

# What is the Threat Perception of the Slovak Republic?

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The main aim of this article is to outline how the understanding and perception of security threats and challenges has evolved since the Slovak Republic's independence. The work reflects on the evolution of the security environment and emerging threats and challenges identified in the official documents of the Slovak Republic. It subsequently compares these results with the perceptions of national experts dealing with security issues. What we found in the official documents was mostly summaries (varying in quality and scope of analysis) of the various identified threats and challenges. As a result of our interviews with experts, and the subsequent comparison of these with the official documents, we are led to the conclusion that the official documents are not entirely in-line with the opinions of the experts. However, this mutual comparison also revealed that in many cases, the official documents do not reflect all potential threats and challenges. We emphasise that since challenges do exist, the failure of the official security documents to reflect certain threats and challenges could negatively affect the future security environment of the Slovak Republic.

*Keywords: Security, Slovak Republic, Security Experts, Security Strategy Threats, Challenges*

## Introduction

In terms of the methodology of this work, it is important to remember that it is impossible to investigate and explain "security" outside the

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context of “insecurity.” In other words, it is methodologically necessary (at least approximately, in the abstract) to set some boundaries within which we may say that a particular aspect of a community is (for the most part) “secure” and when it is becoming “insecure.” Such a boundary might be a state border—e.g. the borders of the EU, NATO or OSCE; the border of geopolitical interests; the critical line of the superpower balance; the boundaries between civilizations or religions, or between areas of economic growth or demography; or, of course, the boundary between security and insecurity itself.

The main aims of this study are to outline how the Slovak Republic’s security environment has evolved, to identify emerging security threats and challenges and to compare these with the perceptions of experts in the field. This process will lead us to the identification of blind spots in the security documents of the Slovak Republic.

The study is structured into a methodological introduction and two main parts. The methodological introduction is connected with the terminological apparatus used in the study, with a particular focus on threat identification. In the first part, using a method of content analysis, we will examine official government documents such as Security and Defence Strategies, the White Book, and the Strategic Defence Evaluation. This policy analysis will focus on threat perception, both before and after the accession of the Slovak Republic to the EU and NATO—with particular focus on current developments since the latter. In the second part we will analyse interviews with experts, emphasising their professional views on threats. Interviewees include officials from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior and the Office of the Security Council of the Slovak Republic; experts from Slovak NGOs that focus on security issues, such as the Slovak Atlantic Commission and the Slovak Foreign Policy Association; academics from leading Slovak educational institutions – the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica – who deal with security issues; the Police Force Academy in Bratislava; and an expert from the private service sector. Finally, we will use a method of comparison that will allow us to contrast how contemporary and future security threats and challenges are understood in official documents, as opposed to how they are understood by security policy experts.

## Methodological Terms: Security vs. Insecurity

For the purpose of this study, it is crucial to divide the security of the state into specific areas. Therefore, we considered a social constructivist approach – that of the Copenhagen School in particular – to be the most suitable for security analysis. The main idea behind this approach is the division of security into horizontal and vertical levels, which then leads to a further division into sectors and analysis levels. Its primary feature is that reflection on these various divisions is based upon social construction, which, according to the Copenhagen School, is the speech act, through which we enter into a discourse-based process of constructing security/insecurity. The speech act indicates what can be regarded as a real threat, as opposed to only an intentionally created and subjectively perceived reality. With this in mind, we wish to draw attention to the widening and deepening of the security agenda, and to the process of threat identification. In this context, it is necessary to define certain terms such as security, security environment of the state, and thus emerging threats, risks and challenges.

In contemporary scholarly debate, there is no commonly acknowledged general definition or explanation regarding the term “security.”<sup>1</sup> Almost all experts have their own methodological and terminological understanding and explanation of this term. In our understanding, security is a complex term that is subject to analysis at various levels (individual, group, local, state, regional and global) in which several differentiated, flexible, internal and external societal factors (military, economic, intra-state and internationally political, legal, environmental, energetic, cyber) have the ability to bring about temporal (relative) stability at the causal level, and through which it is possible to eliminate all types of crisis, risk, threat and war. In our study, however, we focus on the security of the state as such—a historical term signifying the system of arrangements, valid at a particular time, to protect a territory and its population, interests and values. This includes the interconnection of all political, police, intelligence, military and legislative tools in a particular state,<sup>2</sup> which are part of the strategic culture of the state and her form, which evolves based on geopolitical changes in the external environment as well as on internal factors (change of identity, change of political system, etc.).

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In this study, therefore, the term “insecurity” will be understood as an aggregate of threats and risks. If we do not know what *insecure* means to us – which threats and risks jeopardise us – then consequently we cannot know what *secure* is—i.e. how to ensure our own security. Only when subjective or objective threats and risks exist, is the need to ensure one’s security actual and legitimate.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the entire development of nature and society, there has been no momentum generated without the existence and influence of various threats and risks. The research of threat and risk therefore represents the deepest roots, the most effective research area, regarding the issue of security. Simply put, the security environment of a state can be understood as a set of external and internal factors, as well as those geopolitical, historical, cultural, political and economic activities of the state, which affect its security.<sup>4</sup> It is a geographically and politically determined space that can have several vertical analytical levels—global, regional, local, and sub-local security environments.

The issue of terminology and perception regarding security threats, challenges, vulnerabilities and risks is very broad. The on-going Western debate on the ‘reconceptualisation of security’ provides us with an interesting perspective on security as an aspect closely related to individual and social values. In the view of Wendt, who advocates the constructivist approach, security is ‘what actors make of it.’<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the concept of security as divided into sectors, as elaborated by Buzan – military, political, economic, societal and environmental – is very useful.<sup>6</sup>

The term “threat,” as such, is directly or indirectly connected with events that may have a societal, natural or technical character, and bring about a violation of the balanced societal system. The terms “threat” and “risk” may differ only quantitatively, and are used here as synonyms. We may categorise threats according to several criteria, one of which is the division into symmetric and asymmetric.<sup>7</sup> The term risk may have several variants—in technological processes threat is understood as activated risk,<sup>8</sup> while in societal processes risk is understood as primary, a part of the security environment which could bring about a security threat.<sup>9</sup> In general, we understand risk as a measure or rate that can be expressed in qualitative and quantitative ways and has an impact on the increase or decrease of the threat potential.

This perspective on the researched problems of security revealed other potential threats and risks at all analytical levels (the widening and deepening of the security concept) connected to individual sectors and individual participants, thus creating space for new approaches to the research of security, especially for states. It is important to bear in mind that there are also specific limitations in the process of researching the field of security, limitations that are directly connected with the abovementioned term “speech act.” This basically irrational term is a paradox of the Copenhagen School. On one hand, from the perspective of social constructivism, it offers a widening and deepening of security, while on the other hand, a speech act as a social construction can modify all perspectives, based on which the actor is the subject and initiator of the speech act (in our case individual vs. state). The range of securitisation/de-securitisation then depends on individual perspective, with the ranking of threats varying significantly, possibly even contradictorily.

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### Official Documents Analysis

Since gaining independence (1993), the Slovak Republic has undergone several interesting instances of turmoil closely related to its foreign and security policies. Various concepts of the role and position of the new state towards regional powers and the new international and geopolitical reality have been publically debated, which, instead of producing a national clarity have rather led to confusion and uncertainty in Slovak foreign and its security policies. Therefore, when analysing these dynamics of Slovakia, it is common to divide them into “pre-1998” and “post-1998” periods—a distinction based on the year of adoption of the central security and defence documents. Most important, however, has been the impact of membership in NATO and the EU, which are very closely tied to the foreign and security policy directions of the Slovak Republic. In the following analysis, we will proceed chronologically, beginning in 1994 and ending in 2015. Our content analysis of the chosen documents will focus on the structural dimension (a hierarchical definition of threats which were actual during the research timeframe and how their actuality was reflected in the documents), the “meaning” dimension (their reflection in particular docu-

ments from the point of view of depth of analysis), and the contextual dimension (from the threats definition point of view in the context of the various analytical levels).

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## The Evolution of Security Documents in the Slovak Republic

### *Defence Doctrine (1994)*

The Defence Doctrine of 1994 is the first official document that focused on the military and security aspects of the state's functioning.<sup>10</sup> This document is deeply coloured by its lack of proper terminology and structure. The defence strategy had only a very general character with few clear directions. Being a first attempt to summarise the security direction of the Slovak Republic, it lacks clear reflection on the new international situation and is focused primarily on Central Europe. This may be the result of a lack of experience on the part of those in charge of producing the document. The most important statement in the doctrine is that expressing the clear will to acquire NATO membership in order to obtain international guarantees of security. Yet the doctrine lacked a clear indication of emerging threats to the new state. To a limited extent, we can say that this doctrine names only such causes for concern as the: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and other threats to human rights and security.<sup>11</sup>

The document may be understood as an attempt to define the defence aims and goals of the Slovak Republic. For our purpose, however, it lacks any clear identification of potential risks and threats. The Defence Doctrine served as a first step towards another document that was adopted in 1996.

### *The Fundamental Aims and Principles of the National Security of the Slovak Republic (1996)*

This is a more clearly structured and defined policy paper than its successor.<sup>12</sup> Despite this however, when the content is thoroughly analysed it is clear that little progress has been made since the Defence Doctrine of 1994.

The text stresses the importance of national sovereignty in ensuring national security. Moreover, a nationalistic tone is clearly evident. For our purposes however the document offers better material than the previous one, although it still lacks an exhaustive summary of threats and related issues. Threats and risks are not referred to using these specific terms, it is nonetheless evident from the text when a particular aspect is understood as such.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, in this text, we understand the external threats to the Slovak Republic to be:

1. the absence of international security guarantees,
2. the slowing or incompleteness of integration goals,
3. the unilateral assertions of state power in the Central European region,
4. the potential failure of political and economic transition (from communism) in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe,
5. the instability and low transparency of political, economic, and security development in the regions of direct or indirect interest to the Slovak Republic,
6. the internationalisation of potential armed conflict close to the borders of the Slovak Republic, and its protraction without a perspective for solution,
7. the interruption of raw energy source transfer due to a potential increase in political tensions and armed conflicts in crisis regions,
8. manifestations of nationalism, chauvinism, religious fundamentalism, racism, anti-Semitism and intolerance,
9. massive migration flows related to disproportional economic development
10. the endangerment of fundamental human rights and freedoms
11. the growth of international and national terrorism and organised crime
12. the unchecked proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction
13. the uncontrolled transfer of conventional arms and battle techniques to crisis regions
14. the increase of armament activities in Central Europe.<sup>14</sup>

While there was progress in defining threats and risks to the Slovak Republic, these were not specifically identified. Yet this document attempted to reflect the emerging situation in Europe regarding conflicts in the Balkans and the post-Soviet space—points omitted from earlier versions.

*Security Strategy (2001)*

The 1998 elections brought a significant change in Slovak internal politics, a change that was also reflected in Slovak foreign and security policy, with consequences for transatlantic relations. The new government's efforts for change culminated in 2001 with the release of the Security Strategy. As compared to earlier official documents, we note a qualitative progress with regard to terminology and structure. Its risk and threat analysis begins by setting out that—despite the fact that the end of the Cold War reduced the risk of global war—the possibility of a large-scale armed conflict cannot be ruled out, due to the armament efforts of several non-democratic States. Trans-national threats and risks are summarised as:

1. Regional conflicts in crisis regions could possibly escalate into larger, protracted conflicts. Conflicts rooted in extremist nationalism, religion or ideology tend to have a long-term character.
2. Uncontrolled immigration is an increasing threat for the Slovak Republic. While it is clear that the Slovak Republic is not a main destination for migrants, uncontrolled immigration from crisis regions may nonetheless present a serious threat to European nations, including the Slovak Republic.
3. International organised terrorism is one of the most important emerging threats to Slovakia's vital interests. The scope and danger of international terrorism appears to be increasing.
4. The compromise or absolute failure of state information systems as a consequence of cyber-terrorism or cybercrime is an emerging threat.
5. Excessive dependence on basic energy sources (and their transport) from unstable regions may negatively affect not only economic prosperity and stability, but the whole security system.
6. Negative demographic growth, represented by a decrease in the active population relative to the retired and economically passive population, negatively affects the sustainability of the social system.
7. Environmental degradation and food security are serious threats that cross the borders of particular states.<sup>15</sup>

The methodology and terminology of this 2001 Security Strategy is found to be at a qualitatively higher level. Regarding the content and context of the document we note one unfortunate coincidence. The



2001 Security Strategy was approved by the National Council on 27 March 2001. A tragic milestone of international terrorism occurred on 11 September the same year undermining both the focus and spirit of the new document. It is also worth mentioning the attempt to mirror this national security strategy to the EU's, as a part of the latter's integration efforts.

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## Security Documents of the Slovak Republic

### *Security Strategy (2005)*

A revision of the 2001 Security Strategy came in 2005 with the release of the new 2005 Security Strategy which reflected changes to the global security environment and Slovakia's new national realities that came with accession to the EU and NATO.<sup>16</sup> The main challenges identified were related to deepening instability and the unpredictability of global affairs due to the rise in failed states and non-state actors married to globalisation, intra-state conflicts, and a global system of politico-economic integration.

The 2005 document highlighted the following as key challenges:

1. The proliferation of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction, and their delivery systems, possibly falling into the possession of terrorist groups and failed states,
2. The possibility of terrorist attacks on the civil population and critical infrastructure of the Slovak Republic,
3. The unwillingness or inability of failed states to ensure their own security, thus contributing to regional instability and creating a base for the activities of terrorist and criminal groups,
4. Protracted regional conflicts that could jeopardise not only regional stability, but also the whole Euro-Atlantic space; such conflicts would be accompanied by extremism, terrorism, poverty, migration, and border violations, and (among other things) erode the power of governments,
5. Organised crime, which takes advantage of technological progress and communication methods and affects all spheres of public life; it focuses on the illegal production and distribution of drugs, human trafficking, prostitution, cybercrime, financial crimes, etc.,

6. The unprecedented development of technologies, the speed of information transfer and its global reach—in other words, the shift from a post-industrial to an information society,
7. Uncontrolled and illegal migration, together with populism and the absence of an EU integration capacity, which could create the conditions for rising intolerance,
8. A possible increase in negative activities of the intelligence services of other non-member states, with the accession of the Slovak Republic to NATO and the EU,
9. Unpreparedness of states for the challenges of increasing globalisation,
10. The rising influence of non-state actors, accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the state's monopoly on the use of force and assuring security,
11. Unbalanced economic growth throughout the world, which can lead to radicalism, extremism, religious fundamentalism, authoritarianism, etc.,
12. The high dependency on energy resources, raw materials and non-renewable resources and the exploitation of non-renewable resources, which could cause substantial irreversible damage to the natural environment.<sup>17</sup>

It is clear from the overarching issues that are identified and prioritised that the 2005 Security Strategy deals with the complex security environment facing the Slovak Republic. Interestingly, individual threats and risks are described with a greater sense of their complexity and interdependence, rather than as isolated problems—which, in the view of these researchers, is a positive development.

### The White Book on Defence of the Slovak Republic (2013)

The most recent document dealing with security issues of the Slovak Republic is the White Book on the Defence of the Slovak Republic, which is the main outcome of the ongoing Strategic Defence Evaluation process.<sup>18</sup> In this broad study on security and defence issues we can find a chapter dedicated to threats and risks which focus on:

1. Rising military expenditures and capabilities in countries outside the Euro-Atlantic area together with the decrease in military expenditures within EU and NATO countries,
2. Eroding respect for international law,
3. The emergence and protraction of new conflicts with escalating

potential – re: the Balkans, Eastern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia – with the potential to cause humanitarian crises and mass illegal immigration, and endanger energy supplies,

4. The locating of missile complexes near NATO member states,
5. Terrorist activities using Slovak territory for transit and logistical support,
6. Deepening problems within the EU economic and monetary structures causing protectionism, nationalistic tendencies, social tension and mass protests,
7. Cyber-attacks against political, financial, commercial and economic institutions within reach of the security interests of the Slovak Republic,
8. Organised crime, mostly connected with arms and explosives trafficking, smuggling across borders, corruption and money laundering,
9. Mostly unpredictable natural and man-made disasters, caused not only within the Slovak Republic, but also in neighbouring countries.<sup>19</sup>

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This document acts as the primary source of Slovakia's security policy. Our analysis provided useful information about the risks and threats to the Slovak Republic from the official point of view. Against the background of the Slovak Republic as a relatively new independent state, it was interesting to analyse the changes in security direction, as well as emerging threats. On the other hand, the official line did not provide us with an in-depth understanding or explanation of current or future threats. It is evident that the official security documents more or less copy the security thinking of the EU and NATO, primarily because these two institutions provide the core international security guarantees and the Slovak Republic is trying to fulfil its commitments to them. Among the most important points to be noted about these documents, is the absence of any hierarchical ordering of the threats, along with relatively loose terminology. Threats are generally described, but lack a ranking from most to least serious.<sup>20</sup>

## Informal Interviews Analysis

In the following section, we will present the results of interviews conducted with experts on security from several institutions. As set out in the introduction, we attempt to include a variety of opinions, per-

spectives and visions. For this purpose, we have chosen experts from the governmental level (the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Security Council of the Slovak Republic and Government Office of the Slovak Republic), the non-governmental level (the Slovak Foreign Policy Association and Slovak Atlantic Commission), and academic institutions (the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations at Matej Bel University, and the Police Force Academy in Bratislava), as well as one private company, LYNX, that deals with, among other things, IT security. All interviews were conducted during January 2014. Due to new developments in international security, an additional round of consultations was conducted in September/October 2015, with particular focus on the case of illegal immigration. In some cases, interviewees expressed reconsideration of their former opinions. All interviewees are experts in the areas of national and international security, with at least 10 years of experience. Although some are currently working in academia, 74% have worked previously for either an NGO, the government or the private sector. Hence, their professional backgrounds are cross-cutting and dynamic.

The results of the interviews are presented in two ways—in table format and in a subsequent discussion. In the simple table, we systematically present the answers of interviewees to a set of questions. The classification or ranked order of threats is based on interviewees' answers. The more often a particular threat has been identified by an expert, the higher on the list it appears.

### *Informal Interviews with the Experts*

Our main aim was to learn how each interviewee perceives present and future threats to the Slovak Republic—their causes (i.e. their origins), targets (at what they are aiming), instruments for confronting them (D—diplomatic, P—political, E—economic, CS—civil society, Pol.—police, M—Military, I—Secret Service), at what level they should be confronted (U—unilateral, B—bilateral, MR—multilateral regional, MG—multilateral global) and any potential space for the involvement of international organizations (NATO, EU, OSCE, UN). The main questions asked were as follows: Could you please identify and name current and future security threats to the Slovak Republic? Are these threats caused primarily by states (or groups of states), non-state actors or domestic actors? Who or what are likely to be the main targets of these threats? Which of

the following instruments do you believe should be used primarily to deal with these threats? Which of the following policy approaches do you believe are best suited to deal with them? Do you see any space for positive OSCE (or other IO) engagement?

The number of experts who identified a particular threat has been converted into a percentage value (indicating its frequency in their responses), the aim of which is to assign a relevance to each particular threat. The threats listed in **bold** font are identified as current while those in normal font are identified as future. Most of the threats will be discussed individually in the subsequent section, with further detailed information as to how they are perceived by the interviewees.

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*Table 1. Experts' Opinions*

<i>Threats</i>	<i>Origins</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>How to address?</i>	<i>Policy level</i>	<i>OSCE engagement?</i>
Economic instability (11) 74%	State, Non-State, Economic subjects	Complex	D,P,E,Pol.,I	Complex	EU
Illegal immigration (11) 74%	State, Non-State, economic	State infra/structure, Soc. Vulnerable	D,P,E,cs	Complex	OSCE, EU, CPC, HCNM
Cyber attacks (9) 60%	State, Non-State	State infra/structure, Individuals, population	Complex	Complex	OSCE, EU, NATO, UN/ Resiliency of cyber space
Social clashes (7) 47%	Domestic, Intl. economic companies	State infra/structure, Population, Soc. Vulnerable	P,E,cs	U, MR	No, EU
Ethno-political conflict and Roma minority (6) 40%	Ethnic groups, minorities, State	Soc. vulnerable, State infra/structures, Minorities	D,P,E,cs,Pol.	U, MR	OSCE HCNM, EU
Organized crime (5) 33%	S., Non-State, Domestic	State infra/structure, Individuals	P,D, Pol., I	Complex	OSCE, EU
Terrorism (4) 27%	Non-State, Individuals,	State infra/structure	Complex	Complex	OSCE, EU, NATO, UN

Energy security (4) 27%	State, Non-State, Domestic	State infra/structure, Population	D,P,E,I	Complex	EU, OSCE – policy coordination, Code of conduct, CBMS
Failed or fragile States (4) 27%	State, Non-State (insurgents)	State, State infra/structure, Population	Complex	Complex	OSCE – transfer of know-how
Espionage (economic) (3) 20%	State, Non-State	State, State infra/structure, Population	D,P,E,Pol.,I	Complex	NATO, EU, OSCE – CBMS, Lessons learned
Privatization of violence (2) 13%	State, Non-State, Technological progress	State infra/structure, Population	Complex	Complex	Arms control regime in this area, but also UN
Income inequality (2) 13%	State, Non-State, Global markets	State infra/structure, Soc. vulnerable, Minorities,	D,P,E,cs	U, MG	EU more, OSCE – 2nd and 3rd D
High economic openness	Domestic, Global markets	State infra/structure, Population, Soc. Vulnerable	D,P,E	U, MR	EU
Dis-integration of inter-generational solidarity	Domestic	Complex	Education, E	U	No
Eroding influence of international law	State	State	D,P,E	MR, MG	UN, OSCE – promotion of international law
Climate changes (4)	State, Non-State	Complex	Complex	Complex	UN, OSCE within 2nd dimension perhaps
Conflict on the EU periphery (3)	Intensification of protracted conflicts, Geopolitical conflicts, State, Non-State	Complex	Complex	MR, MG	OSCE – conflict prevention, monitoring
Unbalanced demographic development (3)	Domestic	Complex	P,E, Education, cs	complex	more EU
The position of China (3)	State	Complex	P,E,D	MR, MG	UN, EU, NATO

EU vs. Russia – securitization of relations (3)	State	Complex	P,E,D,cs	MR,MG	OSCE – promotion of dialogue, platform for dialogue
Big economic turbulence (3)	State, Global markets, Economic subjects	Complex	P,E,D	U,MR,MG	OSCE within 2nd dimension
Strategic import of raw materials (2)	State, Non-State	Complex	P,E,D	B,MR,MG	OSCE as policy coordinator
Islamization of Europe (2)	Related with bad demography in Europe, bad social situation in Islamic countries and immigration	Population	P,D, Education, cs	MR	Platform for religious dialogue perhaps
Existence of the State – Slovak Republic as such	Based on existence of NATO and EU as such	Complex	Complex	U,B,MR	No/ or maybe regional CBMS
Democracy as such	General social disappointment	State, Population	P,E,D,cs	U,B,MR	No
Militarization of Kalinin-grad	Consequence of worsened USA – RF relations	Complex	Complex	MR	YES – mediator and communication channel
Interstate conflict (related with failed states)	Periphery of the EU, Central Asia	Complex	Complex	MR	OSCE – CSBMS, Non-proliferation, Disarmament, HCNM, Missions
Potable water	Pollution, especially pressing for SR	Population	E,P,D,cs	Complex	All IOS, OSCE, FAO
Food security	State, Non-State, domestic	Population	E,P,D	Complex	FAO
Changing global alliances	State, Non-State	State	Complex	Complex	OSCE – mostly relations EU-USA-RF
High raw material consumption	State, Non-State, Private economic subjects	Complex	E,P,D,cs, education	Complex	OSCE as norms setter, regulator

## The Most Important Threats Facing the Slovak Republic

In 2013 and early 2014, the security environment of the Slovak Republic was determined by the general stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, especially within Central Europe. In 2014/2015 this changed significantly. Geographically, the nearest area of security instability has been the Western Balkans (Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina), where the threat of organised crime (drugs, illegal migration, arms) and religious extremism runs high. The situations in Afghanistan, the Korean peninsula, the Middle East, North Africa and, in particular, Syria, have negatively impacted the security situation in Europe. Slovakia, however, has not been directly threatened either by the migration flow or other threats. There is also the rising threat of individual terrorism and the “homecoming” of EU citizens who have fought in jihad zones. Despite the effective multilateral involvement of Slovakia in the War on Terror, the openness of its economy and its high dependence on external sources – energy in particular – has negatively affected the security environment. The implementation of the North Stream gas pipeline and the potential implementation of a gas pipeline through Turkey may bring about a decrease in the transit of Russian gas through the Družba pipeline, which is permanently threatened by the more or less latent dispute between Russia and Ukraine over the price of gas and its transit.

*Economic instability*—has been mentioned several times as a primary cause of other threats such as social clashes, moral degradation, a worsened social situation, ethno-political conflict, the rise of radical political forces, etc. Economic instability is understood mostly in terms of the rising debt in EU countries, fiscal and monetary dependency, the role of China in global monetary affairs, a potentially unstable eurozone, etc.

*The openness of the Slovak economy*—and its dependence on external markets represents another point of view on economic threats. Transnational private economic institutions such as banks and corporations have an immense influence on the national economy, in particular in the financial, automotive and energy sectors. The leading role in this area should be given to the EU or OECD, according to the experts.

*The number of immigrants*—to the Slovak Republic does not represent a significant quantity as compared to the number of immigrants to the states south of the EU, to Russia or to the US. It is hard even to compare such numbers. On the other hand, immigration arising



from conflict zones in North Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus does represent a threat to Slovakia. Also, it is important to distinguish between immigration from non-EU countries to the EU, and immigration within the EU. Both could have a negative impact on the economic situation of the “native” inhabitants. Moreover, the patience of several EU countries experiencing large-scale immigration is on the extreme edge, and ideas of monoculturalism are being revived. However, measures to confront this threat should be undertaken at the national level, or (if multilaterally) on the EU platform.

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*Cyber-threats* are a very interesting phenomenon. Some interviewees identified them as new threat and others as old, while yet others understand it only as a new “modus operandi” of older illegal activities (organised crime, espionage, etc.). Closely related to cybersecurity is the threat of the **privatization of violence**. Experts understand the privatization of violence in terms of the relatively easy availability of several types of arms—the term ‘arms’ being expanded from its conventional meaning to include such things as a computer virus or simple USB key, which are easily available and have the potential to destroy both the software and hardware of the targeted victim.

*Social clashes and ethno-political conflict*—are closely related to the worsened economic situation and other negative trends of social life: the degradation of traditional values, lack of a vision for the future, disintegration of intergenerational solidarity, decreasing trust in traditional political elites and the party system, etc.<sup>21</sup> According to some experts, this situation has the potential to evolve into clashes between the Slovak ethnic majority and the Hungarian minority. Other interviewees, however, do not consider clashes with the Hungarian minority to be a threat, or even a potential scenario. However, failed integration of the Roma minority does represent a threat, according to the majority of interviewees. The situation within the Roma community is not sustainable. Many Roma have been living in incredibly poor conditions for several generations, leading to the vicious cycle of social exclusion, crime and poverty. This issue must be addressed, not only as a threat to the security of the state, but also from a humanitarian and human rights perspective.

*Organised crime and failing states*—are serious threats to the Slovak Republic, according to several experts. With regard to this threat, it is important—though complicated—to distinguish between internal (domestic) and external (transnational/international) origins. In terms

of domestic features of organised crime, corruption has been identified as the most challenging problem. Money laundering and the legalisation of illegal wealth is another feature of domestic organised crime—when former “gangsters” become respected businessmen, for example. Transnational organised crime in Slovakia is closely connected with drug trafficking and production. The Slovak market is still not considered highly profitable in terms of drug consumption (although the number of drug addicts has increased); Slovakia serves primarily as transit country in the drug trade. There are a number of foreign organized crime groups operating in Slovakia, mostly from the Balkans and the Caucasus, especially from zones of protracted conflict and failed (or failing) states in the OSCE area.

*Terrorism*—represents a specific type of threat. Neither in the past nor the present has there been any information about a possible terrorist attack within Slovak territory. However, Slovakia is seen as relevant for other terrorist activities. According to several experts, Slovakia is a place of rest for ‘sleeping terrorist agents.’ The network of connections between terrorist groups and individuals in Slovakia is vague, but still solid enough to provide help with logistics operations for terrorist organisations, logistics operations being understood as activities such as money laundering, safe house promotion, document falsification, etc. In any case, the threat of terrorism should be addressed by all relevant security organisations.

*Energy security*—is a long-term interest of the Slovak Republic at the international level. The Slovak Republic is absolutely dependent on the import of raw materials (mainly iron ore and uranium) and energy sources (oil and gas). The diversification of energy sources is one of the most important tasks for the national economy. However, this process is complicated due to a number of factors (infrastructure, geopolitics, it’s costly in terms of both time and money, etc.), and therefore may be considered a challenge for the future. It is no secret that the main causes of concern related to energy security lie outside the country. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine over the price of gas and oil (not to mention other political and economic issues) represents a persistent threat to the Slovak Republic. In 2009, the escalation of this conflict finally resulted in an energy crisis. Moreover, this same conflict is renewed every year and serves as a factor of instability in the broader region of Central and Southeast Europe.

## Current Challenges for Slovakia

The situation in Ukraine has always been watched carefully by Slovakia as they are direct neighbours. On the Slovak side of the Schengen border with Ukraine, no paramilitary incidents have been reported and the situation appears normal. What is important, according to Slovak officials, is that in the case of a sudden flow of immigration Slovakia is immediately ready to accept 1,000 persons, and, if the situation worsens, it might accept as many as 10,000. In the event of critical escalation of the conflict, Slovakia is ready, in cooperation with Poland and Hungary, to increase these numbers significantly.<sup>22</sup> What is interesting is that Slovakia's position on potential immigration from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq or Libya is very different. During the spring of 2015, in very mixed messages, the Slovak government grudgingly offered some 500 places for immigrants from these countries. Nonetheless, it has not been officially declared (at least not explicitly) that the situation in Ukraine represents a threat to the Slovak Republic.

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Experts, on the other hand, do consider the current situation in Ukraine to be a direct threat to the Slovak Republic, both in the mid-term and the long-term. In their view, scenarios of potential escalation of the conflict in Ukraine may negatively affect Slovakia across several dimensions.

In terms of the military dimension, probably nobody, or only a small number of experts, expected such a development as the Ukrainian conflict when protests began a few years ago. Given this situation, there is need for review of the Slovak Republic's current defence and security strategy regarding the possibility of armed conflict in its immediate neighbourhood. In the event of further escalation of the conflict, military expenditures will certainly rise in order to secure the borders and provide intra-state security. Experts also accept the possibility of greater military cooperation within the V4, the EU and/or NATO. In our opinion, at the EU level, in the context of the CFSP and CSDP debate, Slovakia should be more active in the event of escalation. In the worst case scenario, a new iron curtain could be drawn, which would have direct geopolitical consequences not only for Slovakia but for the whole OSCE region. In such a case, however, Slovakia would reaffirm its position within the EU and NATO.

From a societal standpoint, in the event that humanitarian assistance to migrants and asylum seekers is needed, the eastern part of

Slovakia may be placed under pressure. Numerous housing structures for immigrants are located in this region. The diffusion or mixture of extremist ideas from Ukraine, represented by the Right Sector, with those of extremist groups in Slovakia could be very dangerous. Also, in this regard, the penetration of extremists and terrorists (not necessarily from Ukraine) into groups of legitimate asylum seekers or immigrants represents a threat. According to the experts, the number of asylum seekers entering Slovakia could be as high as 100,000 (requiring from the government a very different attitude than its one regarding asylum seekers from the Middle East).

In the event of further escalation of the conflict, the mutual economic exchange between Slovakia, Ukraine and Russia will be negatively affected. In both the mid-term and the long-term, this situation would not be sustainable and would result in disaster for the Slovak economy. For example, the import of iron and coal from Ukraine is crucial for the metallurgic sector in Slovakia. Automobile export (KIA) from Slovakia to Russia would also be negatively affected. It is important to underline that, according to several Slovak experts, the effort to deepen economic relations between the EU and Ukraine (AA and DCF-TA) has been a top priority for Slovak foreign policy. For Slovakia, the energy sector—the import of gas and oil from Russia via Ukraine, and avoiding a potential interruption of this flow—is crucial. Currently, the threat of an interruption in oil supplies import is even more significant. In terms of an interruption of the gas import, the diversification of gas supplies via the reverse flow offers a solution in the short-term.

In conclusion, all of these aspects must be considered as a whole rather than separately, given their deep interconnection. Without a doubt, the economic aspect is the most vulnerable. If Slovakia were to be cut off from the oil and gas stream for a long period, it would have catastrophic effects on the national economy. Moreover, in the case of a further rise in unemployment, protests could occur and a “snowball effect” could begin.

During a follow-up round of consultations with the experts, all of them agreed that illegal (and to some extent legal) migration from North and Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and other conflict areas poses a direct threat to both the EU and Slovakia. It is difficult to place their understanding of the security dynamics of migration since more than 70% stated that, because of the highly dynamic nature of

such problems, the situation changes quickly and hence particular issues may cross these boundaries. For example, what was considered only a political issue a few weeks ago may today be regarded more as a security issue.

From the security point of view, however, uncontrolled waves of migration crossing Schengen borders is very dangerous, as it makes the registration and careful control of these masses impossible. This opens the door for radical Islamist forces to enter the EU, which could lead to the involvement of the military if EU member states were to agree to launch a military operation in conflict-affected countries, or a maritime operation in the Mediterranean against human traffickers. In geopolitical terms, active Russian and Western military engagement in Syria has the potential to influence the future character of the conflict, although it is uncertain in just what way.

The economic side of migration is also very important. Migration flows generate enormous profit for the human trafficking business on both sides of the Mediterranean,<sup>23</sup> not to mention the issue of the uncontrolled flow of weapons in areas of open conflict. Another dimension of economic pressure is the situation within those European countries directly affected by this immigration, where the costs related to incoming migrants can reach considerable sums.

What is more, this crisis has exposed a weak spot in the EU and its coherence; thus, from our perspective, immigration is a politico-social issue. At the EU level, there is a deep divide between countries that have a positive attitude toward accepting immigrants on their territory (without any particular reference to a quota system) and countries with a negative attitude. This leads to open disagreement, quarrelling, media-blaming, and bloc-creation within the EU. In other situations, this would simply be accepted as a natural scenario— however, this is not such a situation. In Slovakia's case, the system of redistribution of immigrants proposed by the EU Commission and approved by qualified majority vote of Ministers of Interior on 22 September 2015 could lead to infringement.<sup>24</sup> Last but not least, as a side-effect, this crisis has created an unprecedented popular polarization within many EU member states. Slovakia is a case in point. This topic is being politicised in the context of the upcoming 2016 parliamentary elections. However, this trend is visible across the whole EU, offering a platform for radical (left or right wing) parties not only to make anti-immigrant and an-

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ti-EU statements, but also to defend their nationalistic and even racial supremacist positions. Public discourse is accompanied by fear, lack of information (or misinformation) and anger. Such emotionally driven behaviour on the part of potential voters could easily be subjected to dangerous political manipulations.

## Conclusion

When discussing the security environment of the Slovak Republic and the perception of threats, it is necessary to underline three main features. The Slovak Republic is:

1. A small state
2. Not directly subjected to most trans-national military threats

Table 2.

<i>Current Threats</i>	<i>Interview results</i>	<i>Official document analysis</i>
Economic instability	Yes	Yes
Immigration	Yes	Yes
Cyber security	Yes	Yes
Social clashes and ethno-political conflict	Yes	Yes
Organized crime and failing States	Yes	Yes
Terrorism	Yes	Yes
Energy security	Yes	Yes
Failed or fragile States	Yes	Yes
Espionage (economic)	Yes	No
Privatization of violence	Yes	No
Income inequality	Yes	No
High economic openness	Yes	No
Dis-integration of inter-generational solidarity	Yes	No
Eroding influence of international law	Yes	No

3. Currently dependent on international guarantees based on membership in NATO and the EU (regarding the security structure of the state).

Table 3.

<i>Future Threats</i>	<i>Interview results</i>	<i>Official document analysis</i>
Climate change	Yes	Yes
Conflict on the EU periphery	Yes	Yes
Unbalanced demographic development	Yes	No
The position of China	Yes	No
EU vs. Russia – securitization of relations	Yes	No
Big economic turbulence	Yes	No
Strategic import of raw materials	Yes	No
'Islamization' of Europe	Yes	No
Existence of the State – the Slovak Republic as such	Yes	No
Democracy as such	Yes	No
Militarization of Kaliningrad	Yes	No
Interstate conflict (related to failed states)	Yes	Yes
Potable water	Yes	Yes
Food security	Yes	Yes
Changing global alliances	Yes	No
High raw material consumption	Yes	No

All other assumptions must be based on these three basic features. The following table compares our analysis of official documents with the results of our unofficial interviews. Our aim is to determine wheth-

er the most ranked threats, according to the interviewees, match with those identified in any of the primary official documents.

Our analysis of the official documents provided us with useful information on the risks and threats facing the Slovak Republic from the official point of view. Against the background of the Slovak Republic as a relatively new independent state, it was interesting to analyse the changes in security direction and also the emerging threats. On the other hand, the official line did not provide us with an in-depth understanding of current and future threats. It is evident that the official security documents generally follow the security thinking of the EU and NATO, primarily because these two institutions provide the core international security guarantees and the Slovak Republic tries to fulfil its commitments to them. One of the most important points to be noted about these documents is the absence of any hierarchical ordering of threats. Threats are generally described, but lack a ranking from most to least serious.

The interviews with experts provided us with some very interesting results. There were a number of discrepancies between the responses of experts, mostly concerning the following two questions: 'Is threat 'X' understood as current or future?' and 'Is threat 'X' more national or transnational?' From our perspective, a consensus could be formed regarding the first question— in other words, threat 'X' is current with the probability that it will intensify in the future. With regards to the second question, the dividing line between national and international threats is loose to nonexistent. In almost every case, the responses of interviewees were more specific than the official documents. Interviewees gave their own explanations and perceptions of particular threats based on their professional experience.

Based on this analysis and comparison we may conclude that the current identification of security threats and challenges in the official security documents reflects the most important issues for the security environment of the Slovak Republic. However, the aim of such documents is not only to offer an analysis of the current state of affairs, but also to prepare the country for the threats and challenges of the future. Our comparison of these documents with the perceptions of interviewed experts has shown that, in many cases, the official analysis does not properly reflect future threats and challenges. Such a situation – for a small state like Slovakia – may bring with it requirements for its resolution which are unpredictable, while on the other hand



prevention and response preparation are likely to be incomparably more effective.

The contemporary debate over the need to implement a security strategy in Slovakia is very intense. The initial plan assumed that the Strategic Defence Evaluation process in 2010 would lead to the implementation of the White Book on the Defence of the Slovak Republic, the Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic, and the Security Strategy of Slovak Republic. However, reality provided us with a different scenario—the release of the White Book alone took almost three years. Therefore, the release of a new and up-to-date defence and security strategy seems to be beyond the current horizon, despite the on-going efforts within the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs on behalf of this issue. Moreover, this process has been unexpectedly interrupted by the Ukraine crisis and has not been a factor in the Strategic Defence proposals.

On the other hand, both the crisis in the Ukraine and the migration crisis should provide the needed impetus to complete and implement new security documents and strategies. Our perception of the threats facing us should be considered anew, assessed thoroughly and, ideally, be properly ranked.



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## Notes

- 1 See: Lucia Husenicová (2011), *Liberalizmus ako teória medzinárodných vzťahov*. Banská Bystrica: Univerzita Mateja Bela, pp. 112-115.
- 2 See: Rob B. J. Walker (1993), *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 3 Michael Dillon (1996), *Politics and Security: Towards a Political Philosophy of Continental Thought*. London: Routledge, pp. 188-190.
- 4 Radoslav Ivančík and Pavel Nečas (2011). 'The Influence of Global Economic Depression on National and International Defence and Security.' In *The Knowledge Based Organization: Conference Proceedings from the 17th International Scientific Conference*. Sibiu: Nicolae Balcescu Land Force Academy, pp. 390-395.
- 5 Alexander Wendt (1992), 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics.' *International Organization*, 46:2, pp. 391-425.
- 6 See: Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver and Japp de Wilde (1998), *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- 7 See: Milan Labuzík and Antoni Olak (2013), *Európska únia - vybrané témy*. Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski: Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu i Przedsiębiorczości.
- 8 See: Lubomír Čech (2008), 'Contribution of Slovak Republic in to Functioning of International Crisis Management.' In *Politické vedy*. 9:3-4, pp. 163-172.
- 9 Jana Lasicová and Jaroslav Ušiak (2012), *Bezpečnosť ako kategória*. Bratislava: VEDA, pp. 10-34.
- 10 In Slovak - Obranná doktrína 1994.
- 11 'Obranná doktrína Slovenskej republiky' (1994), p. 5.
- 12 In Slovak - Základné ciele a zásady národnej bezpečnosti Slovenskej republiky 1996.
- 13 In the text they are characterized as 'factors with influence on the national interest' and are divided into internal and external factors, but not as positive or negative. However, it is clearly visible which are positive and which negative, even without this explicit division.
- 14 'Základné ciele a zásady národnej bezpečnosti Slovenskej republiky' (1996), pp. 5-7.
- 15 'Bezpečnostná stratégia Slovenskej republiky' (2001), pp. 6-7.
- 16 Josef Ahrhám and Milan Vošta (2011), 'Ekonomický rast a konvergence rozšírené Evropské unie.' In *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia*. 21:5, pp. 3-16.
- 17 'Bezpečnostná stratégia Slovenskej republiky' (2005), pp 4-7.
- 18 In Slovak - Biela kniha o obrane Slovenskej republiky 2013.
- 19 'Biela kniha o obrane Slovenskej republiky' (2013), pp. 24-26.
- 20 However, this situation is common in the official documents of other countries, e.g. Germany.
- 21 According to the theory of security studies and also the responses of interviewees, it is not straightforward to draw a dividing line between transnational and national (external and internal) threats and challenges. Social

- challenges and ethno-political conflicts are some of those cases.
- 22 Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky. 'Záznam z 59. zasadnutia Bezpečnostnej rady SR z 21. januára 2014.' (2014), Accessed September 30, 2015. <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/zaznam-z-59-zasadnutia-bezpecnostnej-rady-sr-z-21-januara-2014/>.
  - 23 Ján Lidák (2014), 'International Migration, Europe and Migration from Africa.' In *Asian and African Studies*, 23:2, pp. 226-254.
  - 24 SITA (2015), 'Fico: Diktát odmietame, kvóty nebude Slovensko rešpektovať' Accessed October 10, 2015. <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/368428-fico-povinne-kvoty-slovensko-nebude-respektovat/?sc=art-368486>.

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