist forces aimed at appealing to certain population segments, as it enables them to portray themselves as legitimate upholders of the ‘national’ or ‘patriotic’ principle. The only difference between them and the other supporters of the same principle is that they use harsher language when bringing up issues or formulating recommendations and solutions. In this respect, a report on Slovakia prepared by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and published in May 2009 by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg pointed out the “worrying increase … in racist political discourse mainly against the Hungarian minority as well as against, inter alia, Roma and Jewish people” since the coalition government comprising the Slovak National Party took power in 2006.

- **Strengthened revisionist elements within the established and government-financed historical science,** mostly under the pretext of “more objective” evaluation of important

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5 ECRI Report on Slovakia (fourth monitoring cycle), p. 27 (Strasbourg: ECRI Secretariat, Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, Council of Europe, May 2009); available at: www.coe.int/ecri
historical events and figures of Slovakia’s national history. There is a group of historians, concentrated particularly in Matica slovenská, and partly in the Nation’s Memory Institute and also at some university departments who promote some so-called ‘national’ or ‘patriotic’ interpretation of those historical events that were of special importance to Slovakia and its people in certain periods of the 20th century (the emergence and existence of the wartime Slovak State (1939-1945) or circumstances and course of the anti-fascist Slovak National Uprising of 1944). The crux of the said ‘patriotic’ interpretation rests especially in emphasizing the ‘positive’ aspects of the wartime Slovak State and disparaging, obfuscating or excusing the war crimes and atrocities its regime was clearly responsible for. These efforts are silently tolerated by the official education system that has been controlled since 2006 by the education minister nominated by the SNS. They form an integral part of the current ruling coalition-forwarded concept of Slovakia’s history that is based on a ‘national’ perspective. This concept is also embraced by some Catholic Church leaders. The attempts to glorify Jozef Tiso, a catholic priest and the president of the Slovak clerical-fascist state have not yet received official government support as the anti-fascist doctrine continues to be the foundation of the modern Slovak statehood. Nevertheless, the ‘soft’ revisionist stream in the field of history and historical memory has become an important player in the public discourse, largely because it has been tolerated by the administration. Perhaps the most tangible manifestation of this phenomenon was passing the so-called Lex Hlinka in 2007 glorifying Andrej Hlinka, a clerical leader and an authoritarian national-conservative populist who founded the Slovak People’s Party that was later renamed to Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party (HSLS). In the course of 1930s, still during Hlinka’s life, the party embraced the fascist rhetoric and ideology and in 1939 became the gravedigger of democratic political regime in Slovakia as a political ally of Nazi Germany. Between 1939 and 1945, HSLS was the dominant force of the ‘independent’ Slovak State’s totalitarian regime that adopted racial legislation inspired by ‘Nurnberg’ laws and actively collaborated with Hitler’s Germany in the implementation of the Holocaust (i.e. “Aryanizing” the Jewish property, depriving the Jews of their civil rights and subsequently deporting them to Nazi extermination camps outside Slovakia’s territory). Although Hlinka died shortly before the wartime Slovak State emerged and therefore could not directly participate in its policies, his credit
for establishing the ideological and political foundations of Slovak clerical fascism is beyond any doubt. Specific displays of promoting ‘national’ interpretation of Slovakia’s history are attempts to mythologize certain historical periods supported by the incumbent administration. Such attempts include the introduction of the concept of ‘ancient Slovaks’ seeking to alter the currently accepted concept of the Slovaks’ ethno-genesis.

- **Aggravated Slovak-Hungarian interethnic relations and deteriorated bilateral relations between Slovakia and Hungary.** Certain government measures in the field of education, culture and use of minority languages have provoked opposition and protests among the ethnic Hungarians. Since the status of members of the Slovakia’s Hungarian minority forms an inseparable part of Slovak-Hungarian bilateral relations, the deteriorating situation in the field of minority rights has negatively affected these relations. In both countries it created a breeding ground for activation of radical nationalist and extremist groups that demonstrate their determination to defend ‘national interests’ by organizing spectacular public events. Worst of all, some high Slovak government officials, including cabinet members and Prime Minister Robert Fico himself, have tried to use the recent revival of Hungarian extremist groups with anti-Roma and anti-Semitic displays (e.g. Hungarian Guard) to support a thesis that extremism and radical nationalism are being ‘imported’ to Slovakia from Hungary. This thesis is supposed to help the Slovak government officials ward off diplomatic pressure from the Hungarian Government provoked by the worsening status of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia by portraying Hungary as a country with deeply rooted home extremism and ultra-nationalism while Slovakia as a mere recipient of these phenomena. Not only is such interpretation completely misleading from the matter-of-fact viewpoint but it hardly helps to reveal the true reasons behind the recent rise in activities of domestic extremists and radical nationalists. Under certain circumstances, it may even be used to excuse them.

- **Aggravation of the so-called Roma issue that represents a serious social problem in the long term.** The inability of most administrations since November 1989 and particularly the incumbent one to tackle this problem systematically has led to a situation
in which peaceful coexistence between the Roma and the majority is in certain places (particularly in East Slovakia) jeopardized by everyday criminal incidents (including violent ones) that provoke retributions. Each such incident serves as a welcomed pretext for extremist groups to organize public rallies at which they advertise overtly racist concepts to solve the so-called Roma issue. A significant proportion of local inhabitants who are fed up with the central government’s incompetence often sympathize with extremists at these meetings.

2.1. Hot summer 2009: anti-Roma public rallies

In the second half of 2009, Slovakia witnessed escalation of tension related to the so-called Roma issue and extremist activities. In August 2009, a civic association called Slovenská pospolitost' (Slovak Community) organized several public rallies in East Slovakia at which it protested against “Roma criminality” and tried to demonstrate its ability to propose viable, feasible and practically enforceable solutions to the problem. In the village of Šarišské Michaľany, Slovenská pospolitost' organized an anti-Roma march after two local Roma had brutally beaten an employee of the local football stadium who tried to prevent them from stealing. Before the march, Slovenská pospolitost' declared “national mobilization” against alleged long-term “Roma terror”. “The bloody attack [by the Roma] took place in a village where white population suffers from Gypsy attacks in the long term but neither the police nor the government cares to tackle the problem,” according to the official Slovenská pospolitost' statement. “That’s why it is high time for us, nationally-conscious Slovak men and women, to show that unlike Fico or Slota we are able to stand up for our nation not only by words but also by actions.” During the march, approximately 200 members and sympathizers of Slovenská pospolitost' violently clashed with the police, provoking many local bystanders to support and even join in with the extremists. Several days later, another extremist association called Nové slobodné Slovensko (New Free Slovakia) organized a protest rally in Prešov. Approximately 300 attendants of the rally condemned “police terror and violence” in Šarišské Michaľany.

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Shortly afterwards, Slovenská pospolitost’ organized a march protesting against “Roma criminality” in the town of Krompachy where the event was attended by about 50 members and sympathizers of the association from various regions of the country. At the end of August 2009, another rally against “Roma criminality” was organized in the town of Turzovka. Simultaneously, Nové slobodné Slovensko, in cooperation with an ultranationalist civic association called Slovenské hnutie obrody [Slovak Revival Movement], organized a public manifestation in Nové Zámky titled *Za budúcnosť našich detí* (For Our Children’s Future). The leitmotif of the event, also advertised on websites of other extremist organizations including Slovenská pospolitost’, was protest against “police violence” used against attendants of the anti-Roma rally in Šarišské Michaľany. In early September 2009, Slovenská pospolitost’ declared in Krompachy “national mobilization” against the terror by “aggressive Gypsy bandits” and “government’s inactivity in tackling the Gypsy issue”. In the course of the event, the police foiled an attempt by rally participants to enter surrounding Roma settlements thus preventing a pogrom or at least an ethnic clash.

Most of the described events (i.e. their preparation, course and aftermath) attracted enormous attention on the part of the media. Detailed media coverage along with the fact that sizeable contingents of law enforcers including top officials of the Slovak Police Force were dispatched to these rallies increased the importance of extremist organizations, particularly Slovenská pospolitost’, as well as the social relevance of their activities in the eyes of the general public.

Generally speaking, activities of the radical, populist, ultranationalist and extremist forces (including far-right and neo-Nazi groups) in Slovakia threaten to worsen conditions for citizens’ coexistence in the near as well as distant future. They negatively affect the overall atmosphere within society, jeopardize implementation and protection of human and minority rights and amount to immediate security risks for certain population groups.

The recent rise in the activities of extremist groups forces government organs to adopt legislative measures aimed at curbing such activities. An example is the most recent amendment to the Criminal Statute. Before April 2009, the law contained provisions that punished supporting and promoting groups intending to suppress fundamental human rights and freedoms, defaming
ethnicity, race and belief and encouraging ethnic and racial hatred. It also included a special provision punishing those who try to excuse, question or deny the Holocaust (the so-called ‘Auschwitz lie’). In April 2009, parliament passed an amendment to the Criminal Statute that introduced punishment for “extremist activities”. The amendment incorporated into the law the term of “extremist group”, as a group of at least three persons established for the purpose of perpetrating extremism crimes. The provision also defined “extremist material”, i.e. written, graphic, pictorial, audio or audio-visual production of texts, statements, flags, butches, slogans or symbols of groups and movements aimed at suppressing fundamental rights and freedoms or programs and ideologies of such groups and movements.

3. Ideological taxonomy in the national context

Principal actors on Slovakia’s right-wing, nationalistic and extremist scene are formations and groupings of different influence, importance and orientation. They may be divided into three basic categories:

- ‘Mainstream’ right-wing nationalists
- Ultranationalists
- Extremists, ‘autonomous’ nationalists, neo-Nazis, racist skinheads

3.1. Creed of mainstream nationalists

‘Mainstream’ nationalists form a relevant part of the established political landscape. Their principal objective is to remain an integral part of the system of parliamentary democracy. The main political vehicle of ‘mainstream’ nationalism is the Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana – SNS). The SNS proclaims itself as the most authentic proponent of the Slovaks’ national aspirations in areas such as building a national state, defending its interests, protecting the Slovaks’ national interests, supporting their national culture, interpreting their national history, shaping relations with neighbouring Hungary, influencing policies with respect to ethnic minorities (especially ethnic Hungarians), etc. The SNS may be described as the most relevant actor of radical (though not anti-system) nationalism in Slovakia. The party currently enjoys a strong position within the power system thanks to its ability to capitalize on xenophobic and anti-
minority (i.e. anti-Hungarian) sentiments of certain population segments and due to coalition strategies applied by other populist parties. The policies pursued by SNS leaders negatively affect the atmosphere in society and worsen the overall status of ethnic minorities. While the SNS does not aspire to undermine the liberal democratic regime, some of its priorities contradict certain essential principles of liberal democracy.

3.2. Creed of ultranationalists

Ultranationalist political formations based on obsolete Slovak nationalism of 1930s-1940s are marginal in the power context and irrelevant in terms of voter support. Along with other minor parties, they dwell in the ‘twilight zone’ of the country’s party system. However, during the period immediately preceding emergence of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993, these formations (including civic associations) played a more relevant role. They usually increase their activity before anniversaries of symbolic historical events and before elections. In some specific situations they oscillate around the line that separates legally existing political parties from extremist groups openly promoting racist, fascist and neo-Nazi views and using violent methods.

The current position of ultranationalist extra-parliamentary parties is politically insignificant. Their activities were the most perceptible between 1990 and 1992 when political leaders sought an acceptable solution to future constitutional arrangement of the Czechoslovak Federation. During this period, an informal bloc of separatist parties and organisations was formed in Slovakia with a single purpose of lobbying at elected representatives toward dissolving the Czechoslovak Federation and proclaiming Slovakia’s full-fledged state independence.

Besides the SNS that played the dominant role, the bloc also included formally autonomous smaller parties and civic associations whose basic credo was to continue the ideological and political legacy of the wartime Slovak State led by Jozef Tiso. Members of these parties and associations may be labelled as ‘old-fashioned’ Slovak nationalists. Their political rhetoric and actions were marked by the admiration of Tiso’s state which, they argued, was the embodiment of the Slovaks’ national aspirations as well as by attempts to justify its regime’s policies, make light of its war crimes and attribute responsibility for them to external forces. In the context of the country’s public and political discourse, these organisations pursued the most blatant forms of
anti-Czech and anti-Hungarian propaganda. They kept in close contact with representatives of nationalist post-war Slovak exile, trying to use their ideological ‘capacity’. These parties (or persons behind them) published nationalist periodicals and organized symbolic public events, especially on the occasion of historical anniversaries with national or nationalist connotations.

Representatives of ultranationalist parties use relatively aggressive rhetoric and verbal assaults with respect to ideological streams and view their upholders as enemies. On the other hand, they do not resort to violent actions, nor do they advocate them. At the same time, though, public events organized by ultranationalist formations (particularly commemorations of the anniversary of founding the wartime Slovak State) are often attended by members of extremist, neo-Nazi and racist skinhead groups who openly advertise their proclivity to violent actions and often do resort to violence, particularly with respect to the Roma and anti-fascists. Currently the most active of all ultranationalist organisations are two officially registered minor political parties, namely the Slovak National Unity (Slovenská národná jednota – SNJ) and the Slovak People’s Party (Slovenská ľudová strana – SĽS).

Utranationalist parties have long striven to develop local ‘strongholds’ through participating in municipal elections but to no much avail so far. In terms of voter support, they are unable to compete with the ‘mainstream’ SNS that has fully developed structures on all levels of the party system, possessing the administrative resources of a ruling and/or parliamentary party and uses radical nationalist rhetoric to lure away potential voters from ultranationalist formations.

The greatest political success ultranationalist forces achieved since 1993 was participation of the SNJ and SĽS in the five-party coalition that backed victorious candidate Ivan Gašparovič in the 2004 presidential elections. The official name of the coalition was the Confederation of National Forces of Slovakia (Konfederácia národných síl Slovenska – KNSS). Other members of the coalition included the ‘mainstream’ SNS, the Movement for Democracy (Hnutie za demokraciu – HZD) that had emerged by splitting from Vladimír Mečiar’s HZDS under the leadership of Ivan Gašparovič and the People’s Union (Ľudová únia – ĽÚ) that had also split from the HZDS. Smer-SD led by Robert Fico also endorsed Gašparovič’s candidature in 2004 as a separate party and not as a member of the KNSS.
3.3. Creed of extremists

Extremist, neo-Nazi and racist skinhead groups pursue their activities mostly outside the legal framework of the existing political system. Most of these groups strive to remove the liberal-democratic system of government. They profess the cult of brutal force with respect to some population groups (e.g. Roma, Jews and members of other minorities and foreigners, liberals, anarchists, antifascists, punks, leftists, etc.) and regularly resort to violence against members of such groups. They have supporters among football hooligans who also tend to prefer violence as the working method.

Overtly fascist, racist and neo-Nazi groups pose a serious threat to particular population groups, which may be sufficiently illustrated by the steadily increasing number of violent acts with racial and/or ethnic motives. For the time being, far-right and neo-Nazi groups lack both public support and intellectual capacity to be able to materialize their goal of removing the democratic regime. However, the extremist scene is currently undergoing the process of re-evaluating the gathered experience, regrouping its forces and adopting the model of ‘autonomous nationalism’ (i.e. leaderless resistance) from the Czech Republic and some other Western European countries, particularly Germany.

According to data supplied by organizations that specialize in monitoring the country’s extremist, far-right and radical-nationalist scene, neo-Nazi or racist skinhead groups are currently active in the following cities and towns of Slovakia: Bratislava, Košice, Bardejov, Detva, Holič, Humenné, Malacky, Martin, Nitra, Nové Mesto nad Váhom, Poprad, Prešov, Prievidza, Rožňava, Ružomberok, Skalica, Stupava, Topoľčany, Trenčín, Trnava, Veľký Krtíš, Vranov nad Topľou, Zvolen and Žilina. Some of them declare affiliation to international organizations such as Hammer Skinheads or Blood and Honour.\(^7\)

Speaking of their ideological foundations, some representatives of extremist associations try to use euphemisms such as ‘national conservatism’, ‘national paradigm’, ‘national activism’ or

\(^7\) Draxler, Pavol – Milo, Daniel – Slaninová, Jana et al: Správa o plnení bezpečnostnej politiky v oblasti extrémizmu [Report on Discharging Security Policy Goals in the Field of Extremism], (Bratislava: Inštitút pre občianske vzdelávanie, 2008).
‘racial realism’ in order to camouflage at least partially radicalism that is proverbial for their views and activities.

Recently, law enforcement institutions (i.e. the Office of Attorney General and the Supreme Court), in cooperation with independent ‘watchdog’ organizations (i.e. anti-racism NGOs), foiled an attempt by the Slovak Community – National Party to change the character of the political regime and remove liberal democracy as its cornerstone through infiltrating into the country’s political system through the available legal mechanisms.

4. Evolution and differentiation of the nationalist organizations and movements

4.1. Mainstream right-wing nationalism

Slovenská národná strana [Slovak National Party]

Founded in 1990, the SNS publicly subscribes to the legacy of historic SNS that existed in Slovakia until 1938. Historic SNS was a moderate nationalist party that formed an important part of the so-called Autonomist bloc in interwar Czechoslovakia. It was established by Lutheran politicians and gained support especially among Slovak Lutherans. The new SNS has been a parliamentary party since 1990, except the electoral term of 2002 – 2006. Between 1992 and 1998 and between 2006 and 2009, the SNS was a member of coalition governments. The party always used its position in the executive to pursue its nationalist agenda. An essential part of this agenda is the constant effort to undermine the standard of minority rights, particularly those of ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia. In early years of its existence, the party was the strongest representative of Slovak separatism.

While the SNS uses the right-leaning, anticommmunist and Christian rhetoric, its socio-economic program features strong elements of etatism, state interventionism, paternalism and inclination to redistributive social policy measures. The SNS is a programmatic opponent of the concept of political nation based on the civic principle (i.e. citizenship). Instead, it prefers the concept of ethnic nation and considers the modern Slovak Republic a national state of ethnic Slovaks. It pursues the policy of assimilation of ethnic minorities, which in the case of ethnic Hungarians
amounts to constantly questioning their loyalty to independent Slovakia. The party’s activities systematically undermine the civic dialogue, particularly those of its elements that are directly related to interaction between majority population and ethnic minorities.

The party’s political arsenal includes systematic use of the so-called ‘Hungarian card’, i.e. encouraging distrust with respect to Hungarians and Hungary and using anti-Hungarian arguments as the principal tool of voter mobilization. Party leaders frequently use confrontational rhetoric and aggressive tone and make offensive statements aimed at political representatives of ethnic minorities. The party is supported by voters with nationalist views who prefer authoritarian concepts of society’s political organization. Its coalition potential (i.e. its ability to coalesce with other parties) depends on power ambitions of other ‘nationally oriented’ populist parties (e.g. Smer-SD or HZDS). In Slovakia’s modern history, moderate centre-right and centre-left parties have never approached the SNS with an offer to form coalition governments.

The SNS verbally keeps distance from extremist groups, emphasizing the ‘stupidity’ of their leaders and members. SNS officials are particularly critical with respect to Slovenská pospolitost’. They went as far as claiming that it was the SNS that initiated necessary legal measures against Slovenská pospolitost’ but failed to corroborate the claim by a single shred of evidence. In fact, judicial proceedings aimed at dissolving the group were launched by the Office of Attorney General acting on a motion filed by the People against Racism civic association. According to SNS Vice-Chairwoman Anna Belousovová, Slovenská pospolitost’ might well pursue the agenda of “someone” who aims to establish in Slovakia a pendant to “chauvinist and fascist Jobbik” in order to create something that “is not characteristic of the Slovaks”. Leaders of Slovenská pospolitost’, for their part, have labelled the SNS as traitor of the national cause and a party of corrupt politicians.

The SNS politically cooperates with ultranationalist formations such as the Slovak National Unity (SNJ) and the Slovak People’s Party (SĽS). In 2003, police investigation in the East Slovak city of Košice revealed contacts between the local representatives of the Slovak National

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Youth (Slovenská národná mládež – SNM), the party’s youth organization, and neo-Nazi groups. The SNS officially dissociated itself from persons involved and publicly denounced them.

Since 1990, the SNS has been among the principal upholders of revisionist ideas regarding the wartime Slovak State along with nationalist-oriented cultural associations such as Matica slovenská and several influential individuals including some historians and a number of Catholic Church leaders. The SNS began to advertise its positive views on the wartime Slovak State immediately after its founding in 1990 and actively furthered them every time it was part of government (i.e. in periods of 1993–1994, 1994–1998 and 2006–2009).

SNS representatives regularly honoured the founding of the wartime Slovak State in March 1939 as the beginning of the first sovereign statehood of the modern Slovak nation. Party leaders repeatedly demanded rehabilitation of its president Jozef Tiso. SNS Chairman Ján Slota called Tiso’s conviction of war crimes and his subsequent execution a “vendetta” and “murder commissioned by the Czechs and communists”. SNS leaders’ positive views of the “first Slovak statehood” were automatically reflected in their negative perception of the anti-fascist Slovak National Uprising (SNP). Slota declared that the SNP had laid foundation for communist totality and the country’s Soviet satellitization. He claimed that the SNP had been “abused for 40 years to promote red totality” and had “lost its moral credit”.

In recent years, though, some SNS leaders manifested a certain shift in their interpretation of the SNP. In 2004, SNS Vice-Chairwoman Anna Malíková-Belousovová called the SNP an act of “the Slovaks’ opposition to fascism” and simultaneously denied that the movement was aimed against the Slovaks’ own state. In August 2006, Belousovová declared that the SNS took its hat off to hundreds and thousands of victims claimed by the struggle against “perverted fascist ideology and its upholders”. These statements illustrate the party leaders’ overall perception of Slovakia’s history during World War II, which is open to confusing and ambiguous interpretation.

11 “SNS: Stanovisko k informáciám o oslavách 62. výročia SNP” ['SNS: Reaction to Information on 62nd SNP Anniversary Celebrations'], SITA news agency, August 30, 2006.
interpretations. While SNS leaders’ public statements cannot be qualified as intentional fuelling of pro-fascist sentiments, they were undoubtedly inspired by efforts to appeal to those nationalist-oriented voters who view positive perception of ‘the first Slovak statehood’ as a display of true ‘patriotism’.

In the 1990s, the SNS maintained contacts with right-wing radical parties around Europe, for instance Front National (FN) in France led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, Alleanza Nazionale (AN) in Italy and the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDPR) in Russia led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Later, the SNS interrupted contact with the FN and the LDPR. Since the mid-current decade, it began to develop relations with the Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN) faction in the European Parliament (EP). After the most recent elections to the EP, the only MEP elected for SNS became a member of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD), a faction comprising Euro-sceptic and right-wing nationalist parties jointly established by deputies for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) from Great Britain and the Lega Nord (LN) from Italy.

4.2 Ultra-nationalism

Slovenská národná jednota [Slovak National Unity]

Ultranationalists from the Slovak National Unity (Slovenská národná jednota – SNJ) define their ultimate goal as building a “national state of Slovenes [the Slovaks’ Slavic ancestors] on Constantine-Methodical traditions”. The SNJ describes its ideological foundation as “national-Christian realism”. The party’s activities are aimed at “making sure that the Slovak nation and its state act as a sovereign subject in every respect, on the inside as well as on the outside”. The foundation of these activities according to the SNJ is “national consciousness and belief in God”. The party’s program speaks of “a thousand-year desire of generations of Slovaks to lead a free national life on the territory inherited from their ancestors and pass it on to their descendants”.

The party proposes to amend the Slovak Constitution so that it “anchors the population’s make-up” and “the irreplaceable role of the Church in society”; it also wishes to restrict immigration and revise international treaties previous post-November administrations entered into with other

12 Available at: http://narod.sk/snj
countries, particularly the bilateral treaty with Hungary. The SNJ opposes Slovakia’s NATO membership. It demands that Hungary indemnify Slovakia for “material damages caused during occupation of Southern Slovakia” It also demands Germany to settle its debts from the period of “the first Slovak Republic” and compensate Slovakia for material damages caused during “the so-called SNP”. Finally, it demands the Czech Republic to indemnify Slovakia for damages caused during the process of dividing the common Czechoslovak property. The party insists that “representatives of the Council of Europe, Washington and NATO stop meddling with Slovakia’s internal affairs, particularly the country’s minority policy, education policy and the language act”.13

SNJ representatives argue that there are negligible differences between all mainstream parties in Slovakia and that their ideological orientation is “generally identical – EU and NATO, multiculturalism, restricting the rights of the Slovak nation, repressions and idleness regarding pressing issues, be it Gypsy expansion and anarchy or misappropriation of public resources”.14 “It is necessary that the Slovak nation wakes up from lethargy and finally begins to support a party that has an ambition to put a halt to this stagnation,” says the party’s official newspaper. “The SNJ is undoubtedly such a party.”15

The SNJ closely cooperates with two overtly revisionist nationalist societies, namely the Society for Preservation of Traditions (Spoločnosť pre zachovanie tradícii) that focuses primarily on maintaining people’s awareness of political representatives of the wartime Slovak State and the Society of Dr. Jozef Tiso (Spoločnosť Dr. Jozefa Tisú) whose principal objective is rehabilitation and glorification of the leader of the wartime Slovak State. The Slovak Youth Unity (Jednota slovenskej mládeže – JSM), a civic association that operates as a cultural and educational youth organization, is personally connected to the SNJ. Like the SNJ, it defines “national-Christian realism” as its ideological foundation.

Slovenská ľudová strana [Slovak People’s Party]

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13 Available at: http://narod.sk/snj
14 Available at: http://narod.sk/snj
Another ultranationalist political formation is the Slovak People’s Party (Slovenská ľudová strana – SĽS) that claims to be a direct successor of the HSĽS. In its official documents, the party declares that it “emerged from illegality” in December 1989. It also points out that it was officially registered on December 14, 1905, with the Ministry of Interior of the Hungarian Kingdom. The official doctrine of the SĽS is based on the “Holy Scripture of the New Testament, teachings of the Saints and Papal encyclicals”. The party’s ultimate goal is to win the parliamentary elections and enthrone the “Slovak State of the estates” that will be built on “Christian, national and social principles”. The party declares that its program is based on “thousand year-old Constantine-Methodical traditions”. It urges all political parties in Slovakia to unite according to the example from October 1938 when the clerical-fascist HSĽS forcibly incorporated most existing political parties and banned the remaining ones in the decisive step toward establishing an undemocratic regime. According to the SĽS, this was a step that “saved the nation as a whole”.16

In its document titled Manifest for the Third Millennium, the SĽS declared that it “rejects continuity with the political regime that disputes the genuine truth the same way it rejects all forms of liberalism, racism, xenophobia, fascism, communism and Nazism, be it in their conservative or revived forms” the document adds that the future of Slovakia rests in “rigorous implementation of universal principles of the Ten Commandments” and calls on citizens to “openly subscribe to building Slovakia on principles of universal Christian and people’s policy”.17

Slovenské hnutie obrody [Slovak Revival Movement]

Part of the ultranationalist opinion stream is also a civic association called Slovak Revival Movement (Slovenské hnutie obrody – SHO). According to its official documents, the organization “strives to awaken and deepen the Slovaks’ national consciousness and patriotism … contribute to defending statehood and sovereignty of the Slovak Republic … and continue in the work and legacy of [national awakener in 19th century] Ľudovít Štúr”.18 Also, it openly subscribes to the legacy of Jozef Tiso. Public statements issued by the SHO contain frequent

16 Available at: http://www.hsls.sk/
17 Available at: http://www.hsls.sk/
18 Available at: http://www.sho.sk/
references to various historical events, particularly those related to the Slovak nation’s ethno-
genesis and its relations with neighbouring nations, especially Hungarians. The organization uses
strongly anti-Hungarian rhetoric. For instance, it demands introducing the principle of reciprocity
into government’s official policy with respect to ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia. The SHO
emphasizes its adherence to the concept of pan-Slavic solidarity; its official website is available
in Slovak, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, and Serbian. In August 2009, SHO representatives
expressed solidarity with anti-Roma activities of extremist organizations and condemned police
interventions against them. According to SHO, protests against “Gypsy criminality” should not
be qualified as extremism.

4.3 Extremism and neo-Nazism

Slovenská pospolitost’ – Národná strana [Slovak Community – National Party]

The Slovak Community – National Party (Slovenská pospolitost’ – Národná strana – SP-NS),
which was dissolved by the Supreme Court acting on a motion filed by the Office of Attorney
General on grounds of violating the Slovak Constitution has a special place among extremist
organizations. The SP-NS was an openly extremist formation that used ultranationalist rhetoric. It
was officially registered as a regular party in January 2005. In March 2006, the Supreme Court
ruled that its existence contradicted valid laws, as the party manifesto in its section titled
Corporate State demanded to restrict suffrage for some population categories, which violated the
fundamental principle of citizens’ equality before the law anchored in the constitution.
Materializing the said demand would have amounted to establishing a non-democratic political
regime (i.e. corporate state) similar to the regime that ruled the wartime Slovak State.

Originally, the SP was founded and officially registered as a civic association in May 1995.
“Slovenská pospolitost’ subscribes to thousand year-old Slovak and Slavic traditions,” according
to its official manifesto. “It is a natural alliance of all Slovaks who think and act in compliance
with ancient Slavic and Slovak cultural, historical and spiritual traditions. Slovenská pospolitost’
carries on the spirit of Ľudovít Štúr and all luminaries of the Slovak nation and has become
known for its uncompromising defence of Slovak national interests.”¹⁹ According to the document, its emergence “was a reaction to long-term failure of policies pursued by the SNS, particularly in time of its government participation … immediately after its emergence, the SP pursued intense activities aimed at identifying the dangers of Slovakia being controlled by foreign [interest] groups and supranational institutions”.

The SP commented on the Supreme Court’s ruling by declaring that its “intense campaign against Zionism attracted attention of state organs as well as the so-called third sector, i.e. organizations operating in the Slovak Republic that are controlled by foreign [interest] groups”.²⁰ The organization called the ruling “unjustified and unlawful” and declared that as long as “the incumbent so-called national administration led by Robert Fico continued to pursue its anti-national activities and liquidate economic, political and cultural independence of the Slovak Republic” it would seek to renew its activity as a regular party.

In recent years, the SP (both as a party and civic association) organized a number of public events (mostly commemorating the wartime Slovak State and its leaders) at which party members and sympathizers (including ‘autonomous nationalists’) openly demonstrated their hatred of minorities (e.g. Jews, Roma), liberals or Western countries (especially USA and Israel) and advertised their adherence to the ideological heritage of the clerical-fascist wartime Slovak State. On several occasions, the police detained SP leader Marián Kotleba on grounds of his speeches at these events.

The SP never went as far as forming actual paramilitary units or imitating them. However, participants of the said public rallies were usually dressed in uniforms that resembled historical uniforms of the Hlinka Guard’s Emergency Units (PO HG), a paramilitary repressive arm of Tiso’s regime. The uniforms were decorated by insignia reminding of Tiso’s regime but featured minor differences that were intentionally applied in order to avoid possible criminal prosecution for using prohibited symbols.

¹⁹ “Kotleba: Ak vláda nebude konat, Michaľany zopakujeme aj inde” [‘Kotleba: If Government Fails to Act, We Will Repeat Michaľany Elsewhere’], SITA news agency, August 11, 2009.
²⁰ Available at: www.pospolitost.org
Politically, the SP closely cooperated with the SĽS in a coalition or quasi-coalition manner. For instance, SP members appeared on the lists of candidates of the officially registered SĽS in parliamentary elections and the two parties repeatedly formed mutual coalitions in municipal elections.

In November 2008, the Ministry of Interior revoked its registration of the SP as a civic association. However this move was motivated by broader political circumstances rather than by the cabinet’s earnest effort to wage a systematic campaign against extremism. Shortly before a long-awaited meeting of Prime Minister Robert Fico and his Hungarian counterpart Ferenc Gyurcsány that was cancelled several times in the atmosphere of mutual political invectives, the Slovak side needed to demonstrate its resolution to combat radical nationalists and extremists. The Hungarian Guard that is widely viewed as a typical representative of political extremism in Hungary was facing criminal proceedings before a Budapest court. Slovakia needed to put an equivalent on the negotiation table, hence the repressive measure against the SP, the embodiment of extremism in Slovakia that had been dissolved as a political party but continued to pursue its activities as a civic association.

On November 12, 2008, three days before the scheduled Fico-Gyurcsány meeting, the Ministry of Interior announced its decision to revoke registration of the SP. “The association pursues activities aimed at instigating hatred and intolerance based on ethnic, racial, religious and political reasons,” the ministry stated when elaborating on the reasons. “In doing so, it strives to achieve its objectives in ways that contradict the Slovak Constitution and other laws.”

From the procedural (i.e. legally formal) and also the matter-of-fact viewpoint, the ministry’s decision was problematic. For instance, the ministry did not abide by time limits pertaining to dissolving political parties that are stipulated by the law. The decision failed to state the facts that would corroborate the illegal nature of its activities. The SP immediately appealed the decision before the Supreme Court, which in July 2009 ruled that the Ministry of Interior had violated applicable procedures. Consequently, it cancelled the ministry’s decision to revoke the

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21 “Súdy: Najvyšší súd zrušil rozpustenie Slovenskej pospolitosti” [‘Courts: Supreme Court Cancelled Decision to Dissolve Slovenská pospolitost’], SITA news agency, July 1, 2009.
registration and referred the matter to the ministry for further action. In early July 2009, the SP resumed its activities as a duly registered civic association. However, the Ministry of Interior announced that it would continue to seek ways to revoke the registration, this time in compliance with Supreme Court’s reservations.

Considering the circumstances of the SP case, its programme and its leaders’ proclaimed aspirations, one may come to a conclusion that it was the most ambitious effort to date by a nationalist, racist or extremist formation to infiltrate the country’s political system and regular electoral competition in Slovakia’s post-November history. Although for a short period of time, the SP-NS did become the leader of the extremist, nationalist and far-right movement in the country. It overtly tried to inoculate mainstream politics with policies based on chauvinism and xenophobia, depriving entire population groups of their political and civil rights, ambitions to change the political regime’s character and replace parliamentary democracy with a non-democratic regime.22

Shortly later the SP resumed its activities in summer 2009 by organizing a series of public rallies protesting against “Gypsy terror” in East Slovakia and former SP leader Marián Kotleba announced in an interview for the portal of the Czech neo-Nazi Dělnická strana (Workers’ Party) that SP activists aimed to establish a new political party called Naše Slovensko (Our Slovakia). Soon afterwards, the SP website published Program Objectives of Naše Slovensko. The document featured demands for legislative and administrative changes that were presented in an overtly populist form. The new party aims to change the existing parliamentary system into a “system of direct democracy”, abolish the post of the president, halt provision of humanitarian aid to third world countries, renounce the country’s membership in NATO and “other organizations that restrict freedom and development of the Slovak nation” and establish militia units called National Guards. It also demanded adoption of further unspecified “suitable measures in the field of education, culture, foreign and immigration policy designed to prevent the Slovak nation from further losing its identity”.23 During the public rally in Krompachy in early September 2009, SP representatives called on local inhabitants to support founding of Naše Slovensko.

22 Available at: http://nepriatelia9demokracie.blogspot.com/2008/02/editorial_21.html
23 www.pospolitost.org
So far, the attitude of state administration organs towards the SP as well as public statements addressed to this group by leaders of relevant political parties indicate that there is a broader informal consensus among mainstream political parties about thwarting this organisation’s endeavour to become a legitimate actor on the country’s political scene. For the time being, this consensus includes all relevant mainstream parties but their motives may differ. While moderate left-wing, centrist and right-wing parties perceive similar groupings as a direct threat to the democratic system, the SNS views them primarily as potential competitors in soliciting votes of the nationalist electorate. It remains to be seen how solid and sustainable the said consensus proves to be.

**Nové slobodné Slovensko [New Free Slovakia]**

Another extremist organization that recently increased its activities is a civic association called *New Free Slovakia* (Nové slobodné Slovensko – NSS). Interestingly enough, the initials of the group’s name are identical to initials of the *National Socialist Party in Slovak* (Národnosocialistická strana). Public rallies organized by the NSS in 2009 commemorated anniversaries of the following historical events and figures: foundation of the wartime Slovak State, death of J. Tiso who was sentenced by the Czechoslovak post-war tribunal, birthdays of several political and military officials of the wartime Slovak State, the ‘small war’ with Hungary in 1939 (i.e. bombardment of Spišská Nová Ves); NATO bombardment of former Yugoslavia in 1999, separation of Kosovo from Serbia, etc. Members of the association regularly attend public events organized by other extremist organisations, for instance recent ‘protest’ rallies against “Gypsy terror”. They always defile with black flags featuring “NSS” initials written in Gothic script.

In August 2009, NSS representative Radovan Novotný refused assertions published by several Slovak media that his association was a Nazi organisation. He said that NSS members considered themselves “nationally sensitive people who love their nation, history and culture”. “Our thinking

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24 Available at: http://nss.sk
is more conservative compared to that of most other citizens,” he said. “We build on time-tested values and we don’t feel hatred with respect to other population groups living in Slovakia.”

**Národný odpor [National Resistance]**

On the one hand, dissolution of the SP-NS in 2006 weakened those segments of the extremist, nationalist and radical right-wing scene that strove to infiltrate the country’s public and political life through available legal methods (i.e. official registration, participation in elections, organization of public events, media coverage, etc.). On the other hand, it forced supporters of overtly fascist far-right formations, including members of neo-Nazi groups, to resort to the strategy of forming separate autonomous cells with *de facto* horizontal chain of command that are connected strictly through coordinated actions. This model of ‘autonomous nationalism’ or ‘leaderless resistance’ has been taken over from *National Resistance* (Národní odpor – NO), a militant far-right movement operating in the Czech Republic. Soon afterwards, groups of radical nationalists began to form *National Resistance Slovakia* (Národný odpor Slovensko – NOS) that applies the same strategy.

The first NO cell in Slovakia, Národný odpor Nitra, was formed after a group of Slovak extremists took part in a march organized by a Czech NO in Brno on May 1, 2005. At the end of May 2005, the group’s activists released the first statement signed simply by “NO Slovensko”.

The statement explained the reasons behind the movement’s formation and its basic program goals, including opposition to immigration, resistance against “privileged Gypsies” and against government and its political regime that was labelled as “tyranny previously unknown to humankind”. The first document in which NO Slovakia openly subscribed to “ideas of national socialism” as its principal objective was released in October 2005.

NO Slovensko explained the principle of ‘leaderless resistance’ in the following way: “After failures of other organizations, we have chosen different tactics of struggle, which is based

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26 Available at: [http://nepriatelia-demokracie.blogspot.com/2008/02/nrodn-odpor-slovensko.html](http://nepriatelia-demokracie.blogspot.com/2008/02/nrodn-odpor-slovensko.html)
mostly on creation of local and regional cells. This system is good because it reduces the risk of enemies infiltrating into our ranks in order to put an end to our organization’s activities. The entire organization operates on friendship and mutual trust. We do not have any central leadership; everything is based on communication between individual cells. The task of the cells is to form the national liberation base in their locations, disseminate the idea of National Resistance and monitor our enemies.”

The Nitra NO cell’s activities included participation in a “protest meeting against Hungarian chauvinism” in May 2006 (it was de facto a campaign meeting jointly organized by the SP-NS and SLS that was attended by 20 Nitra NO members) and a violent demonstration by 6,000 members of Czech NO cells on May 1, 2007, in Brno that was eventually dispersed by the police. NO Nitra also organized its own events. On March 16, 2007, (i.e. two days shy of the anniversary of founding the wartime Slovak State) it organized a “March against Drugs” attended by approximately 100 participants and in May 2007 it organized a “March against Homosexuality” attended by some 70 participants.

The Nitra NO cell remained alone in its campaign until summer 2007 when two new local NO cells were founded in Bratislava and Trnava. In August 2007, the three cells released a joint statement expressing their preparedness to struggle against the system. On March 14, 2008, on the anniversary of founding the wartime Slovak State, they organized a “March against Drugs” in Nitra together with the SP.

The NO has gradually evolved into an informal alliance of extremist, neo-Nazi and racist skinhead groups. They have organized a number of spectacular public events such as rallies, marches and demonstrations that were usually held on the anniversaries of historical events as well as a handful of ‘thematic’ events (e.g. marches for “the freedom of speech”, for “the future of next generations”, against “police brutality”, etc.). Some members of these groups have infiltrated football fan clubs and teamed up with local football hooligans, frequently provoking clashes with rivaling fan clubs and the police. During football games, they regularly chant racist and anti-Semitic slogans.
In the past, they also used banners frequently. However, this form of propaganda has declined recently, due in part to pressure by anti-racist NGOs whose activists request the police to intervene every time such banners appear. In the last three years, activists of the People against Racism civic association organized public campaigns against intolerance on football stadiums within the framework of a project called Football against Racism in Europe (FARE). They also monitored racist and/or neo-Nazi displays and symbols on football stadiums and alert the Slovak Police Force and the Slovak Football Association.\(^{27}\)

Activities of NO in Slovakia symbolize the resurrection of national socialist traditions and subscription to European racist movement, including ideals of Aryan beauty (NO rhetoric is often marked by anti-Roma sentiment) and revolutionary strategy - all in all, they aim to remove the liberal-democratic regime. NO is a militant organization that views violence as a legitimate tool of resistance. It is gradually strengthening its position on Slovakia’s far-right scene and undoubtedly has an ambition to become the dominant force of the far-right movement.

In May 2009, the Slovak Autonomous Nationalists organized a march “Against Globalization, Capitalism and for Social Security” in Košice. Except members of extremist groups, the event was also attended by members of Matica slovenská’s local youth association and representatives of Dělnická strana, a Czech neo-Nazi party (one of them even delivered a speech). While speakers talked about harsh racist, anti-Roma and anti-Semitic invectives, participants chanted anti-American and anti-Israel slogans, called for “free, social and national” life and celebrated the rise of nationalism in Slovakia. At the end of August 2009, two members of Matica slovenská’s local youth association in Košice signed a memorandum adopted at the rally of extremist groups in Nové Zámky.

The Slovak Autonomous Nationalists have created their own communication channel by launching the nacionalisti.net portal. The official goal of the website is to “encourage national activism and discuss contemporary problems that torment not only Slovak but also global community (e.g. globalization and related de-nationalization, loss of ideals, devastation of the environment, suppressing the freedom of thinking and fear to call problems their real names)”.

\(^{27}\) Available at: http://futbal.rasizmus.sk/category/monitoring/
The portal also admits to criticizing “black racism, policies of Israel and political correctness”. A similar portal in terms of discussed issues and furthered opinions is Beo.sk, a portal that describes itself as a “politically incorrect portal that is strongly influenced by the national paradigm and racial realism”.28

5. Voters, supporters and leaders

5.1. Electoral support and leaders’ profile of mainstream nationalists

The ‘mainstream’ nationalist SNS received votes of most radical nationalists in all previous parliamentary elections, scoring 13.94% in 1990, 7.93% in 1992, 5.40% in 1994, 9.07% in 1998, 6.97% in 2002 (split into 3.65% for the PSNS and 3.32% for the SNS. An internal rift stemming from party leaders’ personal animosity split the SNS in two equally strong, formally independent factions in 2001; both factions later reunited to form a single party again) and 11.73% in 2006.

As a relevant political force, the SNS appeals to a relatively broad share of the electorate as well as persons who wish to pursue a political career. It is a typical clientelist party that uses its participation in public power (i.e. in central government or local self-governance organs) to rake in material benefits for party leaders and cronies. During the current electoral term (2006 – 2009), several SNS leaders, including its chairman and its cabinet appointees, became entangled in corruption scandals.

Between 1990 and 2006, SNS Chairman Ján Slota held the post of mayor in the regional capital of Žilina. During his four consecutive office terms, he not only turned the town into a party stronghold but also developed a power system within the town and the region that was based on clientelism, corruption and unlimited powers of the mayor. By curbing certain civil rights (for instance the right to free access to information) and using authoritarian methods (e.g. intimidating opponents, controlling local media, pressuring members of the city council and enforcing personal and political loyalty from members of law enforcement organs), Slota turned Žilina into an enclave where liberal-democratic principles and standards were not applied in the full profile.

28 Available at: www.nacionalisti.net
SNS leaders have become notorious for their aggressive rhetoric with respect to political opponents and independent media as well as their preference of personal confrontation and conflicts in the past, they included mutual conflicts between party leaders, which in 2001 caused a rift within the party. Some leading party officials are also known for their vulgar behaviour and using non-normative language in public. The party lacks noteworthy intellectual and expert background; it is unpopular among liberally-oriented intellectuals. It attracts mostly individuals intending to advertise their ‘patriotic’ orientation, for instance employees of Matica slovenská or other cultural institutions. Some intellectuals close to the SNS may be considered loyalists of the former communist regime.

5.2. Electoral support and leaders’ profile of ultra-nationalists


The activities of both ultranationalist parties – SNJ and SĽS – are pursued by a limited number of people who feel nostalgia for the wartime Slovak State. The essence of their political program is historic revisionism and efforts to continue in the work of political models of the Slovak autonomist movement from the first Czechoslovak Republic and the wartime Slovak State. Both parties are politically quite insignificant and their activities remind one of performances of amateur clubs. They receive rather limited media attention only before the anniversaries of historical events. The SNJ has been led from the beginning by a former big beat bar singer who quit his career after the fall of the communist regime and joined the separatist movement between 1990 and 1992.; Allegedly, his band was regularly invited to play in garrisons of the occupation Soviet Army. The SĽS has its official headquarters in Banská Bystrica.
Election results of ultranationalist parties have always been insignificant and showed a declining trend. In 1992, they combined 0.84% of the popular vote (0.30% for SĽS, 0.23% for HzOS and 0.31% for SS-SNZ); they totalled 0.40% (0.27% for SĽS and 0.13% for SNJ) in 1998, 0.15% (SNJ) in 2002 and 0.16% (SĽS) in 2006.

Table 1
Results of nationalist parties in parliamentary elections in Slovakia (%)

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<tr>
<td>‘Mainstream’ nationalists</td>
<td>13.94</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>9.07</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>11.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>13.94</td>
<td>7.93</td>
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<td>PSNS</td>
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<td>3.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ultranationalists</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<td>0.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>SĽS</td>
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<td>0.30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNJ</td>
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<td>0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>SS-SNZ</td>
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<td>0.31</td>
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5.3. Socio-cultural, value and demographic background of sympathizers

A characteristic feature of SNS voters is significant inconsistency of views regarding socio-economic issues. For instance, their perception of reforms implemented by the centre-right administration of Mikuláš Dzurinda is rather ambivalent as the rate of those opposing the reforms among SNS voters was lower compared to voters of Fico’s Smer-SD and Mečiar’s ĽS-HZDS. Other typical features of SNS voters include strong ethnic nationalism, anti-minority sentiments and endorsement of etatism and authoritarianism. For instance, a majority of SNS voters believe it is primarily government’s responsibility to take care of citizens’ well-being. SNS supporters perceive the Slovak Republic as a strictly national state in which the Slovaks should have the decisive say, even at the expense of ethnic minorities. The SNS enjoys above-average voter support among men, first-time voters and people with primary education. On the other hand, its voter support is below average among people with university education, farmers and pensioners.
In the 2006 parliamentary elections, the SNS recorded above-average election results in Žilina, Trenčín and Banská Bystrica regions (i.e. in north-central part of the country) whereas its voter support in the two largest Slovak cities of Bratislava and Košice was perceptibly lower.

The two ultranationalist parties, namely the SNJ and the SĽS, are irrelevant in terms of voter support. They are practically parties without voters as they receive several thousands of ballots combined in parliamentary elections. It is virtually impossible to record such a small group of voters in public opinion polls because their combined share of the popular vote is at the level of statistical tolerance. However, it is safe to assume that these voters’ socio-cultural orientation is similar to that of SNS voters.

From the socio-demographic view, the category of extremist formations’ members and sympathizers is strongly dominated by young people and especially by men who make up most participants and attendants of public events organized by extremist groupings. Recently, though, these events have been increasingly often attended by residents of towns and villages where they are held, particularly in East Slovakia (e.g. rallies protesting against ‘Romany criminality’). Here, these events’ attendants included not only young men but also middle-aged and elderly people, pensioners, women, students, pupils and even mothers with children.

6. Radical right subculture

The extremist and neo-Nazi subculture includes a specific music scene, particularly rock bands with racist, anti-Semitic and Nazi repertoire such as Krátky process (Short Process), Juden Mord, NS Band, Ancestors, etc. The extremists also take advantage of the virtual communication space (i.e. the Internet) that allows them to disseminate information, communicate mutually, coordinate their activities and popularize specific fashion (i.e. style of clothing). Many neo-Nazis are active football hooligans who use football games to advertise their symbols and messages.

Extremist and neo-Nazi groups use music production and organization of concerts as the means of establishing the basis for mutual communication, advertising their ideas and raising funds for their own activities. The sale and distribution of different merchandise such as clothes, fashion
accessories and symbols serves the same purpose. To manifest their affiliation, members of the extremist, nationalist and far-right movement choose clothing of particular brands that feature specific motives, symbols and slogans. Most of them wear clothing brands such as EightyEight, Everlast, Lonsdale, Thor Steinar, Umbro, Wiking, Pretorian, R.A.C. or Hatecore and footwear brands such as Boot and Braces or Dr. Martens. In recent months, the demonstration of ‘national’ orientation and sympathies with Slovenská pospolitost, its program and activities has become wearing its logo that features the Slovak double cross (very similar to the one that was worn by members of the Hlinka’s Guard) on T-shirts, jackets and baseball hats.

In March 2009, one extremist website published a manual for participants and attendants of public events that are supposed to “express an opinion”, i.e. convey the message to the general public, but not to use physical force against ideological opponents or groups extremists view as enemies. The said manual is supposed to increase the success rate of public events organized by extremist groups, provide maximum anonymity to members of extremist groupings and make it more difficult for law enforcement organs to identify them.

An integral part of the manual was a detailed description of a specific style of clothing recommended to rally participants and attendants called Black Bloc (i.e. black shirts, trousers, caps and flags). Such clothing creates an optical impression of a homogeneous mass and makes it very difficult for the police to monitor event participants reliably. Compared to Black Bloc, the neo-Nazi or skinhead image is much more conspicuous, which is why extremists are gradually abandoning it when organizing public events. Furthermore, they believe that Black Bloc commands respect and looks presentably. It also confuses the police since it resembles the anarchist style of clothing and even makes it difficult for anarchists themselves to identify right-wing extremists during violent clashes.

In the chapter titled “How to Behave at Rallies”, the manual recommends rally participants to always keep within a group of people they know, to follow instructions issued by organizers, to avoid conflicts and to refrain from the use of alcohol before and during rallies. It also recommends rally participants to “be on alert” every time the police regroups and prepares for “picking” individuals from the crowd and even suggests to help the “picked” participants by
pulling them in the opposite direction. Last but not least, the manual provides useful advice for situations of retreat or physical conflict with the police.29

7. Issues on the agenda

7.1. “National” opinion stream, populist appeal

An important factor that catalyzes formation of favourable social conditions for activities of extremist forces is existence of the so called ‘national’ opinion stream whose sympathizers profess values such as nation, motherland and ethnic national state, placing them on the opposite pole from people who prefer values such as universal human rights, civil society principles, rule of law and democracy. Slovakia’s situation is even more peculiar because the ‘national’ stream does not only comprise members and sympathizers of radical, ultra-nationalist, extremist and far-right groups but also representatives of political parties that declare left-wing or social democratic orientation (including representatives of the dominant ruling party Smer-SD). An important actor of the ‘national’ stream is Matica slovenská, a state-financed cultural organization led by persons with overtly nationalist, anti-minority, isolationist and revisionist views.

Another fact that is hard to ignore is that some ‘mainstream’ political parties prefer a political appeal based on a combination of populist mobilization methods and elements of ethnic nationalism (i.e. national populism) as the means to drum up voter support before elections or justify practical political measures before the constituency. The national populist appeal reaches far beyond the traditional right-left division of the political spectrum.

The effectiveness of appealing to the electorate through populist methods that is in the long term successfully demonstrated by ‘mainstream’ political actors serves as some kind of a manual for representatives of the extremist scene. Particularly in recent months, extremist groups began to pursue specific activities aimed at appealing to the general public. They are striving to overcome their previous isolation and ‘reach out’ to the population by organizing public events that are

29 Available at: http://hlavuhore.wordpress.com/2008/03/27/248/
supposed to manifest their concerns about society’s current condition. For the time being, extremists are relatively cautious when advertising their views and presenting their proposals at public gatherings. They tend to tone down their naturally aggressive rhetoric and use rather general formulations compared to theses they proclaim within their own environment. This moderation may have two basic motives: first, avoiding potential punishment for violating the law, second, not deterring potential sympathizers right away by advertising excessively radical demands that could betray the anti-systemic nature of extremist groupings and highlight the risks inherent in implementation of their political program (i.e. conflicts, violence and destabilization).

7.3. Effort of conceptualization: Memorandum of the First Post-November Generation of the Slovak Youth

In August 2009, extremist and ultranationalist forces attempted to formulate their program objectives in a comprehensive manner in a document titled Memorandum prvej ponovembrovej generácie slovenskej mládeže (Memorandum of the First Post-November Generation of the Slovak Youth). The document was adopted as a joint resolution of participants of the public rally headlined Za budúcnosť našich detí (For Our Children’s Future), organized by a handful of nationalist groups in Nové Zámky. The event was held in the aftermath of the series of anti-Roma rallies organized by Slovenská pospolitost in East Slovakia and was supposed to express solidarity with participants of the rally in Šarišské Michaľany that ended in a violent clash with the police.

The said document is written in a pseudo-academic style, making references to renowned sociologists and political scientists such as Jan Koller, Zygmunt Bauman or Samuel Huntington but also notorious Holocaust denier Norman Finkelstein. Its characteristic features include the refusal of a liberal-democratic regime, questioning of basic principles of market economy, embracing historical revisionism, anti-Atlanticism, anti-Americanism, anti-minority sentiment, anti-Semitism and demonstratively subscribing to pan-Slavism and Christian roots.

Signed by representatives of extremist New Free Slovakia, ultranationalist Slovak Revival Movement and youth organization of Matica slovenská in Košice, the 17-item Memorandum argues that the Velvet Revolution from November 1989 did not represent any groundbreaking
change in society’s development as it merely legitimated the ongoing “theft at the expense of the nation and decent man” and redistributed society’s assets and resources among leading members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia while failing to make any “ideological, moral or personnel” changes in the leadership of political institutions.30

The document denounced the government’s official anti-fascist interpretation of World War II events in Slovakia (i.e. wartime Slovak State and the Slovak National Uprising) as “Bolshevik myths”. It refused the principle of political correctness and condemned “the imaginary campaign against extremism” as an undemocratic display and “the witch hammer” that undermines “freedom and privacy of individuals and groups”. It pointed out alleged misinterpretation of concepts such as nationalism, extremism, terrorism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia and expressed concerns over emergence of “new totalitarian regimes in the Euro-Atlantic civilization space”.

Signatories of the Memorandum condemned Slovakia’s participation in the NATO military intervention in former Yugoslavia and emphasized that they refuse to “be incorporated in the sphere of influence of the United States of America and Israel”, which is why they demand that Slovakia “immediately leave the military alliance of murderers and invaders, i.e. the North Atlantic Alliance”. They also pointed out the “genocide Israel perpetrates on the Palestinian nation”.

The authors of the document also warned against “pernicious effects of multiculturalism” and proclaimed their preparedness to “protect, preserve and pass onto new generations our cultural and spiritual legacy that is closely tied not only to our Slavic origin but also to cultural and historical development of the specific region of Central Europe”. The signatories refused “any cultural and spiritual pressure to alter our Slavic and Christian values – if we preserved any at all” and vowed to “guard and defend sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic against any unjustified territorial autonomist tendencies”.

The document addressed the so-called Roma issue in the following way: “The first post-November generation of the Slovak youth feels compelled to give a real name to the Gypsy population explosion in Slovakia … For the sake of our children, we insist on seeking a viable solution to inadaptability and antisocial behaviour to which thousands of Romany mothers bring up their children by their non-education. At the same time, we as non-Roma refuse to be discriminated against by being forced to contribute our money to measures aimed at endless privileging of one ethnic group that has produced no acceptable results in sixty years.”

7. 4. Extremists’ xenophobia

Principal elements of the political creed professed by Slovak extremists, radical nationalists and neo-Nazis are anti-democratic, anti-liberal, anti-leftist, anti-communist, anti-capitalist, anti-globalization, anti-Western, anti-American, anti-Israeli, anti-EU, anti-Turkey, anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic, anti-Roma, anti-Baha’i, anti-minority, anti-immigrant, anti-masonry and homophobic views and ideas whose ratio differs from one group to another. However, they all subscribe to and promote ethnic and racial homogeneity, white supremacy, various kinds of solidarity (including pan-Slavic solidarity), corporative state order, the need to introduce authoritarian or totalitarian regime and the use of violence against ideological and political opponents.

Compared to ultranationalists, the ideological foundation shared by extremists and neo-Nazis is less heavy on anti-Hungarian resentment. For them, ethnic and language differences between the Slovaks and the Hungarians are pushed to the background by racial closeness of two nations as well as by the extremists’ common hatred of members of other racial groups (i.e. Roma, Jews, people with dark complexion and immigrants from Asian and African countries).

A typical set of concepts shared by members of Slovak neo-Nazi groups includes admiration for Nazi Germany and its policies, embracing the concept of ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government) and the denial or even the approval of the Holocaust. With respect to international affairs, extremists express sympathies with Serbia in its confrontation with the West and the USA, condemn military operations of the United States and their NATO and Western allies in other countries (e.g. Iraq or Afghanistan), approve Russian nationalism and Russia’s imperialistic policies and endorse the ultimate political goal of radical Islam, which is to undermine or
completely remove the liberal-democratic system of government. However, the latter concept clashes with cultural Islamophobia on the local level as they also hate immigrants from Muslim countries.

7.5. Stereotypes, social distance and low empathy to others: tools in hands extremists

Radical nationalists and extremists pursue their activities in the social environment characterized by a relatively high level of social distance and distrust with respect to certain minority groups and/or lingering stereotypes about people of different racial or ethnic origin. Some of these groups (e.g. Roma, people with different sexual orientation or foreigners) are direct targets of extremist actions. According to a sociological survey carried out jointly by the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) and the Research Cabinet for Social and Biological Communication (KVSBK) within the framework of the COPART project, the Roma incur the greatest social distance of all ethnic groups; according to the Bogardus test, as many as 69% of respondents would not want a Romany family for neighbours (please see Graph 1).

The majority population continues to show a low degree of empathy with respect to sexual minorities. According to the said sociological survey, over two in three respondents believed that bisexuals (71%), gays (69%) and lesbians (68%) did not deserve the society’s helping hand (IVO/KVSBK/COPART, May 2008). A significant share of the population is also suspicious with respect to foreign immigrants. In a study on national populism in Slovakia, Oľga Gyárňášová argues that “certain anxiety regarding the inflow of foreigners may be documented by relatively frequent opinions that immigrants “contribute to the growth in crime” (43% of approving vs. 17% of disapproving answers) and “steal people’s jobs” (42% vs. 22%). On the other hand, a minority of Slovak citizens believe that immigrants will “benefit Slovakia’s economy” (11% vs. 46%) and represent “an asset for the society because they bring new ideas and culture” (18% vs. 35%). Generally speaking, two in three Slovaks (66%) adopt a negative position on immigrants who come to Slovakia to look for jobs and home (“It will be at the expense of our people and will cause coexistence problems”) while two in seven (28%) believe that they “will benefit our economy and enrich our culture”.

The fact that a significant proportion of the Slovaks tend to perceive the society’s overall structure through the ethnic prism plays into the extremists’ hands. A significant majority of Slovak citizens perceive contemporary Slovakia as a national state of the Slovak nation in which the Slovaks should have the decisive say. Five in eight respondents of Slovak origin (62%) endorsed this assertion while only three in eight of them (36%) believed that the Slovak Republic was a state of all citizens who live in it and therefore it must guarantee equal rights for all regardless of their ethnicity (IVO, May 2008). In order to provide a complex picture, we must add that most Slovaks pair the said belief with a conviction that minority rights in general should be thoroughly respected in democracy; such was the opinion of two in three respondents of Slovak origin (67%) while less than one in three of them (30%) believed that the majority was entitled to decide at the expense of minorities in democracy (IVO, May 2008).

7.6. Extremists and historic revisionism: mission almost impossible

It turns out that historic revisionism proselytized by extremists is unlikely to become their strongest mobilization tool. Representative public opinion polls carried out over the past 15 years do not seem to indicate increasingly positive perception of historical figures viewed as iconic by Slovak nationalists and extremists (e.g. Andrej Hlinka or Jozef Tiso); on the contrary, the share of those who perceive them positively rather tends to decline; negative perception prevails particularly in the case of Tiso.

Table 2

Public perception of Slovak historical figures (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive personality</th>
<th>Equally positive and negative</th>
<th>Negative personality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrej Hlinka</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jozef Tiso</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Public image of radical nationalist and far-right groups

According to public opinion polls, the social distance most people in Slovakia feel toward skinheads and neo-Nazis is matched only by the social distance they feel from drug addicts.

**Graph 1**

*How would you respond if the following people became your neighbours? (Combined share of responses “I would be upset” + “I would be worried” in %)*

![Graph showing social distance towards different groups](image)

**Source:** IVO/KVSBK/COPART, May 2008.

The Bogardus test reveals that almost five in six Slovaks (82%) would not want skinheads, neo-Nazis or drug addicts for neighbours. Three in four of them (75%) would not want to live next to inveterate alcoholics (please see Graph 1). For the sake of objectivity, though, we must add that such strong social distance from neo-Nazis came about as a result of the lingering image of skinheads and neo-Nazis as persons who resort to violence with respect to anybody who
disagrees, openly subscribe to extermination of entire population groups, demonstrate loyalty to the Nazi ideology, approve Nazi war crimes, use Nazi slogans and greetings (e.g. Heil Hitler) and proudly wear Nazi symbols (e.g. crosses, swastikas, eagles, etc.).

However, the physical appearance of extremist participants of recent anti-Roma demonstrations in East Slovakia differs essentially from the described image: they look more ‘civil’ to begin with and they do not openly advertise values ordinary citizens feel repelled by in the long term. They refrain from making public references to historic fascism or Nazism. Finally and most importantly, they highlight the issue most local inhabitants view as absolutely relevant for their everyday lives (i.e. ‘Romany criminality’). Thanks to this new image, it may not take too long before the substantial part of the population not only identifies with the extremists’ position on the so-called Roma issue but also accepts them as a legitimate social force or at least a group that will no longer be stigmatized by strong social distance.

In Šarišské Michaľany where the police acting on a request by the local council chairman intervened against extremists from Slovenská pospolitost and local residents who sided with them, discontented local inhabitants reacted by organizing a referendum on removing the local council chairman. This may certainly be interpreted as political success of Slovenská pospolitost whose activity initiated developments that might trigger a change in the power ratio in the said village.

In recent years, representatives of the ‘patriotic’ opinion stream (e.g. members and sympathizers of Matica slovenská) authored numerous statements that featured positive references to members of ultranationalist and extremist groupings including Slovenská pospolitost. They often described them as good-tempered young people who care about the nation’s well-being, historical traditions and national consciousness. Also recorded were sporadic mutual contacts between members of Slovenská pospolitost and hierarchs of the Catholic Church. Last but not least, some nationalist historians gathered around Matica slovenská and the Nation’s Memory Institute (ÚPN) took part in events organized by extremist and radical nationalist groups, including Slovenská pospolitost.
Slovenská pospolitosť published on its website a study on the wartime Slovak State by Tomáš Klubert, a historian with the ÚPN and editor-in-chief of the Pamäť národa [Nation’s Memory] magazine. Klubert protested against the move, arguing that the text was reused without his permission and that it had been written before he joined the ÚPN. Nevertheless, the very fact that an extremist organisation views a study written by a historian currently working with an official state institution as compliant with its own ideological fundamentals is nothing short of symptomatic.

Persons harbouring openly revisionist views on the wartime Slovak State do not dwell only among extremists and ultranationalists but also among some top representatives of ‘mainstream’ parties. A perfect example is Jozef Rydlo, an MP for SNS who regularly presents adoring statements on anniversaries of founding the wartime Slovak State or Ján Podmanický, an MP for Smer-SD who co-authored and edited a book of odes celebrating the president of the wartime Slovak State Jozef Tiso.

Through involvement in a local environmental project in Nitra (i.e. liquidation of an illegal waste dump), leaders of the ultranationalist Slovak Revival Movement established intense media communication with the mayor of this regional capital (elected for Smer-SD). The civic association informed that its project “received support from the mayor of Nitra”, arguing that the project’s smooth implementation was made possible thanks to “mutual cooperation” between the association and the town of Nitra.

In 2008, the media broadly publicized the case of Rastislav Rogel, an actor formerly working for the Slovak National Theatre and a member of Krátky proces and Juden Mord music bands, who is viewed as a symbolic figure of the Slovak neo-Nazi movement. Rogel openly supports the concept of Jews’ extermination. He was implicated in several violent criminal offences perpetrated against anti-fascists, including a brutal attack on the Bratislava-based Obluda club shortly upon his return from a rendezvous of neo-Nazi rock bands in Italy. The fact that Rogel is one of the most prominent figures among Slovak neo-Nazis did not seem to deter TV Markíza, the country’s largest private TV station, from featuring him in one episode of its popular soap opera. Quite symptomatically, Rogel appeared in the episode wearing an EightyEight T-shirt.
9. International contacts

The fact that Slovak extremist and radical right-wing groups emphasize their purely ‘patriotic’ character, reject internationalism, focus strictly on domestic issues and are essentially isolationist does not prevent them from drawing inspiration from similar groups operating in surrounding countries in order to achieve their goals. They maintain vivid contacts with their pendants abroad, participate in their events and invite their representatives to their own events organized in Slovakia.

Slovak extremist, far-right and nationalist groups often take over specific organizational and operative patterns (e.g. the concept of ‘autonomous nationalism’ or Black Bloc clothing style) from their counterparts operating in the Czech Republic. Their close cooperation with Czech extremist groups is based primarily on cultural and linguistic proximity as well as the two countries’ geographic closeness.

Although less intensely, Slovak extremists also cooperate with extremist groups from other EU member states, especially Germany, Austria, Italy, Romania, Hungary and Poland. Outside the EU, they maintain contacts especially with brethren organizations from Serbia and Russia. They frequently take part in demonstrations, meetings, rallies, marches and music concerts organized in these countries.

During the ‘protest’ in Šarišské Michaľany, leaders of Slovenská pospolitosť directly mentioned a similar meeting in Litvínov, the Czech Republic, as the source of their inspiration. The event in Litvínov was organized by Dělnická strana. Representatives of Dělnická strana and Slovenská pospolitosť openly speak of their mutual partnership. The rally in Šarišské Michaľany was attended by extremists from the Czech Republic and Hungary.

In July 2009, approximately 30 supporters of National Socialism from Slovakia, including members of three music bands, took part in a meeting of neo-Nazis from Hungary, Germany and the Czech Republic that was held in Győr, Hungary. The event that was supposed to symbolize
Slovak-Hungarian reconciliation (its official poster featured the slogan: “Hungarians and Slovaks Together, Never against Each Other!”) was organized by the National Workers’ Party, a Hungarian neo-Nazi formation. In August 2009, representatives of Slovak neo-Nazi groups attended a meeting commemorating the 22nd anniversary of death of Rudolf Hess that was organized in Budapest by local neo-Nazis. Several days earlier, Slovak neo-Nazis met with their Czech, Polish, Austrian and German counterparts in the Czech town of Nový Knín. The event that was attended by approximately 300 people featured speakers from Czech Dělnická strana, representatives of Autonomous Nationalists and the National Democratic Party from Germany. The event was accompanied by a concert of music bands from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany and Portugal.

10. Conclusions

There is a whole range of historic, socio-cultural, ethno-demographic and political factors that create a relatively rich breeding ground for the activities of extremist, radical nationalist and far-right groups in Slovakia nowadays. These factors include the following:

- Ideological and political legacy of the wartime Slovak State that encourages revisionist tendencies in the interpretation of historical events;
- Public and political discourse featuring strong nationalist elements;
- Complicated interethnic relations between the Slovaks and ethnic Hungarians;
- Tense bilateral relations with a neighbouring country (i.e. Hungary) that is inhabited by a nation whose members form the largest ethnic minority living in Slovakia;
- Strong social distance toward the Roma who make up a substantial share of the population in certain regions of the country;
- Negative effects of long-term social isolation during the communist regime on the population’s value orientations;
- Deeply rooted populist mobilization strategies preferred by most relevant ‘mainstream’ parties;
• Differentiating impact of the overall transformation process and especially pro-market socio-economic reforms implemented in the recent decade with regard to certain population groups (e.g. socio-professional, regional or ethno-demographic);
• Long-term negligence of certain serious social problems (e.g. unfavourable situation of the Romany population, regional disparities, inflexible education system);
• Absence of strong, well-profiled and authentic (as opposed to bogus) left-wing and liberal civic-oriented political formations rejecting ethnic nationalism in their programmes;
• Insufficiently effective repressive, preventive and prophylactic government policies with respect to extremists;
• Increasingly strengthened ties between domestic extremists and right-wing radicals and their partners abroad.

On the other hand, the factors that do or should restrict and/or complicate future activation of extremists and radical nationalists include the following:

• State’s official anti-fascist doctrine;
• Existing liberal-democratic system of the government;
• Country’s full-fledged membership in the EU that has an elaborate system of standards, principles and practices that create additional checks against recurrence of authoritarianism;
• Activities of non-governmental organizations and independent think-tanks that monitor the radical right-wing scene and regularly evaluate the overall social development in the country;
• Activities of independent media that expose extremist links and personnel background of radical right-wing groupings;
• The majority population’s lingering strong social distance toward members of the neo-Nazi movement;
• Cooperation with applicable organs of EU member states, including neighbouring countries, aimed at exposing and destroying international contacts between extremist groupings.
A determinant that may essentially influence mutual working of both sets of described factors is government policy, which is capable of affecting the power ratio between them. Under government policy, we hereby refer particularly to activities by government organs in the field of exposing and combating illegal activities of neo-Nazi groups and preventive measures designed to inhibit dissemination of extremist and radical nationalist ideas and practices. Part and parcel of the integral preventive system should be educational activities, especially those of the government-financed education system embracing true multiculturalism that take into account the diversity of the Slovak society, complexity of historical circumstances and contemporary social situation of various population categories including ethnic minorities. On the macro-social level, the success rate of tackling long-term social problems, coping with negative effects of transformation processes and future development of the country’s party system may prove to be of crucial significance. Potential strengthening of moderate non-nationalist mainstream parties and emergence of authentic modern left-wing and liberal political formations may successfully undermine the position of national populist formations and create a more favourable environment for combating extremism, radicalism and far-right nationalism on all levels of the society.