

# Explaining Different Paths of Democratization: The Czech and Slovak Republics

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Since the 'velvet divorce' in January 1993, the Czech and Slovak Republics seem to have developed in completely different directions: towards a role model and a problematic case of post-communist democracy, respectively. This supposedly sharp difference in development provides in itself a very interesting topic for study; it also offers a very useful means of evaluating the many theories that have been offered to explain (un)successful processes of democratization in Eastern Europe, by comparing the two countries in the light of their degree of 'democratic consolidation', thereby establishing in greater detail ways in which they differ. On this comparative basis the strengths of the main theories that have been put forward to explain different paths of democratization in the region more generally, and in these two republics in particular, can be tested. That experience shows how, relatively independently of existing social structures and institutions, political elites create and maintain a particular opportunity structure of political competition or conflict which, in turn, may develop its own momentum, which may endanger democracy.

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Less than ten years ago the Czech and Slovak Republics still constituted one country, Czechoslovakia, destined to become one of the most successful post-communist democracies. Together with Poland and Hungary, that country was among the favourites to join NATO and the EU, the highest foreign policy goal of every Central European country. However, and for different reasons, during 1992 the political leaders of the Czech and Slovak governments of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic decided to split the country and since 1 January 1993 the Czech and Slovak Republics have existed as separate entities.<sup>1</sup>

As was to be expected, the Czech Republic became in many respects the successor to the former federation: for example, it kept the flag, capital and president. Moreover, the country retained Czechoslovakia's standing as the

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success story of East European transition, joining NATO and becoming one of the five East European countries in the first wave of EU accession negotiations. Despite recent party political scandals and the increasing awareness that the country is not as advanced with its economic transition as was thought, the Czech Republic ranks among the most successful East European countries in both economic and political terms and it is generally considered to be a more or less 'consolidated democracy'.<sup>2</sup>

From the moment Slovak independence became an option, many observers both inside and outside the country warned of the dangers. However, contrary to most predictions Slovakia did not fare especially badly in economic terms. Rather – and this was less often predicted – the new republic met increasing problems on the political front. In contrast to the 'consolidated democracy' Czech Republic, Slovakia became referred to as 'border democratic',<sup>3</sup> 'partly-free',<sup>4</sup> 'nationalist-populist',<sup>5</sup> an 'illiberal democracy'<sup>6</sup> or (at best) a 'special case with doubts over its status'.<sup>7</sup> Even in the most recent literature, published after the electoral defeat of the Mečiar regime in October 1998 and the installation of the 'liberal-democratic' Dzurinda government, Slovakia continues to feature between countries such as Albania, Belarus and Croatia.<sup>8</sup>

This supposedly sharp difference in development provides in itself a very interesting topic for study, and provides a very useful set-up to evaluate the many theories that have been offered to explain the relative success of processes of democratization in Eastern Europe. In the next section, we will compare the two countries in the light of their degree of 'democratic consolidation' to establish in greater detail how the two countries actually differ. This will provide the basis for the following section, in which we test the strength of different general theories that have been advanced to explain different paths of democratization in the region more generally, and in these two republics in particular. We will argue that explanations for the different degrees of democratic consolidation in the two republics can be found in the different pattern of political competition among their elites rather than in economic, cultural or certain institutional factors. Crucially, we show how elites create and maintain a particular structure of political competition or conflict which, in turn, may develop its own momentum, which in our view may endanger democracy.

### **Democratic Consolidation in the Czech and Slovak Republics**

In line with much of the contemporary literature on democratization, we distinguish between two different conceptualizations of democratic consolidation. In the first, consolidated democracy is defined in a minimal sense, as a regime in which all politically significant groups adhere to the

established democratic rules of the game.<sup>9</sup> Democracy itself is defined in minimalist terms, as a set of institutions and procedures that guarantee competitive politics. The second notion is based on a more substantive definition of democracy and its consolidation.<sup>10</sup> Democracy is consolidated when not only political actors comply with the democratic rules of the game, but also these rules are seen as legitimate by the actors themselves and by a large section of the public. In addition, there are five definitional prerequisites for consolidation to exist: the existence of a free and vibrant civil society; the existence of a relatively autonomous political society; the subjection of political actors to the rule of law; the existence of a functioning bureaucracy; and an institutionalized economic society.

With regard to the minimal definition of consolidated democracy, the inevitable conclusion seems to be that both countries are consolidated democracies – a view widely shared among observers of post-communist politics.<sup>11</sup> In nominal terms, all the necessary institutions based on competitive politics and universal suffrage have been successfully introduced and sustained in the Czech and Slovak Republics. Genuinely competitive elections take place on a regular basis, allowing representation of the citizens' views. The rules governing the electoral processes have, so far, been democratic, and international observers have been generally satisfied with the manner in which past elections were conducted in both states. These elections determine who holds power and they have always been marked by the presence of a wide choice of alternatives to the incumbents.

From 1989 to the present date, different parties alternated in power in both countries. Basic freedoms of speech, press and organization are guaranteed, too, and written constitutions limit governments and provide for the division of powers between executive, legislative and judicial branches in a manner perfectly consistent with the procedural requirements of democracy. Moreover, despite attempts in both countries to enact legislation favouring the incumbents, such as changes to electoral laws or laws regulating party finances and access to state-controlled media,<sup>12</sup> from a minimal procedural point of view it is important that these legislative acts were adopted by constitutionally sanctioned bodies and procedures. One can certainly question the reasons, the morality and the political brinkmanship that lay behind many such attempts, but it is clear that they do not infringe the picture of procedural democracy. Moreover, similar showdowns of institutional manipulation and skewing of incumbents' power and resources are not uncommon in long-established Western democracies or in other post-communist countries.

However, what is clearly of concern is that even in minimalist terms Slovak democracy has shown increasing signs of decay in recent years. The

gravest examples were the effective cancellation of the deputy's mandate of the HZDS renegade, Gaulieder, the installation of the SNS MP, Hruska, and the unilateral cancellation by the authorities of the 1997 referendum on direct presidential elections – all against the recommendations of the Constitutional Court and in the latter case also of the Central Referendum Commission.<sup>13</sup> Arguably, these are the first serious signs of erosion of democratic consolidation in Slovakia even in elementary minimalist terms – issues for which we would certainly not find a comparable equivalent in the Czech Republic. Indeed, some observers have already cited these instances as proof that Slovak democracy is not consolidated in behavioural terms.<sup>14</sup>

Even a cursory application of the more substantial conceptualization of democratic consolidation clearly shows why Slovakia's process of democratization is evaluated as it is. The key problem of Slovak democracy lies in the application of the majority rule principle and the subsequent general pattern of political activity. In their definition, Linz and Stepan stress the indispensability of 'the rule of law' and 'the spirit of constitutionalism' for democratic consolidation.<sup>15</sup> This involves the understanding that political actors abide by rules because they see them as legitimate, not just because they see them as 'strategically' more convenient than some other alternative. Evidently, when measured against the more demanding criteria of democratic consolidation, Slovakia displays more signs of an unconsolidated than of a consolidated democracy.

A striking feature of political activity in Slovakia is that, while elementary democratic procedures still remain largely intact, not least because of a great deal of skilful brinkmanship with the legal loopholes on the side of the HZDS-led government and the fact that the country has been subjected to severe international pressures, its broader pattern is characterized by a sharp meta-institutional and national-identity conflict, on the one hand, and deeply personalized politics that revolved around Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, on the other hand. The political stakes in contemporary Slovak politics have been gradually raised and provide for sharp polarization and disunity within the elite, whereby opposition and government forces alike perceive each other as illegitimate.<sup>16</sup> The political conflict revolves around the dogged and protracted struggles over constitutional matters, rights of opposition, and the rights of minorities, with the heaviest artillery of rhetoric and means employed in these exchanges.

In the post-1994 elections and under the reign of the HZDS–SNS–ZRS government, this structure of conflict produced symptoms barely compatible with the spirit of constitutionalism or rule of law: the Constitution itself was repeatedly subjected to amendment for clear party advantage (mostly without success thanks to the qualified majority

requirements); horizontal accountability between state institutions was drastically cut by a combination of revisions in prerogatives and changes of personnel in the key institutions initially designed to check on the government's power;<sup>17</sup> the obstructionist behaviour of governmental authorities<sup>18</sup> undermined trust in the independence of the state bureaucracy.

Moreover, the combination of the government's institutional manipulations with the underlying confrontation within Slovakia's political elite resulted in a vicious and strange dynamic of conflict resolution: the government proposed a law; this law was usually passed without any amendments or input by the opposition in parliament; the president vetoed it, usually at the instigation of the opposition; a parliamentary (governmental) majority re-approved it in the original form; and then either the president or the opposition used their right to ask the Constitutional Court to judge on the law's compatibility with the Constitution. The Constitutional Court thus became the only and key Slovak institution able to challenge the government – being upgraded from the 'Third Chamber' to the de facto 'Second Chamber'<sup>19</sup> – and the outcomes of legislative activity normally depend on the subsequent ability or will of the government majority to avoid, re-interpret or violate the Court's rulings.

These negative symptoms of the previous Slovak regime have inevitably been reproduced in the other 'arenas of consolidated democracy'. Although a great deal of freedom and independent political and social activity is exercised on the local level and among the increasingly modern, organized and action-capable societal groups,<sup>20</sup> research by Darina Malová<sup>21</sup> suggests that the autonomy of civil society has been severely circumvented by concerted actions of the Slovak ruling elite. The many legislative acts involving, for example, foundations, universities or local governments attempted to squeeze civil society actors out of existence, and where such state actions ran into the resilience of better-organized and -coordinated actors (such as trade unions), the ruling HZDS exercised a 'divide and rule' strategy, granting privileged access to politically loyal groups or creating their own party-affiliated groups competing with those that opted for independence and disobedience.

In a similar vein, the cancellations of voucher privatization and its replacement by direct sales, alongside the government's total control over the bodies responsible for privatization of state property, are clear indications of the changing agenda of economic transformation. These acts in themselves are neither undemocratic nor necessarily changing the general direction towards a market economy. But they did create serious impediments to the development of a universal legal and regulatory framework essential for the existence of an 'economic society', which could institutionalize market exchanges and separate them from the state

apparatus and political actors. Instead, the evidence suggests that the Slovak elites systematically engaged in patronage-orientated allocation of economic benefits, turning privatization into pork-barrel politics rewarding those inside and close to ruling parties.<sup>22</sup>

However, this should not obscure the fact that, measured against the same demanding definition, the Czech Republic will hardly qualify as a fully consolidated democracy either. What clearly separates the country from its eastern neighbour is the significantly more developed and widely respected system of horizontal and vertical accountability between institutions, plus the overall pattern of political activity which takes place within these institutions. The protracted wars between different state bodies, such as those which occurred in Slovakia between the president on the one hand and the parliament (or its majority) and the government on the other,<sup>23</sup> are basically unknown in the Czech Republic; or, when clashes occur, they at least do not lead to subsequent attempts to eliminate rival institutions from the political landscape. The Constitution has also gained widespread acceptance among the elite and the public alike, at least in the sense that blatant and overt attempts to manipulate it for partisan advantages were softened by a sort of 'constitutional conservatism' which gained momentum from the document's adoption in the winter of 1992. Equally, although strong majority rule has been the guiding principle of the parliamentary process and the laws that regulate it, this has not resulted in severe imbalances in favour of ruling majorities or the exclusion of opposition from supervisory and overseeing bodies, such as parliamentary committees and commissions, or the Independent Control Office.<sup>24</sup>

However, the picture becomes bleaker if one checks the civil or economic societies – the other arenas of consolidated democracy identified by Linz and Stepan. In contrast to the prudent and settled political society, most visibly represented to the outside world by the skilful leadership of Václav Havel and Václav Klaus, the character and legal regulatory framework necessary for civil and economic societies remain the subject of political battles, leaving both arenas lagging well behind. Political controversies involving the decentralization of government through the creation of regions, reluctantly pursued by various governments, specifically those led by the ODS, and also the battles involving laws on non-profit associations or labour codes, all testify to the desire, however subtly pursued, of at least some members of the elite effectively to exercise control, and even monopoly, over areas feared to constitute a potential challenge to their existing dominance.

After an analysis of the poorly developed civil society in the Czech Republic, Andrew T. Green and Carol Skalnik Leff observe that '[t]his stunting of the political process – an unevenness in the evolution of

democratic institutions and processes – carries risks for the management of future political controversy'.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the political crisis that hit the Czech Republic at the end of 1997 may well be attributed, at least partly, to accumulated deficits in the development of associational life and the legal framework of organized access of this sphere to the state and policy-making processes.<sup>26</sup> This crisis also showed that, despite the neo-liberal rhetoric and supposedly 'rolled-back state', the policies of the Czech governments towards economic society were quite interventionist and, given the scale of illegal party funding and corruption that has now become known, also involved elements of pork-barrel politics.

Taking all this into account, what appears crucial is that, in comparison with Slovakia, in the Czech Republic many of these violations of and deviations from democracy more strictly defined neither grossly affect mutually balanced and accountable relationships between institutions, nor produce a zero-sum and bitter conflict within the country's political elite. Although plagued by numerous scandals, the Czech Republic has not witnessed attempts to forestall police investigations and criminal prosecutions of these events, or to undermine several non-party or all-party investigations into the matters of public concern.<sup>27</sup> Equally, while civil society received an arguably indifferent treatment from the state and party elites, all the continuing processes and debates surrounding its future development are subject to open contestation on the political scene, without the danger of slipping into the same type of overcharged and chronic controversy over democracy characterizing Slovakia.

In sum, the process of democratization in the Czech Republic seems to have produced a democratic system which, thanks to its internal incentives and structural underpinnings, guarantees that its deficiencies may be corrected over time, by means of peaceful evolution. In contrast, the process of democratization in Slovakia has produced a democratic system operating with internal incentives and a structure of conflict profoundly endangering its elementary pluralist character, a system requiring a radical rupture with its political practices if it is to progress in the future.

### Explaining Different Paths of Democratization

Explanations of democratization and its different patterns can roughly be clustered around three sets of variables: *structural*, such as the level of socio-economic development, patterns of modernization and industrialization, and prevailing cultural patterns, all of which can be linked to the modernization paradigm; *institutional*, such as designs of executive-legislative relations and electoral systems and the shape of parties and party systems; and *actor-behavioural*, such as the power

constellation of elites, or even very particular and contingent policy decisions. The latter two categories are especially prominent in transition theories emphasizing strategic choices and leadership processes.<sup>28</sup>

The principal distinction among these three sets of variables lies in the degree of determinism or intentionality with which they influence current outcomes.<sup>29</sup> The structures are the long-term cultural, economic and social preconditions that shape the present trajectories of democratization. Structural variables generate constraints and opportunities for political actors in a way relatively independent of their action. They are the lasting determinants, often stemming from the distant past or country-specific historical experiences. Actor-behavioural variables, on the other hand, emphasize a considerable amount of freedom from structures. Strategies of elite actors and their mutual relationships during and shortly after the breakdown of regimes are crucial in shaping paths of democratization. Intentionality and immediate action are here considered more important than long-term structures and rigid determinants. Institutional variables can, in this respect, be placed somewhere between the structures and actors. Institutions may reflect long-term cultural and social patterns and, at the same time, provide constraints on actors' behaviour. The emphasis laid on institutions among the proponents of actor-orientated transition theories stems largely from their preoccupation with rules of the game and the shape of institutions which emerge during and shortly after the period of the breakdown of the authoritarian regime.

Within these broad categories, several overlapping explanations have already been proposed to account for different patterns of democratization in Eastern Europe, which all could theoretically shed light on the diverging paths of democratic consolidation in the Czech and Slovak Republics. Most frequently, these have included individual factors such as different modes of extrication from communism, namely radical breakaway and the presence of large counter-elites as opposed to a mere transformation of old elites; different levels of modernization; different levels of stability of communist rule, that is the presence or absence of internal revolts against the communist regimes; the relative strength of civil societies in different countries; and different historically induced cultural traditions, namely either the prevalence of the Ottoman, or the dominant influence of Austro-Hungarian and northern European traditions.<sup>30</sup>

The trouble is, however, that none of these explanatory factors, at least if considered on their own terms, will yield sufficient explanatory capacity to illuminate our two cases. The Czech and Slovak Republics, rather than displaying marked differences, appear to share many of these characteristics, including obviously the same type of communist regime. Regarding the mode of extrication from the communist regime and the

relative strength of civil society, broad opposition movements (Civic Forum in the Czech Republic and Public Against Violence in Slovakia) were involved in the breakdown of the Czechoslovak communist regime, and both groups also dominated the round-table talks and the subsequent first free elections in the respective parts of the former federal state; elements of opposition civil societies were present in both countries under communism (groups around Charter 77). Although civil society was perhaps weaker in the Slovak than in the Czech part,<sup>31</sup> it is clear that both were weak in comparison with Poland or Hungary (though perhaps stronger than in Bulgaria or Albania).

The other three broad explanations which figure prominently in the literature on democratization – economic, cultural and what we term here 'aggregated institutional' – will not fully bear the burden of explanation for our two cases, either. First, although large historical disparities between the Czech and Slovak parts in terms of levels of socio-economic development persisted until the end of the Second World War (measured in related indices of modernization such as the degree of industrialization, technological development and levels of education and urbanization), they were evened out by the concerted and rapid process of the communist-led modernization and industrialization of Slovakia. The result of these policies was that, towards the late 1980s, the Czech and Slovak societies became very similar in macro-economic terms.<sup>32</sup> Surely, the application of the unifying Soviet model of modernization and industrialization bore all the hallmarks of the distortions of a centrally planned economy. In comparison with the situation in the Czech part, the communists implanted heavy industries, in particular armaments production, into the initially rural-based Slovak economy. With the end of redistributive economic measures, associated with the pursuit of radical shock-therapy reform by the first post-communist Czechoslovak government, large parts of these industries collapsed, putting a heavy burden on Slovak economic transformation.

The key disadvantages in the structure of the Slovak economy were thus the main reasons for the steeper decline in production and the higher rate of unemployment in Slovakia than in the Czech lands, and they certainly played a role in the splitting of the country at the end of 1992.<sup>33</sup> However, it is striking that, contrary to general expectations, and despite the rhetoric of Mečiar's governments about halting shock-therapy policies, after the split Slovakia has continued the radical economic policies and has performed reasonably well in terms of its basic macro-economic indicators, such as GDP growth, inflation, trade deficit, balance of payments, or level of unemployment.<sup>34</sup> In fact, from 1994 onwards the country virtually equalled the performance of the Czech Republic – whose initial impressive achievements in radical economic reforms were mainly 'achieved'

rhetorically under the banner of the big-bang reforms of Klaus's governments – and also that of the many supposed front-runners of consolidation in the region.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, while the improved performance of the Slovak economy coincided with worsening problems in democratic consolidation, the Czech Republic appears to show the opposite linkage.<sup>36</sup>

Secondly, there is little empirical evidence to support propositions about their deep cultural differences,<sup>37</sup> and in particular the 'civic' as opposed to 'traditionalist' cultures prevailing in the Czech and Slovak Republic respectively.<sup>38</sup> Admittedly, many sociological studies pointed to a different electoral climate in the two republics before the splitting of Czechoslovakia. These differences in attitudes between Czechs and Slovaks on the mass level were related to the views concerning the common state, the radical reforms, unemployment, the role of the state in the economy, the traditions of the First Republic, or the legacy of the war period.<sup>39</sup> However, even accepting that these differences could partly account for the upsurge in popularity of 'nationalist-populist' forces in Slovakia, and hence to the splitting of the federation, it was unclear what changes these attitudes would undergo after that event, given that they were related primarily to the issue of Czecho-Slovak coexistence, and were often evaluated on the basis of a highly select number of individual surveys.

Indeed, Kevin Krause's systematic analysis of mass-level opinions in the Czech and Slovak Republics, based on the results of more than 25 surveys between 1990 and 1995, is tellingly entitled 'Different but not *that* Different'. The author concludes his analysis of several important dimensions of popular attitudes with a note that

Slovaks and Czechs are different but the similarities in their opinions far exceed the differences ... even when the difference in mean between the two populations exceeds 15 percentage points an overwhelming share of the two populations (over 82%) hold an identical set of opinions. On nearly all questions cited here, the difference in means is considerably smaller than 15 percentage points and on many questions the Slovak and Czech populations are extremely similar.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, when the attitudes of the Slovaks are compared with those of a larger pool of East Europeans, they are generally closest to those of the Czechs and even far more similar to the attitudes of the citizens of consolidated democracies (Hungary and Poland, for example) than to those of other problematic democracies, such as Bulgaria or Romania, let alone Russia.<sup>41</sup> A very relevant example is provided by Richard Rose,<sup>42</sup> who presents data on popular support for authoritarian alternatives (army, communist regime, strong leader, reject all) in seven Central and East

European countries and Russia. For all different alternatives, popular support in Slovakia is very low, almost similar to the Czech Republic (and virtually identical to Hungary), far below the scores in Bulgaria or Russia. And finally, irrespective of comparisons, ever since the fall of communism, a significant majority of the Slovak population has consistently supported parliamentary democracy, while only a small minority preferred authoritarianism or the old communist regime.<sup>43</sup>

To be sure, this is not to deny that differences exist on the mass level, and that these may bear upon the possible explanation of the observed divergent patterns of democratic consolidation. But the relative insignificance of attitudinal differences between the two populations, particularly in a broader comparative perspective, essentially requires further exploration of how these micro-structures and characteristics are channelled (and perhaps retrospectively reinforced) by Czech and Slovak elites and institutions to produce these actually quite significant differences in political outcomes on the macro-level. In other words, we need to look beyond over-generalized accounts of either socio-economic or cultural differences to account for our divergent patterns.<sup>44</sup> We need to bind these differences with a clear focus on institutions and elites.

However, and thirdly, it is important to note again that differences in political outcomes cannot be rooted in what we term here 'aggregated institutional' explanations. By this we mean explanations pointing to different institutional frameworks and their possible effects on processes of democratic institutionalization and consolidation: in other words, the well-established debates concerning the payoffs between presidential and parliamentary systems, proportional representation (PR) and majoritarian electoral systems, and the various combinations of these basic institutional pillars of modern democracies. Both countries have for long been operating with essentially very similar institutional frameworks.<sup>45</sup> From a broader comparative perspective, there is virtually no difference in the shape of the macro-institutional structures of the two countries. Hence, it would be highly questionable to trace divergent outcomes of democratic consolidation to these types of institutional effects.

This also means rejecting the popular argument that the problematic democratization in Slovakia is caused mainly by its 'hurriedly drafted and vaguely formulated constitution'.<sup>46</sup> After all, various other post-communist countries have managed to keep on the right path of democratization despite a far from perfect Constitution, not least the Czech Republic.<sup>47</sup>

What, then, does account for the differences between the Czech and Slovak Republics? We suggest that explanations can be traced primarily to the different character of competition among political elites, which derives from the presence and dominance of nation- and identity-related questions

in Slovakia, and the almost total absence of these in the Czech Republic. Given that elites in both countries operate within political parties, it follows, first, that it is the specific and different nature of party competition that shapes different outcomes in democratic consolidation; and, second, that this different nature of party competition derives from a simultaneous process of state- and nation-building in Slovakia, acting as the source of fundamental political and institutional conflicts, and the largely resolved character of these issues in the Czech Republic, where political conflicts focus on issues of a less divisive nature.<sup>48</sup> In other words, the crucial factors to account for our differences lies in demography, consequent problems of nationhood and statehood, and the politics of national identity. These variables, given their politically less salient character, received almost no systematic academic attention in reference to transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America,<sup>49</sup> but came to the forefront of analysis during transitions in Eastern Europe, with many authors arguing that this is a specificity which sets this region's processes of democratization apart.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, it requires no more than a cursory glance at the political elites and party systems in the two countries to demonstrate the manner in which issues associated with nationhood and state-formation bear on political outcomes. Unlike the Czech political elite, united behind basic democratic principles and rules of the game, the Slovak elite is divided to the point where the overall political and institutional structure is dominated by two almost irreconcilable camps of opponents (each with its own divisions and conflicts), both espousing diametrically opposing conceptions of democratic rules and procedures and views of politics. Most importantly, ever since Mečiar's first removal from governmental office – during his reign as the leader of the Slovak government during the federal years – and the consequent formation of his HZDS in 1991, elite divisions and rival positions have basically been framed as struggles over the 'right and proper' defence of Slovak national identity and interests. These divisions, involving persons as well as institutions, gained momentum over several electoral periods and governmental changes and reached a level of elite antagonism endangering the entire fragile political order. Carol Skalnik Leff captures the problem accurately by pointing out that

socio-economic and national-identity issues that resonate through the political crisis are not a mere cleavage politics [...], potentially susceptible to elite bargaining and accommodation. They have become instead elements in a politics of hyperbolic 'life or death' struggle over the meaning of Slovak independence.<sup>51</sup>

Nowhere has this become more apparent than in the structure of party competition. Although written for a different time and territory, the famous

cleavage model of Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan<sup>52</sup> can help to illuminate the difference in party competition in the present-day Czech and Slovak Republics. In terms of their Parsonian *a-g-i-l* paradigm, political competition in the Czech Republic is predominantly situated at the moderate *a* end of the functional dimension, pointing to interest-specific oppositions, whereas in the Slovak Republic political competition is situated at the more extreme *i* end of that dimension (that is, ideological oppositions in 'friend or foe' terms) and at the *g* end of the territorial axis (oppositions within the national established elite).

Empirical research clearly shows that the Czech Republic's party system competition is of a unidimensional nature, with the dominant conflict structured alongside the socio-economic dimension.<sup>53</sup> The Czech parties compete primarily on positions clustered around questions of market liberalism and economic populism, and the other existing dimensions (nationalism and religion), while important for individual parties (SPR-RSČ and KDU-ČSL), play a significantly less important role in shaping the overall structure of competition. The composition of government coalitions has so far been a perfect embodiment of this structuring, with either right-of-centre governments of ODS, ODA, KDU-ČSL (1992, 1996) or the left-of-centre government of ČSSD (1998) taking on the respective roles of government and opposition.<sup>54</sup>

By contrast, the Slovak party system can be characterized by several dimensions of competition, of which a dimension clustered around national and collective identity questions appears the most important in structuring the party political conflict.<sup>55</sup> While other dimensions exist, most notably the socio-economic dimension, it mainly provides a potential for disagreements for parties within the two blocs, rather than a potential for the structuring of conflict between the blocs. The composition of government coalitions has reflected these dimensions of competition with, on the one hand, party marriages of HZDS, SNS and later ZRS involved in Mečiar's governments (1992, 1994), largely united on national and identity questions but potentially divided on socio-economic ones. Both Moravčík's temporary government (1994) and the new Dzurinda government, on the other hand, consisted of a similarly ideologically diverse set of all other parties, united mainly in opposition against Mečiar and his allies.

It is important to note, however, that 'identity politics is much broader than the ethno-national form to which such politics is often reduced',<sup>56</sup> both by certain politicians and by most scholars. The main division within Slovak politics is between different groups of Slovak citizens rather than between 'ethnic Slovaks' and 'ethnic Hungarians'.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the main struggle within Slovakia is at least as much over the process of *state*-building as it is over that of *nation*-building. Although the two processes are

closely related in theory, and clearly overlap in Slovak practice, they are two *separate* processes.

Simply stated, it could be said that Slovak politics revolves around the question, 'are you for or against Mečiar?'. Moreover, the fact that Mečiar is 'unable to govern without crisis and confrontation' has been a major reason for the increased polarization of Slovak politics.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, a more fundamental division underlies the personalized struggle: how to deal with 'outsiders' (including both national minorities and the international environment)<sup>59</sup> in a majoritarian-authoritarian or a consensual and democratic manner.<sup>60</sup>

We suggest, therefore, that the new Slovak state with its many unresolved issues (for example, its international position and the Hungarian minority) created a perfect 'political opportunity structure' for the skilful populist Mečiar, whose polarizing and crude power politics brought Slovakia away from the path of democratic consolidation. The Czech Republic, by contrast, considered itself from the outset as the successor to the Czechoslovak state, primarily adjusting itself to the changed reality (that is, changing from a federal into a unitary state). Even if Klaus was a more moderate politician than Mečiar, his attempts at concentrating more power in the hands of the executive were also constrained by the Czech (or Czechoslovak) 'institutional tradition'.

Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, while both politicians were largely driven by egocentric power motives, Klaus argued the necessity of the splitting of the country mainly on the basis of general economic and practical arguments (that the federation had become unmanageable), while Mečiar had bargained mainly on the basis of national (or nationalist) arguments (namely, defending 'Slovakia's rights and interests'). As the main (or even sole) Slovak participant in the decision to split Czechoslovakia, Mečiar had a major advantage over his Slovak competitors: as the accidental Father of the Fatherland, he was to a large extent able to create the initial identity and expectations of the new Slovak state.<sup>61</sup> In addition, his ousting from power in 1991 had given him the opportunity to build his own political organization, which was (and remains) the best-organized party in Slovakia. As the programmatic differences between the main parties (the KDH-DU-SDK, SD, HZDS – and now SOP) were and still are rather small – all parties want some form of social market economy and pro-Western foreign policy, for example – Mečiar differentiated himself from the opposition by personal and polarized politics. Over the years this has developed into an all-out struggle over the state, as Mečiar and his substantial clan increasingly took over state agencies and property. Moreover, the polarization drove the Mečiar group into a corner: either they stayed in complete power (with whatever means

necessary) or they would lose all: political power, economic assets, and in some cases even their personal freedom.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, if one is to choose strictly between structural, institutional and actor-behavioural variables, it appears that the different outcomes in democratic consolidation in the Czech and Slovak Republics must be explained by agency-bound variables, namely such established and fashionable factors in the literature on democratization as political elites and patterns of party competition. Rather than deep cultural differences between the two countries on the mass level, differences in economic performance, or a previous communist regime of different nature, it is the elites and political competition which function in a different way, and this is what accounts for the different political outcomes. True, the dominance of questions related to nationhood and statehood in Slovak post-communist politics, and the almost total absence of these in the Czech politics, may be seen as an historical artifact and, therefore, something of a given element in the structure. Historically, the debate on national issues served as the most fundamental divide within the pre-war Slovak elite – a divide which also ran through the history of the Slovak Communist Party after the Second World War.<sup>63</sup> However, our analysis shows that, over time, the Slovak elites framed the political conflict quite independently of the pre-existing social divisions, and it is in this sense that we ascribe primacy to political elites and parties, rather than to historical context (structural variables), in our explanation of the Slovak path of democratization.

### Conclusions

The analysis of divergent paths of democratization in the Czech and Slovak Republics suggests three conclusions. First, the Czech Republic is very unlikely to regress into the pattern of elite and party competition typical of Slovakia. The reason for this is that there is little of such regressive potential either on the mass level or in historical circumstances for elites to exploit. The relative ethnic homogeneity, together with (perceived) established traditions of statehood and nationhood, are primary reasons for this optimism. The Czech elite would have to exert a great deal of political skill and activity to open issues that are largely considered settled. The processes of accession to the European Union, looming on the horizon and possibly opening issues of national identity and sovereignty, will surely provide for a further opportunity to test this proposition. But at the moment, the case of the Czech Republic clearly shows that ethnically and culturally homogeneous states, as well as states without a significant external national problem (such as a sizeable and active minority living outside – or inside – its border), provide more favourable conditions for the establishment of



democracy, a point already emphasized in Dankwart Rustow's seminal article on democratic transitions.<sup>64</sup>

The second important conclusion is that Slovakia is not doomed to failure forever, because there is only relatively little which holds the current pattern together, especially on the mass level. Or, as a recent study on public opinion in Slovakia concluded, 'The years 1996 and 1997, then, brought not only the strengthening of authoritarian trends and a weakening of the rule of law, but hopeful signs of a more activist, democratic political culture.'<sup>65</sup>

In other words, there is nothing inevitable about the Slovak's path of democratization, and any fatalistic predictions based on a belief in Slovakia's backwardness, cultural inferiority or fundamental lack of modernization are misplaced. This is perhaps precisely the reason Slovakia is considered in so much contemporary writing on democratization in the region as a sort of uneasy 'borderline case'. But, we would argue, not for long.

The anti-Mečiar opposition gained a significant victory in the 1998 elections, and subsequently formed a broad coalition government. All signs point to the new government bringing Slovakia back on the earlier path of democratic consolidation, although a great deal of skilful leadership and dealing will be needed to offset some of the negative effects of previous years of political polarization. However, as Sharon Fisher has argued,

the results of the 1998 parliamentary elections reveal the ruling parties' lack of success in promoting their image of the nation. Clearly, the Mečiar government failed to see that as the country moved further from the previous, communist regime, political scare tactics and discourse about the 'threats' to the nation would no longer be as successful as they had been some years earlier.<sup>66</sup>

Obviously, the processes of state- and nation-building in Slovakia are not completed yet. However, the initial anxieties have disappeared. Moreover, a whole new generation has come of voting age which has never consciously experienced anything other than Slovak statehood. Not surprisingly, these young voters are less worried about internal and external 'threats' to the young state.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, the pattern of political competition in Slovakia suggests that its political elite indeed 'failed the people',<sup>68</sup> at least in the sense that the uncompromising and damaging character of party or elite conflict has largely contradicted the sharpness or polarization among those who elect these elites. It is simply striking that the Slovak case is characterized by a relatively mild conflict on the mass level, on the one hand, and a severe and fundamental conflict on the party elite level on the other hand – in other words, 'reversed consociationalism'.<sup>69</sup> This speaks volumes for Sartori's

general observation linking the structuring of party systems to endogenous preferences and the actions of parties, rather than only to exogenously induced societal structures.<sup>70</sup>

It also underlines the importance of elites in the political process in general, and during democratization processes in particular. Even if often criticized for their inability to produce a coherent theory or testable hypotheses, democratization theories emphasizing strategic choices and leadership processes build on precisely such assumptions. They stress the autonomy of the political, and in doing so point to the real possibility that conflicts which dominate a given polity may derive from the interests of those engaged in political competition, rather than from objective social conditions.

## APPENDIX

## ACRONYMS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

*Czech Republic*

ČSSD	Czech Social Democratic Party
KDU-ČSL	Christian Democratic Union-Czech People's Party
KSČM	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia
ODA	Civic Democratic Alliance
ODS	Civic Democratic Party
SPR-RSČ	Association for the Republic-Republican Party of Czechoslovakia
US	Freedom Union

*Slovak Republic*

DU	Democratic Union
HZDS	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia
KDH	Christian Democratic Movement
SDK	Slovak Democratic Coalition
SDL	Party of the Democratic Left
SNS	Slovak National Party
SOP	Party of Civic Understanding
ZRS	Association of Workers in Slovakia

## NOTES

1. For some of the many explanations of the 'velvet divorce', see Sabrina Petra Ramet, 'The Reemergence of Slovakia', *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.22, No.1 (1994), pp.99-117; Sharon L. Wolchik, 'The Politics of Ethnicity in Post-Communist Czechoslovakia', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol.8, No.1 (1994), pp.153-88; Jiří Musil (ed.), *The End of Czechoslovakia* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1996); Otto Ulč, 'Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce', *East European Quarterly*, Vol.30, No.3 (1996), pp.331-52; Petr Kopecký, 'From "Velvet Revolution" to "Velvet Split"', in Michael Kraus and Allison K. Stranger (eds.), *Irreconcilable Differences?: Explaining the Dissolution of Czechoslovakia* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Paal Sigurd Hilde, 'Slovak Nationalism and the Break-Up of Czechoslovakia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.51, No.4 (1999), pp.647-65.
2. For an account on the more recent developments in Czech politics, see Radim Marada, 'The 1998 Czech Elections', *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol.7, No.4 (1998), pp.51-8; Steven Saxonberg, 'A New Phase in Czech Politics', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.25, No.2 (1999), pp.80-94.
3. Raymond D. Gastil (ed.), *Freedom in the World: Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1993-1994* (New York: Freedom House, 1994).
4. Adrian Karatnycky, 'Freedom on the March', *Freedom Review*, Vol.28, No.1 (1997), pp.5-29.
5. Michael Carpenter, 'Slovakia and the Triumph of Nationalist Populism', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol.30, No.2 (1997), 205-20.
6. Fareed Zakaria, 'The Rise of Illiberal Democracies', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.76, No.6 (1997), pp.25-43.
7. Paul G. Lewis, 'Theories of Democratization and Patterns of Regime Change in Eastern Europe', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol.13, No.1 (1997), pp.4-26.
8. Grzegorz Ekiert, 'Ten Years After: An Optimistic View', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol.13, No.2 (1999), pp.278-84. For more detailed (and positive) accounts on developments in post-Mečiar Slovakia, see Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová, 'Slovakia's Democratic Awakening', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.25, No.2 (1999), pp.96-110; Martin Porubjak, 'Anfang einer liberalen Demokratie in der Slowakei?', *Europäische Rundschau*, Vol.27, No.1 (1999), pp.81-93.
9. See Juan J. Linz, 'Transitions to Democracy', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.13, No.3 (1990), pp.143-69; Michael Burton, Richard Gunther and John Higley, 'Introduction: Elite Transformations and Democratic Regimes', in John Higley and Richard Gunther (eds.), *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.1-37; J. Samuel Valenzuela, 'Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions', in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and J. Samuel Valenzuela (eds.), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp.57-104.
10. See Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
11. For example, Carol Skalnik Leff, 'Dysfunctional Democratization? Institutional Conflict in Post-Communist Slovakia', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.43, No.5 (1996), pp.36-50; Ellen Comisso, 'Is the Glass Half Full or Half Empty? Reflections on Five Years of Competitive Politics in Eastern Europe', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol.30, No.1 (1997), pp.1-21.
12. Slovakia has often been criticized and labelled an unconsolidated democracy because of the attempts of Mečiar's ruling elite to exercise an iron grip on the country's media. The changes in the personnel of the Slovak Councils for Radio and Television Broadcasting, and their replacement with people close to the ruling coalition people after the 1994 elections, received particular attention from observers. However, this should not obscure the fact that, despite all these and other attempts of various post-communists governments in Slovakia to subordinate

- state media to their own advantage, a good deal of freedom and independent TV, radio and press exist, and that these attempted processes at subordination or control are by no means specific to Slovakia: see Andrej Školky, 'The Role of the Mass Media in the Post-Communist Transition of Slovakia', in Soňa Szomolányi and John A. Gould (eds.), *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation and the Struggle for the Rules of the Game* (Bratislava: Slovak Political Science Association, 1998), pp.187-207; Ján Füle, 'Media', in Martin Bútora and Thomas W. Skladony (eds.), *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State of Society* (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1998), pp.179-87.
13. For details on these cases, see Petr Kopecký, *Political Competition and Institutionalization of Parliaments: The Czech and Slovak Republics* (Leiden: Ph.D. dissertation, 1999).
  14. Soňa Szomolányi, 'Identifying Slovakia's Emerging Regime', in Szomolányi and Gould, *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, 9-34.
  15. *Problems of Democratic Transition*, p.10.
  16. See John A. Gould and Soňa Szomolányi, 'Elite Fragmentation, Industry and Prospects for Democracy: Insights from New Elite Theory', <<http://www.cc.columbia.edu/sec/dlc/ciao/book/gould21.html>>; Carol Skalnik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation versus State* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998).
  17. Such as the National Property Fund, the Supreme Control Office, the Slovak Information Service, or the public television and broadcasting.
  18. A case in point is the removal of the supposedly informed investigators in the police investigations of the kidnapping of the Slovak president's son.
  19. Martin Shapiro and Alec Stone, 'The New Constitutional Policies of Europe', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.26, No.4 (1994), pp.397-420.
  20. See Martin Bútora and Pavol Deme, 'Nonprofit Organizations and the Non-Governmental Sector', in Bútora and Skladony, *Slovakia 1996-1997*, pp.189-200.
  21. 'The Development of Interest Representation in Slovakia After 1989: From "Transmission Belts" to "Party-State Corporatism"', in Szomolányi and Gould, *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, pp.93-112.
  22. See Marín Leško, *Mečiar a Mečiarizmus* (Bratislava: VMV, 1996); Grigorij Mesežnikov, 'The Open Ended Formation of Slovakia's Party System', in Szomolányi and Gould, *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, pp.35-56; Ivan Mikloš, 'Economic Transition and the Emergence of Clientelist Structures in Slovakia', in *ibid.*, pp.57-92; Ivan Mikloš, 'Privatization', in Bútora and Skladony, *Slovakia 1996-1997*, pp.117-25.
  23. For some striking examples of anti-president measures of the Mečiar government, see Leff, *Czech and Slovak Republics*, pp.133-5.
  24. The position of the KSCM and, formerly, the SPR-RSČ is a partial exception here, because both parties have been considered as 'anti-system opposition' by the rest of the parliamentary representation. However, while this categorically excluded both parties from potential government coalitions or regular consultative meetings with the president, it did not exclude them from participation in parliamentary committees, investigatory commissions, question times and interpellations, or even intra-parliamentary party negotiations. In any case, these exceptions seem to be in the past, as the 1998 elections did not return the extreme right SPR-RSČ to parliament, and made the orthodox communist KSCM increasingly *koalitionsfähig*: see Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde, 'The 1998 Parliamentary and Senate Elections in the Czech Republic', *Electoral Studies*, Vol.18, No.3 (1999), pp.415-24.
  25. 'The Quality of Democracy: Mass-Elite Linkages in the Czech Republic', *Democratization*, Vol.4, No.4 (1997), pp.63-87 (p.84). Paradoxically, although the Slovak Republic actually has a legal framework for the 'third sector', which is rather restrictive, the country's civil society seems in a far better shape than that in the Czech Republic. Most observers consider the mobilization of Slovakia's 'civil society' - including NGOs, churches, trade unions, artists - as a crucial element in the 1998 electoral defeat of the Mečiar government. During his visit to Slovakia in November 1998, President Havel somewhat provocatively stated that the Czech Republic could learn from Slovakia what a useful civil society can be. On the role of civil society in the 1998 Slovak elections, see the various contributions in Martin Bútora, Grigorij Mesežnikov, Zora Bútorová and Sharon Fisher (eds.), *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia* (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1999).

26. Jiří Pehe, 'Czechs Fall From Their Ivory Tower', *Transitions*, Vol.4, No.3 (1997), pp.22-7.
27. Kevin Krause, 'Democracy and the Political Party Systems of Slovakia and the Czech Republic' at <<http://www.nd.edu/~kkrause/papers>> (1998).
28. Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
29. Jon Elster, Claus Offe and Ulrich K. Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
30. For example, Lewis, 'Theories of Democratization'; Gerardo Munck and Carol Skalnik Leff, 'Modes of Transition and Democratization: South America and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective', *Comparative Politics*, Vol.29, No.3 (1997), pp.343-62.
31. Ulř, 'Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce'; Zdenka Mansfeldová, 'Zivilgesellschaft in der Tschechischen und Slowakischen Republik', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 6-7 (1998), pp.13-19.
32. See Jiří Musil, 'Czech and Slovak Society: Outline of a Comparative Study', *Czech Sociological Review*, Vol.1, No.1 (1993), pp.5-21; Václav Prucha, 'Economic Development and Relations, 1918-89', in Musil, *The End of Czechoslovakia*, pp.40-76.
33. See Wolchik, 'The Politics of Ethnicity'; Ulř, 'Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce'; Kopecký, 'From "Velvet Revolution"'.  
Ivan Mikloř and Eduard Zitnanský, 'The Economy', in Bútorá and Skladony, *Slovakia 1996-1997*, pp.103-15.
35. See Mikloř, 'Economic Transition'; Carpenter, 'Slovakia and the Triumph of Nationalist Populism'; the annual OECD and World Bank reports. Admittedly, the post-Mečiar period has shown that Slovakia's economy is in a worse state than originally thought, but the same is true of the post-Klaus Czech economy; see the various reports in *Business Central Europe*, most notably November 1998 (survey of the Czech Republic) and May 1999 (survey of Slovakia).
36. Evidently, these questions not only general explanations based on levels of socio-economic developments, but also the validity of regionally-based propositions correlating high democratic performance with advances in economic reforms and high economic performances: see, for example, Martha De Melo, Cevdet Denizler and Alan Gelb, 'From Plan to Market: Patterns of Transition', *Transition: The Newsletter about Reforming Economies*, No.6 (1996), pp.11-12.
37. See Miroslav Kuřý, 'Slovak Exceptionalism', in Musil, *The End of Czechoslovakia*, pp.139-55; Ulř, 'Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce'.
38. See Carpenter, 'Slovakia and the Triumph of Nationalist Populism'. For the general argument, see Ken Jowitt, *The New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).
39. Wolchik, 'The Politics of Ethnicity'; Zdenek Suda, 'Slovakia in Czech National Consciousness', in Musil, *The End of Czechoslovakia*, pp.106-27; Kevin Krause, 'Different but not that Different', at <<http://www.nd.edu/~kkrause/papers>> (1997).
40. Krause, 'Different but not that Different', p.30. A similar conclusion can be drawn from, for example, the study *Czechs and Slovaks Compared: A Survey of Economic and Political Behaviour* (Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, 1992).
41. Richard Rose, 'Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.5, No.3 (1994), pp.18-31; Radoslaw Markowski, 'Political Parties and Ideological Spaces in East Central Europe', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol.30, No.3 (1997), pp.221-54; Fritz Plasser, Peter A. Ulram and Harald Waldrauch, *Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).
42. Richard Rose, 'Where Are Postcommunist Countries Going?', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.8, No.3 (1997), pp.92-108.
43. See the *New Democratic Barometers II-IV*, by Richard Rose and Christian Haerpfer (Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, 1993-1996); Zora Bútorová (ed.), *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia: A Public Opinion Profile of a Country in Transition* (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1998).
44. Or, in the words of Christian Boulanger, "... social structures and economic conditions have to be considered if we want to understand the political development of the Slovak Republic

- in the context of post-Leninist transformation. But these factors do not provide a full answer to the question why the Slovak case is different from many of its neighbors': 'Constitutionalism in East Central Europe? The Case of Slovakia under Mečiar', *East European Quarterly*, Vol.33, No.1 (1999), pp.21-50 (p.37).
45. See Kopecký, *Political Competition*.
  46. Darina Malová and Marek Rybár, 'The Impact of Constitutional Rules on Institutionalization of Democracy in Slovakia', in Vladimíra Dvořáková (ed.), *Success or Failure? Ten Years After* (Prague, 1999), pp.68-79 (p.68); see also Katarína Zavačká, 'The Development of Constitutionalism in Slovakia', in Szomolányi and Gould, *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, pp.157-67.
  47. See Leff, *Czech and Slovak Republics*, p.158. Moreover, some authors argue that Slovakia actually had 'a fairly good basis for the consolidation of Constitutionalism': Boulanger, 'Constitutionalism in East Central Europe', p.30.
  48. The link between the political issue and the intensity of political competition has also been made by Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, although they reduce the 'identity issue' to the 'ethnic issue' (see below): see their 'The Structuring of Political Cleavages in Post-Communist Societies: The Case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia', *Political Studies*, Vol.46, No.1 (1998), pp.115-39.
  48. Juan J. Linz, 'State Building and Nation Building', *European Review*, Vol.1, No.4 (1993), pp.355-69; Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Consolidation*.
  50. See Claus Offe, 'Capitalism by Democratic Design: Democratic Theory Facing Triple Transition in East Central Europe', *Social Research*, Vol.58, No.4 (1991), pp.865-92; Valerie Bunce, 'Comparing East and South', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.6, No.3 (1995), pp.87-100.
  51. Leff, 'Dysfunctional Democratization?', p.48.
  52. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments', in Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp.1-64.
  53. See Herbert Kitschelt, 'Party Systems in East Central Europe: Consolidation or Fluidity', paper presented at the APSA Convention, New York, 1-4 Sept. 1994; Kevin Krause, 'The Political Party System in the Czech Republic: Democracy and the 1996 Elections', *Czech Sociological Review*, Vol.34, No.4 (1996), pp.423-38; Markowski, 'Ideological Spaces'; Evans and Whitefield, 'Structuring of Political Cleavages'.
  54. The so-called 'opposition agreement', in which the ODS supports the minority ČSSD government, seems to indicate the existence of a second dimension, closely related to majoritarianism versus consensualism, dividing the two large parties (ODS and ČSSD) from the small ones (most notably KDU-ČSL and US). However, this dimension seems temporary and mainly relevant at the elite level. Moreover, it is also only a secondary dimension, since ODS and ČSSD are still in strong political competition on economic and social issues.
  55. Kevin Krause, 'Dimensions of Party Competition in Slovakia', *Slovak Sociological Review*, Vol.1 (1996), pp.169-86; Krause, 'Democracy and Political Party Systems'.
  56. Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, 'Reflections on the "Revolutions" of 1989 and After', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol.13, No.2 (1999), pp.303-12 (p.307).
  57. Judy Batt, *The New Slovakia: National Identity, Political Integration and the Return to Europe* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996); Martin Brusis, 'Ethnic Rift in the Context of Post-Communist Transformation: The Case of the Slovak Republic', *International Journal on Group Rights*, Vol.5, No.1 (1997), pp.3-32.
  58. Leff, *Czech and Slovak Republics*, p.156.
  59. Batt, *The New Slovakia*, p.17.
  60. Peter Učeh, 'A Decade of Conflict Within Slovak Polity: Party Politics Perspective', in Dvořáková, *Success or Failure?*, pp.80-103.
  61. See also Sharon Fisher, 'Strengthening National Identity: The Politics of Language and Culture in Post-Independence Slovakia and Croatia', paper presented at the 4th Annual ASN Convention, New York, 15-17 April 1999.
  62. Many people had either received their companies or shares through illegal privatization deals or their companies were heavily dependent on favourable government policies. Consequently, the new government has directly started to look into various dubious

- privatization deals and stopped special subsidies to Mečiar's cronies.
63. Victor S. Mamatey and Radomir Luža (eds.), *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973); Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1974); Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).
  64. 'Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model', *Comparative Politics*, Vol.2, No.3 (1970), pp.337-65.
  65. Zora Bútorová, 'Public Opinion', in Bútorová and Skladony, *Slovakia 1996-1997*, pp.67-80 (p.79); see also Bútorová, *Democracy and Discontent*.
  66. Fisher, 'Strengthening National Identity', p.14.
  67. This can be seen, for example, in their greater support for the opposition parties as well as for integration into Western organization such as NATO and the EU; see Michal Ivantyšyn, Marián Veľšic and Zora Bútorová, 'First-Time Voters', in Bútorová, *Democracy and Discontent*, pp.135-50. Oľga Gyárfášová, Miroslav Kúška and Marín Veľšic, 'First-Time Voters and the 1998 Elections', in Bútorová, Mesežnikov, Bútorová and Fisher, *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections*, pp.233-43; see also Fisher, 'Strengthening National Identity'.
  68. Szomlányi, 'Identifying Slovakia's Emerging Regime'.
  69. A similar difference between mass and elite level has been noted with regard to the 'ethnic conflict' between 'ethnic Slovaks' and 'ethnic Hungarians': see Juraj Podoba, 'Between Rancour and Cooperation: Ethnic Conflict in Slovakia', *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, Vol.4, Nos.3-4 (1997), pp.279-87.
  70. Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); see also Lipset and Rokkan, 'Cleavage Structures'; Peter Mair, 'E.E. Schattschneider's *The Semisovereign People*', *Political Studies*, Vol.45, No.5 (1997), pp.947-54.