

# Hating Thy Imaginary Neighbor: An Analysis of Antisemitism in Slovakia

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This article offers an analysis of subnational variation in antisemitism. Utilizing survey data from 1990 to 2008 in Slovakia, we characterize three types of anti-Jewish attitudes. Our results point to: (1) the decline of antisemitism due to the consolidation of a Hungarian-Slovak divide; (2) the lowest antisemitism levels expressed by those in the capital city; and (3) the diffuse voting patterns of antisemitic respondents, e.g., the Slovak National Party, the Christian Democratic Movement, and Mečiar's nationalistic-populist Movement for Democratic Slovakia.<sup>1</sup>

*Key Words: Antisemitism, Political Cleavages, Slovakia, Survey Data*

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There is a specter haunting the end of communism—the specter of two old European demons—nationalism and antisemitism. Despite the sparse presence of Jews today in Eastern Europe, antisemitic attitudes persist in some places and among some segments of society. A great deal has been written on antisemitism in several states, notably Germany, Poland, and Ukraine, yet there is surprisingly little systematic research on the subject in certain countries in the post-communist world. Slovakia is one of the more egregious oversights.<sup>2</sup> This article remedies this lacuna in the literature on antisemitism by providing an original, empirical analysis of subnational variation (Snyder, 2001) in antisemitism within Slovakia. Our analysis is guided by a multilevel conceptual framework, developed in Kovács (2010), and exploits survey data covering the period from 1990 to 2008.<sup>3</sup>

Analytically, we focus on characterizing three types of variation in anti-Jewish attitudes: (a) macro-level temporal trends, (2) meso-level regional variation, and (3) micro-level variation among political subgroups. Our results point to three main findings. First, antisemitism has declined

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1. For more on party voter linkages in Czechoslovakia, see Rakušanová (2002).

2. For important work on antisemitism in Slovakia, see Bútorová and Bútor (1992), *Focus* (1999), Klamková (2009), Mesežnikov, Koliár, and Vašečka (2005), Měšt'an (2011), and Vašečka (2006).

3. For a recent overview of antisemitism in Europe, see Bergmann (2008); for a survey of post-communist Europe, see Erős and Enyedi (1999), Kovács (1999, 2010), and Shafir (2004).

significantly in Slovakia since the early 1990s, which highlights the shifting salience of identity cleavages over time and the consolidation of the Hungarian-Slovak divide.<sup>4</sup> Second, unlike Hungary, the lowest level of antisemitism is expressed among those living in the capital city. Third, the voting patterns of antisemitic respondents are diffuse, and include supporters of the Slovak National Party (SNS), the Christian Democratic Movement (HZDS), and Mečiar's nationalistic-populist Movement for Democratic Slovakia. Despite the recent focus on the Jewish origins of one Slovak politician, our findings point to the relatively peripheral nature of the Jewish question in Slovakia's politics—especially when compared to the more prominent Hungarian language issue and to the Roma question.

Our analysis proceeds in three stages. First, we provide a brief history of antisemitism and antisemitic discourse in Slovakia. Second, we characterize both temporal changes and regional variation in antisemitic attitudes within Slovakia since 1989, and provide a comparison with other “out-groups.”<sup>5</sup> Third, we analyze the individual-level determinants of antisemitic attitudes and the role of antisemitism in political competition.

#### A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Antisemitism in Czechoslovakia has traditionally had two primary manifestations, the ethnic and the economic—the former typically targeted Jews as members of a distinct ethnic group, as opposed to a separate religious group,<sup>6</sup> while the latter focused on Jews as economic exploiters of the new nations seeking self-determination (Pavlát, 1997).<sup>7</sup> The Tiso regime—an interwar Slovak-Nazi puppet state<sup>8</sup> under the leadership of Catholic

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4. Salience is defined as the prominence and relative importance of a given political issue.

5. In this article, the term “out-groups” is used to refer to ethnic, religious, economic, and social minorities excluded from mainstream politics.

6. One example is the bill that Josef Herzog proposed in the Austrian Parliament in 1903. It called for removing the equal status of Jews on racial rather than religious grounds. The Christian Socialist Party was one of the main parties expressing antisemitic policies; see its party pamphlet *Vaterland* [Fatherland].

7. See Bútorová and Bútor (1992), *Focus* (1999), Klamková (2009), Měšť'an (2011), and Vašečka (2006). These two forms of antisemitism—ethno-religious and economic—have historically been deeply intertwined, in part because the Jews were frequently segmented into certain occupational niches, and thus displaying the characteristics of the cultural division of labor, an integrated culture-class system of ethnically based economic stratification (Hechter, 1978).

8. The Tiso regime had embraced many anti-Jewish policies, which we discuss later. We are indebted to Hana Kubátová-Klamková for her comments on the nature of the Tiso regime.

priest-cum-politician Josef Tiso—adeptly blended the ethno-religious and economic dimensions of antisemitism.<sup>9</sup>

Czechoslovakia was one of the few countries that openly supported the emerging Jewish state in 1947-8, yet it quickly shifted its pro-Israel stance in 1948. The most infamous indication of this shift was the “anti-Zionist” show trial of Rudolf Slánský in 1952.<sup>10</sup> In 1975, Czechoslovakia adopted UN Resolution No. 3379, which determined that Zionism was a form of racism, yet Czechoslovakia, like many other communist countries, developed a specific form of antisemitism that persists today: antisemitism without Jews.<sup>11</sup> After communism, antisemitism was resurrected in the specific form of “Judeo-bolshevism,” which implicated Jews in the establishment of communist regimes across Eastern Europe (Krejča, 1993; Shafir, 2004).<sup>12</sup>

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9. Although antisemitism in Czechoslovakia has both nationalistic and socio-economic roots, the major difference between the Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia) and Slovakia is that antisemitism in Slovakia is driven by religious differences, contrary to the Czech lands, due to the high levels of secularization in Bohemia. An important exception to this rule was the so-called 1899 Hilsner affair.

10. In 1952, Rudolf Slánský and 13 other party officials (of which 11 were Jewish) were tried. Many victims of the Slánský trial were later rehabilitated during “de-Stalinization” (Margolius Kovály, 1986; Rotkirchen, 2012).

11. The exception was the dissident organization Charter 77, which prepared reports mapping the status and situation of Jewish communities and monuments in Czechoslovakia. Examples include: “The Open Letter to the Leadership of the Council of Jewish Communities in the Czech Lands,” written in February 1989 by Leo Pavlát and signed by twenty-four other dissidents; and “Critique on the Devastation of the Jewish Cultural Monuments” and “Tacit Disregard of the Role of Jews in Czechoslovak History” from April 1989 and signed by Tomáš Hradílek, Dana Němcová, and Saša Vondra (Frankl, 1998; Rotkirchen, 2012, p. 293).

12. The most striking example was the publication of *Týdeník Politika* [*Politics Weekly*], which launched open attacks against Jews, the “Judeo-Masonic conspiracy,” and the State of Israel. The publication, which was associated with Josef and Tomáš J. Dolejší between 1991-1993, focused on the detection of “Zionists, Jews, Freemasons, Rotarians, and Illuminati” among the political elite and other public figures and printed excerpts from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and articles on the “Auschwitz lie.” Since the beginning of its publication, however, *Politics Weekly* was criticized by individuals, organizations, and public authorities. In particular, the weekly *Respekt* [*Respect*] and daily *Lidové noviny* [*People’s News*] monitored and informed about law enforcement action (or a lack thereof) concerning *Politics Weekly* and its publishers. Due to public pressure, the publication of *Politics Weekly* was discontinued by the end of 1992. Another antisemitic journal is *National Flag*, the content of which is analogous to the content of *Politics Weekly*—but, unlike *Politics Weekly*, it cannot be purchased in the customary shops.

Our subsequent analysis suggests that antisemitism in Slovakia still exists today, but at significantly lower levels than in the early 1990s. Recent years have brought mixed signals: the first Jewish museum was established in Bratislava in the same year that a prominent Slovak politician was the subject of a smear campaign for his alleged Jewish origins. We investigate these signals of antisemitism at the national, the regional, and the individual level using several waves of public opinion data.

#### PREJUDICE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Our first goal is to characterize how aggregate levels of antisemitic prejudice have evolved in Slovakia since the end of communism—i.e., is there more or less antisemitism over time? Is there significant variation across regions? Who in Slovakia expresses antisemitic prejudice? We consider these three questions in turn, using surveys conducted between 1990 and 2008.<sup>13</sup>

Our results suggest that the aggregate level of antisemitism, as expressed in the distaste for having Jews as neighbors (“social distance”), has declined sharply since the early 1990s. At the time, roughly one in three respondents (34%) did not want to have a Jew as a neighbor, compared to approximately roughly one in seven respondents (12.5%) almost two decades later.<sup>14</sup> This downward trend is comparable to social distance attitudes toward other out-groups as well—for instance, social distance toward immigrants and Gypsies (Roma) has also declined sharply over time. In 1990, roughly 37% of respondents expressed high social distance from immigrants, whereas the number was about one half that level (17%) in 2008. More than three-quarters of respondents said that they would rather not have a Roma as a neighbor in 1990; less than one-half of respondents expressed social distance toward Roma in 2008. This finding is consistent with the decline of social distance toward all groups since 1989.

The most recent data indicate that the least social distance is expressed toward Jews (13%), compared to immigrants (17%) and Roma (47%). Noteworthy is that the relative rank order of these three groups in terms of social distance (Roma > immigrants > Jews) remains consistent over time. While these trends display less social distance over time toward Jews—as well as Roma and immigrants—the numbers also tend to hide considerable

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13. We use the World Values Survey (1990, N = 466), the European Values Survey (1999, N = 1331, and 2008, N = 1426), and the International Social Science Program Survey (2003, N = 1152).

14. The most recent surveys we were able to obtain did indicate a considerable increase from previous survey research (from 6% in 1999 to 12% in 2009).

variation across regions and social groups, to which we now turn our attention.

#### REGIONAL VARIATION

Figure 1 displays the intensity of antisemitism in each of Slovakia's eight regions.<sup>15</sup> The national-level story hides considerable variation between regions that were highly antisemitic in the early 1990s, such as Žilina (41%), and those that were significantly less antisemitic, such as Bratislava (12%).<sup>16</sup> In the early 1990s, Banská Bystrica and Žilina were the most antisemitic regions (41%), followed by Nitra, Trenčín, and Trnava (34%), Prešov and Košice (32%), and Bratislava as the least (12%). This suggests that, unlike in Hungary (Kovács, 1999), antisemitism is largely a phenomenon of smaller cities and the countryside in Slovakia.

It is important not to infer too much from data collected in the early 1990s. By the end of the decade, all regions exhibited significantly lower levels of social distance toward Jews. The mean declined to 10 percent, and ranged between 4 and 17 percent in 1999. The level of antisemitism declined in all regions, but it declined most dramatically in Banská Bystrica (from 41% to 6%) and the least in Bratislava (from 12% to 11%). By 2008, there was a slight correction to the decline, and many regions experienced a marginal rise in the level of antisemitism, reflecting an overall inverted J-curve pattern over time.<sup>17</sup> Today, the highest level of antisemitism is evident in the eastern Slovak regions.

Taking the average level across all three time periods, Bratislava still displays the lowest level of antisemitism, with a mean level of 12 percent, whereas Žilina exhibits the highest level, with roughly 22 percent. This is followed closely by Trnava (21%), Prešov (20.4%), Nitra (19%), Banská

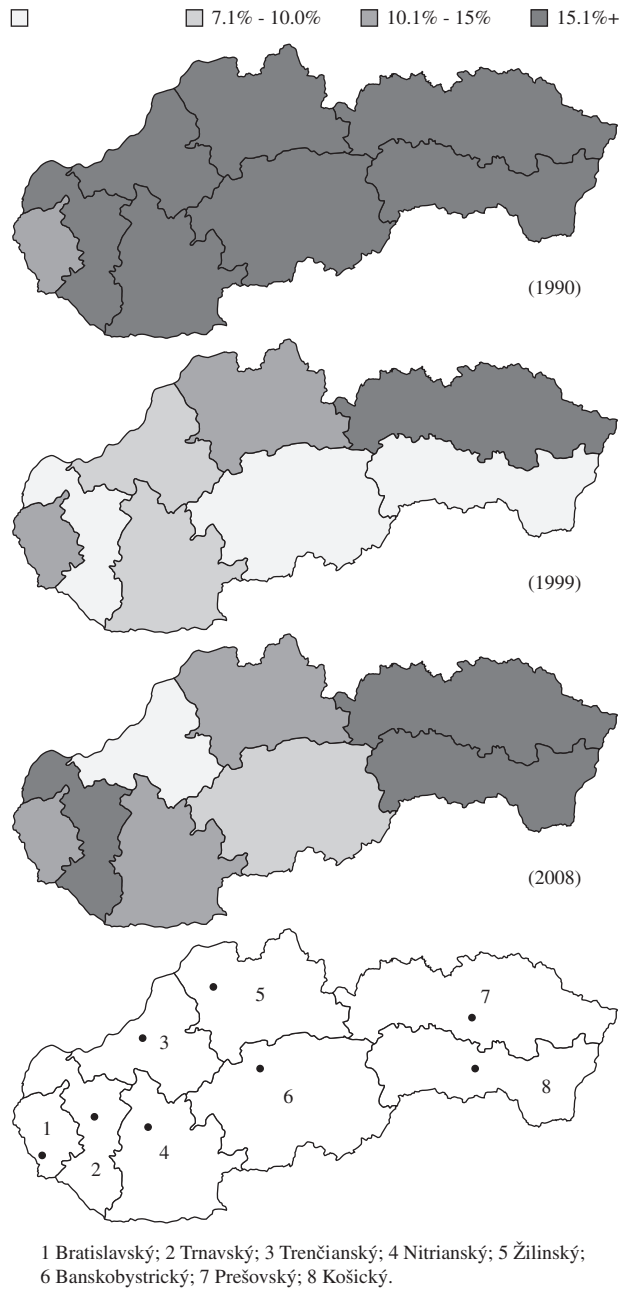
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15. To maximize both comparability and coverage over time, we rely on the European Values Survey, which was conducted every nine years: 1990, 1999, and 2008. Slovakia has eight administrative regions: Banskobystrický, Bratislavský, Košický, Nitrianský, Prešovský, Trenčianský, Trnavský, and Žilinský.

16. The average regional level was roughly 33 percent, with a range between 41 and 12 percent.

17. Overall, from 1999 to 2008, six regions increased or stayed the same, while only two decreased; for instance, Bratislava (14%) was slightly higher than it was in the early 1990s (12%). This may reflect, in part, the migration of individuals from the periphery, where antisemitism was generally greater than it was in the capital during the early 1990s. Unfortunately, our data are not strictly longitudinal and thus do not follow the same individuals over time, so we are unable to test this supposition empirically.

FIGURE 1  
REGIONAL VARIATION IN ANTISEMITISM ACROSS 8 REGIONS IN  
SLOVAKIA—1990, 1999, AND 2008



Bystrica (18%), Košice (17.6%), and Trenčín (16%). These differences across regions and trends over time are depicted in Figure 1.

Aside from the capital region of Bratislava, the remaining regions exhibit more volatility in antisemitism over time. In general, the outskirts of the former Austro-Hungarian empire bordering Galicia tend to be more antisemitic. Although the roots of these differences are historical, and connected to the nation and state building in Slovakia and the WWII era, our analysis shows that they have persisted to the present day and to some degree influence political choices—in particular the support for the nationalistic parties.

#### MICRO-LEVEL VARIATION

After the breakup of Czechoslovakia, the initial level of social distance regarding Jews was very high in the Slovak part of the federation.<sup>18</sup> According to a representative survey conducted in 1990, every third respondent mentioned that he or she would not want to have a Jew as a neighbor (Table 1). This high display of hostility toward Jews was not matched by widespread attacks on Jews, outbursts of antisemitism rhetoric among Slovak politicians, or a sudden surge of antisemitic discourse in the media (Měšt'an, 2011). One interpretation of this disparity between attitudes and behavior is that the attitudes reflect the confusion and anxiety associated with the political and economic transition (Bútorová & Bútorá, 1992). Ethnicity also came to the forefront, due in part to the collapse of the Czechoslovak federation and demands for greater Slovak autonomy. At the

TABLE 1  
SOCIAL DISTANCE TOWARD JEWS:  
DOES NOT WANT TO HAVE JEWS AS NEIGHBORS

	1990		1999		2008	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mentioned Jews	157	33.69	130	9.77	177	11.73
Did not mention Jews	309	66.31	1,201	90.23	1,236	81.91
Does not know					54	3.58
Did not answer					42	2.78
Total	466	100	1,331	100	1,509	100

Source: Data are from the World Value Survey 1990 and the European Values Surveys 1999 and 2008.

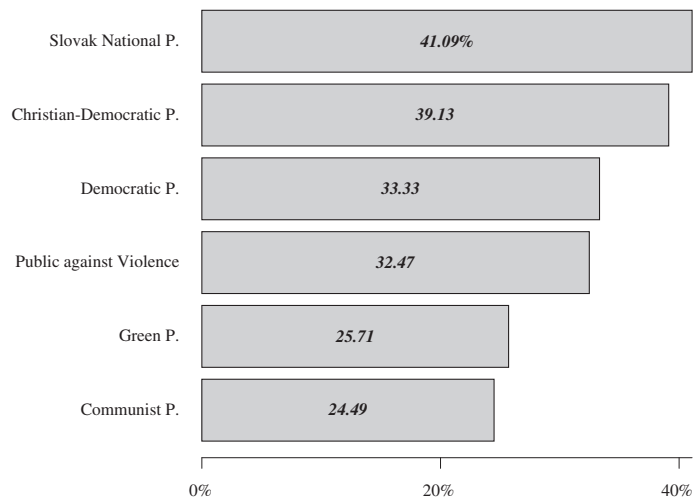
18. For a discussion on measures of social distance and the criticism of the use of measures of social distance toward Jews, see Vašečka (2006). On the historical roots of antisemitism in Slovakia, see Klamková (2009).

same time, Slovak nationalists called for the rehabilitation of the World War II fascist Tiso regime.

Consistent with this explanation, surveys from 1999 and 2008 show that the degree of hostility toward Jews stabilized at around 10 percent, dropping dramatically from the early 1990s, as shown in Table 1. Examining the trend over a twenty-year period suggests that social distance toward Jews expressed in the early 1990s was indeed peculiar to the immediate collapse of communism and the subsequent secession from the federation.<sup>19</sup> Current levels of antisemitism in Slovakia are in the high single digits, which is one third the level of the early 1990s and stable over time.

Despite some potential to mobilize anti-Jewish sentiment, none of the major Slovak political parties over the past twenty years can be singled out as carrying a distinctly anti-Jewish message (Figures 2-4). In 1990, at least over 20 percent of respondents for *all* Slovak political parties declared that they do not want to have a Jew as a neighbor, including respondents from voters for “Public Against Violence” [*Verejnost’ proti násiliu*], the major anti-communist, pro-democratic political movement that ousted the communists from power in Slovakia.<sup>20</sup>

FIGURE 2  
SOCIAL DISTANCE TOWARD JEWS IN 1990 BY POLITICAL PARTIES



Proportion of those who do not want to have Jews as their neighbors by parties  
Source: World Value Survey 1990.

19. On the effect of secession increasing the role of ethnicity, see Siroky (2011).

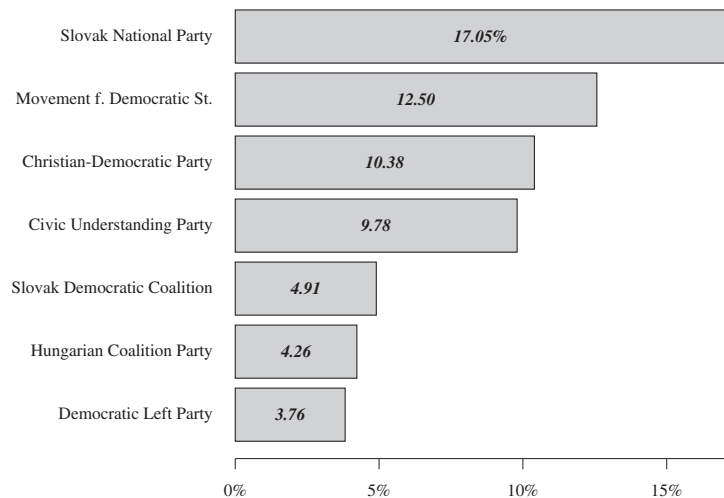
20. Figures 2-4 include parties that have received over 5 percent of the popular vote in the elections.



Figure 2 shows that two major political parties stand out in 1990 as harboring the most voters with anti-Jewish sentiments: The Slovak National Party [*Slovenská národná strana*] and the Christian Democratic Party [*Kresťansko-demokratická strana*]. Slovak nationalists, seeking Tiso's rehabilitation, "describe the Tiso years as a 'Slovak miracle' and the fascist leader's alliance with Hitler as the 'lesser of evils'" (Hockenos, 1994, p. 12).

Almost 40 percent of voters for both of these parties mentioned not wanting to have a Jew as a neighbor, according to the 1990 World Value Survey. Both parties were instrumental in attempts to rehabilitate the Tiso legacy, highlighting its Catholic character and its distinction in being the first independent Slovak republic; it's no surprise that supporters whitewashed its record as a Nazi satellite regime that enthusiastically enforced anti-Jewish policies, deported Jews to concentration camps, stripped them of their citizenship, and appropriated their property.

FIGURE 3  
SOCIAL DISTANCE TOWARD JEWS IN 1999 BY POLITICAL PARTIES

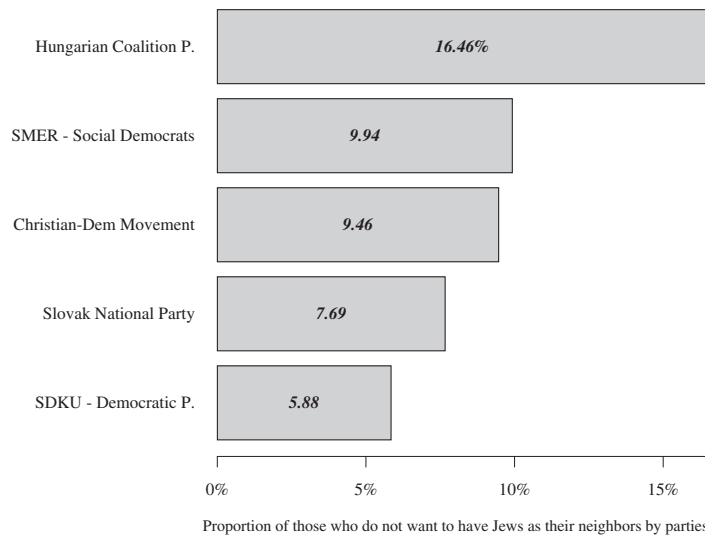


Proportion of those who do not want to have Jews as their neighbors by parties  
Source: European Values Survey 1999.

Figure 3 shows that the degree of social distance toward Jews dropped dramatically across all parties by 1999. The number of voters who did not want to have a Jew as a neighbor did not exceed 20 percent for any of the major political parties. The Slovak National Party, together with the Christian Democratic Movement and Mečiar's nationalistic-populist Movement

for Democratic Slovakia, harbored most of the respondents expressing anti-Jewish attitudes.<sup>21</sup> The reformist successor of the Slovak Communist Party (Party of the Democratic Left) and the ethnic Hungarian Party (Party of the Hungarian Coalition) expressed the lowest levels of social distance toward Jews in 1999.

FIGURE 4  
SOCIAL DISTANCE TOWARD JEWS IN 2008 BY POLITICAL PARTIES



Source: European Values Survey 2008.

Figure 4 shows that the degree of social distance toward Jews remained stabilized around 10 percent among most of the supporters of all political parties, according to the survey conducted by the European Values Survey in 2008. One clear conclusion that emerges from this party-level data is that the political base of anti-Jewish support is highly unstable (cf. Gyárfášová, 2004; Kitschelt, 2007; Tucker, 2005). While voters of the ethnic Hungarian Party were the least anti-Jewish in 1999, almost 20 percent of its supporters express anti-Jewish sentiment almost a decade later. A flip occurred among voters of the Slovak National Party: in 1999, its voters expressed the highest level of hostility toward the Jews, while in 2008 they expressed the relatively low level of social distance toward Jews.

21. On Slovak populism and semi-authoritarianism, see Bunce and Wolchik (2010); Bustikova (2009); Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009); Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2009); Kopecky and Mudde (2003); Krekó, Szabados, Molnár, Juhász, and Kuli, 2010; and Vachudova (2005).

Voters of the Slovak National Party are hostile toward accommodative policies that benefit Hungarians—the most politically organized minority in Slovakia—but not toward Hungarians per se (Bustikova, 2012).<sup>22</sup> This lack of group hostility, as opposed to policy hostility, is consistent with the low antisemitism of Slovak National Party voters after 2000, when policy concessions toward Hungarians became a strong political factor. Conversely, the low antisemitism among the voters of the Hungarian Party in 1999 coincides with the time when Hungarian parties were seeking political concessions from the Slovak majority under the umbrella of ethnic accommodation, and succeeded. The primary ethnic political cleavage in Slovak politics is between Hungarians and Slovaks, and the secondary cleavage is between Roma and Slovaks. The Jewish-Slovak divide occupies a third and relatively unimportant ethnic dimension of political competition.

The classification of Jews also appears to be changing over time (Tables 2-4). Based on a factor analysis that includes three time points over two decades, the perception of Jews as either an ethnic or social minority has changed over time. In 1990, Jews were associated primarily with ethnic minorities, which included “people of a different race,” immigrants, and Muslims (Factor 2, Ethnic minorities, in Table 2). Social outcasts and social minorities—such as drug addicts, homosexuals, and people with AIDs—appear on a separate dimension. Jews were associated with other distinct minorities in the early 1990s, but not with social outcasts.

By the end of 1999, the distinctions between non-politicized ethnic minorities and social minorities blurred, as did the distinction between social minorities and outcasts, such as criminals and alcoholics, who fall into their own category (Table 3, Factors 1 & 3). The perception of outcasts—in particular, of ethnic and social minorities, such as homosexuals and people with AIDS—has changed over time. In the early 1990s, Jews were identified solely with ethnic minorities, and outcasts were perceived as identical with social minorities. In 1999 and 2008, various groups of outcasts form their own category, while social and ethnic minorities blend together. This de-escalates the formation of a unique ethnic identity—such as a Jew, Gypsy, Muslim, or foreigner—since ethnic groups are, in respondents’ minds, pooled with social minorities (Tables 2-4). The identification of political extremists as a distinct category remains the same in 1990, 1999, and 2008 (Tables 2-4) (see also Krieglerová & Kadlečiková, 2012).

In 1999, Jews are associated with both ethnic minorities, such as Muslims, and with social minorities, such as homosexuals (Table 3, Factor 1). The de-ethnicization of Jews, as the surveys suggest, coincides with the

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22. Slovak National Party voters are primarily concerned with political concessions afforded to Hungarians since Slovak independence (Bustikova, 2012).

TABLE 2  
GROUP HOSTILITY: FACTOR ANALYSIS AND FACTOR LOADINGS, 1990

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>		<i>Factor 2</i>		<i>Factor 3</i>	
	<b>Social minorities and outcasts</b>		<b>Ethnic minorities</b>		<b>Political minorities</b>	
Drug addicts	.786	(.786)	.029	(-.024)	.111	(.127)
Homosexuals	.703	(.716)	.261	(.210)	.138	(.159)
People who have AIDS	.717	(.703)	.276	(.262)	.065	(.092)
People with a criminal record	.659	(.660)	.178	(.154)	.058	(.053)
Heavy drinkers	.617	(.563)	-.044	(-.012)	.322	(.331)
Jews	.093	(.148)	.773	(.751)	.053	(.065)
People of a different race	.160	(.224)	.740	(.694)	.228	(.224)
Immigrants/Foreign workers	.050	(.133)	.677	(.612)	.219	(.183)
Muslims	.362	(.422)	.625	(.561)	.274	(.266)
People with large families		(-.322)		(.583)		(.124)
Right-wing extremists	.108	(.113)	.125	(.096)	.902	(.895)
Left-wing extremists	.097	(.103)	.164	(.138)	.907	(.891)
Emotionally unstable people		(.137)		(.389)		(.480)
N	466					
Proportion of variance	0.240	(.215)	0.201	(.184)	0.178	(.166)

Method: Factor analysis, varimax rotation. Question: On this list are various groups of people. Could you please identify any that you would not like to have as neighbors? The second column includes the full battery of questions, including factor scores for "People with large families" and "Emotionally unstable people." Source: World Value Survey 1990.

reduction of social hostility toward Jews once Slovakia achieved independence.

Table 4 shows data from 2008 that suggest respondents associate Jews firmly with both members of other ethnic groups, including Roma (Gypsies), and with social minorities, such as homosexuals and people with AIDS, as in 1999. The placement of Jews in the factor that combines both ethnic groups and social minority groups is unequivocal. Compared to 1990, Jews are strongly associated not only with ethnic minorities, but with social minorities as well. Yet, anti-Jewish sentiment in Slovakia is politically unsettled. Since the independence, none of the major political parties has sought to capitalize on anti-Jewish sentiment in Slovakia.

#### WHO IS A REAL SLOVAK?

The relationship between antisemitism and nationalism can be analyzed further by investigating how antisemites define a real Slovak (Figure

TABLE 3  
GROUP HOSTILITY: FACTOR ANALYSIS AND FACTOR LOADINGS, 1999

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Factor 1</i> <b>Ethnic and social minorities</b>	<i>Factor 2</i> <b>Political minorities</b>	<i>Factor 3</i> <b>Outcasts</b>
Jews	.686	.091	-.036
Muslims	.703	.166	.012
People of a different race	.670	.149	-.003
Immigrants/Foreign workers	.602	.152	.095
People who have AIDS	.534	-.031	.380
Homosexuals	.533	.057	.355
Gypsies	.261	-.082	.331
Left-wing extremists	.086	.917	.015
Right-wing extremists	.085	.920	.061
People with a criminal record	.077	.041	.640
Drug addicts	.038	.071	.695
Heavy drinkers	-.011	.098	.637
N	1331		
Proportion of variance	.203	.146	.141

Method: Factor analysis, varimax rotation. Question: On this list are various groups of people. Could you please identify any that you would not like to have as neighbors? This analysis excludes two items: "People with large families" and "Emotionally unstable people," due to low factor scores. Source: European Values Survey 1999.

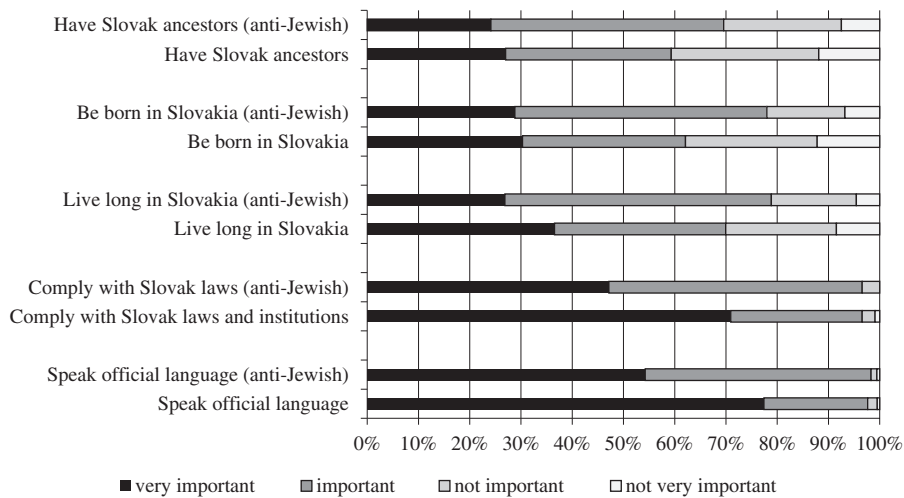
TABLE 4  
GROUP HOSTILITY: FACTOR ANALYSIS AND FACTOR LOADINGS, 2008

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Factor 1</i> <b>Ethnic and social minorities</b>	<i>Factor 2</i> <b>Political minorities</b>	<i>Factor 3</i> <b>Outcasts</b>
Jews	0.759	0.004	-0.026
Muslims	0.755	0.058	0.115
Immigrants/Foreign workers	0.751	0.065	0.084
People of a different race	0.641	0.231	-0.032
Homosexuals	0.625	0.175	0.256
People who have AIDS	0.577	0.253	0.355
Gypsies	0.442	-0.065	0.379
Drug addicts	0.193	0.256	0.676
People with a criminal record	0.210	0.235	0.615
Heavy drinkers	0.080	0.341	0.618
Christians	0.298	0.246	-0.541
Right-wing extremists	0.076	0.916	0.113
Left-wing extremists	0.066	0.926	0.093
N	1188		
Proportion of variance	.248	.166	.145

Method: Factor analysis, varimax rotation. Question: On this list are various groups of people. Could you please identify any that you would not like to have as neighbors? This analysis excludes two items: "People with large families" and "Emotionally unstable people," due to low factor scores. Source: European Values Survey 2008.

5). For the majority of respondents (among those who would not mind having a Jew as a neighbor), being a true citizen means speaking the official (Slovak) language and complying with Slovak laws and institutions (Figure 5). The survey was administered in 2008, right before the reversal of minority language rights in 2009, and thus captures the politicization of language in party competition in Slovakia (Kelley, 2004; Liu & Ricks, 2012).

FIGURE 5  
IMPORTANCE: TO BE A TRUE SLOVAK (2008)\*



\*Respondents who did not mention that they would not want to have a Jew as a neighbor—N ~ 1230, respondents who do not want to have a Jew as a neighbor (anti-Jewish)—N ~ 177.

The results of Figure 5 show that respondents who display social hostility toward Jews have a more primordial view of Slovak citizenship. While almost 80 percent of the respondents who do not express social distance toward Jews think that speaking the official language is very important to being a true citizen of Slovakia, only 54 percent of respondents who are hostile toward Jews share the same view of language as critical to being Slovak. Similarly, over 70 percent of those not expressing social distance toward Jews think that complying with laws and institutions is very important to being a true citizen of Slovakia, while only 47 percent of hostiles share the same view. Those expressing social distance toward Jews were also 10 percent more likely to think that having Slovak ancestors was important to being a true citizen. These differences, depicted in Figure 5, are both statistically significant and substantively noteworthy.

This rock-bottom construct of the nation among antisemites is also visible when we compare how much importance respondents attach to being

born in Slovakia. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents displaying antisemitic attitudes think that being born in Slovakia is important for being a true citizen of Slovakia, while being born in Slovakia is important only for the 62 percent of respondents without an antisemitic prejudice. Sixty-two percent of respondents who did not express hostility toward Jews thought that having Slovak ancestors was either very important or important for citizenship. In contrast, among respondents expressing hostility toward Jews, having Slovak ancestors was either important or very important to almost 80 percent of respondents.

Although this elemental view of Slovak citizenship is comparably important for respondents who express hostility toward Jews, it is trumped by cultural concerns. Even for respondents who are hostile to Jews, it is more important to be born and raised in Slovakia, and to comply with its laws and language requirements, than to possess Slovak blood (i.e., referring to definition of citizenship based on *ius sanguinis*, defining citizenship not on place of birth—*ius soli*—but on ancestry). Similar to the results from the factor analysis from 2008, anti-Jewish sentiment is only partially driven by primordial differences; more crucial are issues of compliance with Slovak laws, social norms, and habits.

Regardless of empathy or antipathy toward Jews, speaking the official language—Slovak—is a defining feature of true Slovak citizenship for all respondents (with the exception of many ethnic Hungarian respondents, of course). The importance of language rights in Slovakia's ethnic politics cannot be underscored enough, and goes a long way toward explaining why antisemitic sentiment has not been tapped as an ethno-political issue. The battle over the status of the Hungarian language divides and preoccupies the Slovak political scene, and identifies the policy positions of all major parties. Although Hungarian was recognized as a minority language under communism, the Slovak language was the only language permitted in official documents. Road signs were written exclusively in Slovak (Votruba, 1998). In 1994, however, the parliament passed a new law, which listed 587 villages that could officially use both Slovak and non-Slovak names.<sup>23</sup> The law stated that the name of the village could be displayed in the minority language if the population size of the minority group exceeds 20 percent.

The EU accession-oriented parties won the elections in 1998; the Hungarian Coalition Party was invited to join the first and second Dzurinda governments in 1998-2002 and in 2002-2006 (Vachudova, 2005). Language policies aimed at accommodating the Hungarian minority immediately fol-

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23. National Council of the Slovak Republic [*Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky*], No. 54, 1994.

lowed.<sup>24</sup> The new law on minority languages, adopted in 1999, significantly expanded the rights of Hungarians.<sup>25</sup> The Slovak National Party protested, arguing that the law instead opened the door to the Magyarization of southern Slovakia (Rafaj, 2011).

The 1999 language law mobilized the opposition around the issue of minority accommodation. Before the law was passed, the Christian Democratic Movement, the Slovak National Party, and a pro-Catholic cultural organization, *Matica Slovenská* [Slovak Heritage Fund], collected 447,000 signatures that called for a referendum on the language bill. The proposed question was: “Do you agree that the Slovak language should be used exclusively in official contacts, as it was before June 1, 1999?” Despite the fact that only 350,000 signatures were needed to initiate a referendum, President Schuster blocked the referendum due to the prohibition of plebiscites on human rights issues (Daftary & Gal, 2000, p. 32). It took ten years for the nationalist parties to overthrow the 1999 law. The Slovak National Party was invited to join populist, nationalistic Fico (SMER) government (2006-2010), and in 2009 helped to pass a new language law, which severely restricted the use of minority languages. The law declared that the Slovak language is an articulation of sovereignty, and that Slovak must be used in all official settings, including at the local government level.<sup>26</sup>

Paradoxically, the success of the controversial 2009 minority language law opened the door for the politicization of anti-Jewish sentiments. The survival of the nationalistic Slovak National Party depends critically upon the politicization of the issue of (Hungarian) minority accommodation (Bustikova, 2012). The Hungarian minority is momentarily politically

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24. According to the 2011 Slovak Census (*Slovak Statistical Yearbook* 2011), the Hungarian minority comprises approximately 8.5 percent of the Slovak population (the percentage of respondents identifying themselves as ethnic Hungarians) and 9.4 percent of respondents stated that Hungarian was their mother tongue. Furthermore, the Hungarian minority is not equally distributed on the Slovak territory, but rather concentrated in two southern regions on the border with Hungary (Nitra and Trnava). Regarding ethnic composition, these regions are the least ethnically Slovak, while the regions of Žilina and Trenčín are the most ethnically Slovak. In 2011, the Roma comprised 1.7 percent of the Slovak population; the regions with the most Roma population were Prešov, Košice, and Banská Bystrica. In comparison, in 1991 the proportion of the Hungarian population was 10.72 percent and 1.5 percent of the Roma population (*Slovak Statistical Yearbook*, 1996).

25. National Council of the Slovak Republic, No. 184, 1999.

26. The most controversial clause of the law was the fine of up to 5,000 euros for those who violate the provisions of the law. The 2009 law was modified in 2011, when it lowered the ethnic size quota from 20 to 15 percent for localities in which minorities were allowed to use a minority language.



divided and fragmented.<sup>27</sup> Until it recoups politically, nationalists may begin eyeing other ethnic groups (including Roma and Jews) to ensure their political relevance in the next elections.

The first major incident of antisemitism since early 1990s that directly targeted a prominent politician came in 2012 to the minister of internal affairs, Daniel Lipšic, a member of the Christian Democratic Movement Party. Prior to this event, the last prominent antisemitic attack on a public figure was against Fedor Gál, one of the leaders of the Velvet Revolution, who was associated with “Czechoslovakism,” considered to be a derogatory term very early in 1990. Since 1993, however, “none of the relevant political parties . . . practiced or included open antisemitism into its political program, with the exception of the Slovak National Party/True Slovak National Party in 2002” (Mesežnikov, 2012).

The attacks in early 1990s were aimed at Slovak Jews, for their allegedly pro-federalist stance toward Czechoslovakia. The attacks by SNS in 2002 were considerably more abstract, and focused on the policies of the state of Israel toward the Palestinians (Mesežnikov, 2012). In the early 1990s, anti-Jewish attacks were aimed at public intellectuals with a different vision of Slovak statehood—a less parochial vision of the nation-state, and a more cosmopolitan one, with greater diversity. The attack on Lipšic in 2012 is, however, unprecedented, and is the first major attack on an active high-ranking political representative since the establishment of an independent Slovak state in 1993.

Lipšic had been anonymously accused of having had inappropriate contact with an Israeli secret service agent. The compromising material, posted anonymously on the Internet, stirred the Slovak political scene, serving to discredit the efforts of Lipšic’s party to eradicate high-level corruption in Slovakia (Filip, 2012) since he has been in charge of handling serious corruption cases against prominent Slovak public officials (*Economist*, 2012). The Slovak National Party leader, Ján Slota, quickly seized the opportunity to conflate his relationship with Israel and his competence as minister of the interior (TASR, 2012). The discussion around Lipšic has unleashed a veritable avalanche of antisemitic and anti-Israeli comments, many of which are posted on an anonymous Web page that smears his career with unsubstantiated allegations of contacts with Mossad and in online comments under newspaper articles that refer to him in major Slovak presses.<sup>28</sup> The Lipšic case is interesting less for its use of antisemitic tropes

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27. In 2009, the former leader of the Hungarian Coalition Party formed a new Hungarian Party (Most-HÍD).

28. The Web page containing the smear against Lipšic can be accessed at <http://www.lipsic.net/>.

in anonymous online commentaries, which tend to be standard and uncreative, than for its being the first politically motivated attack on a high-level politician in Slovakia since the early 1990s.

#### ANTISEMITIC DISCOURSE

Antisemitism has thus been present in Slovakia during its almost twenty years of independence. We have identified three antisemitic discourses in Slovakia: the historical, the political, and the international. The historical discourse is aimed at rehabilitating and glorifying the heritage and heroes of the Slovak Republic; the political discourse is aimed at portraying post-communist development as struggles between national forces and the “Jewish lobby”; and, finally, the international antisemitic discourse portrays critically the role and actions of Israel in Middle East politics (see Mesežnikov, 2012).<sup>29</sup>

The historical discourse blends religious and nationalistic forms of antisemitism.<sup>30</sup> The key elements of this discourse are strong ethnic nationalism, a focus on positive perception of the anti-democratic, and the corporatist nature of the Slovak state under Tiso and its religious and ethnic antisemitism. The history of the Slovak Holocaust under Tiso’s leadership goes far beyond passive cooperation: Hitler praised Slovakia in 1942 for its exemplary cooperation in its “contribution to solving the Jewish question.”<sup>31</sup>

The memory of Slovak independence played a crucial role at the beginning of 1990s, when nationalistic and populist parties recalled nostalgically and sought to rehabilitate the legacy of the Tiso’s state.<sup>32</sup> Public

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29. This distinction is based on the analysis of various secondary sources (annual reports on antisemitism and racism for Slovakia: 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, & 2008), literature (Mesežnikov, 2012; Měšť’an, 2011), and major Slovak media outlets).

30. This is distinct from the Czech Republic due to the high levels of secularization in Bohemia.

31. Tiso’s state excluded Jews from most areas of public life and was involved in the Aryanization of Jewish property and the deportation of the Jewish population. After intervention from the Vatican and public protests, the deportations came to a standstill. By that time, however, more than 75 percent of the Slovak Jewish population was deported to concentration camps (approximately 58,000). Deportations were resumed in October 1944 by German authorities, when Germany occupied Slovakia during the Slovak National Uprising. During this time, a further 13,500 Slovak Jews were deported, and some of them murdered in Slovakia itself.

32. Under the leadership of Jozef Tiso, a priest, and the Slovak Peoples Party, Slovakia formed a separate state with close ties to Nazi Germany. As such, Slovakia adopted the antisemitic policies that played an important role in defining

intellectuals, such as selected historians from the *Matica Slovenská*, were also active in the rehabilitation efforts. The main function of these efforts was political mobilization on ethnic and ideological grounds—based on nationalism and Catholicism—i.e., defining the “real” Slovaks. Moderate revisionists started a process of rehabilitation of historical public figures and the Slovak Catholic Church. The attempt to beatify the Roman Catholic bishop Ján Vojtaššák met with strong opposition from the domestic and international Jewish community, since Vojtaššák was actively involvement in transferring Jewish assets to the state during Tiso’s Slovak Republic (see Mesežnikov, et al., 2005).

The second Slovak antisemitic discourse is political and built on racist anti-Roma and anti-Hungarian attitudes.<sup>33</sup> In general, such intolerant attitudes target Jews, Roma, Hungarians, immigrants, and foreigners as “the others,” but they also revive the discourse of “Jewish conspiracy.” Political discourse utilizes traditional negative stereotypes of Jews as “conspirators” in quest of a new world order (Vašečka, 2006). Key elements of this discourse are defamation and aggressive public shaming; proponents target public figures opposing their agenda as “Jews, Freemasons and Zionists.” While the first, historical, discourse seeks to rehabilitate and glorify the troublesome past, the second, political, discourse portrays the post-communist development in Slovakia as a struggle between “the pro-national Slovak forces and the representatives of the Jewish lobby” (Mesežnikov et al., 2005).

The third antisemitic discourse in Slovakia—the international—is complex and often too nuanced to be primarily employed by the nationalistic extremists. Its roots can be discovered in the anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist rhetoric of the communist era. International discourse critically portrays the State of Israel in Middle Eastern politics and the world. It views Israel’s policies toward the Palestinians as barbaric and an act of aggression. The politically right-wing-leaning proponents of this discourse include representatives of the Slovak radical parties (SNS and PSNS), neo-Nazi groups, paramilitary groups based on the “Hlinka Guards,” and some representatives of the Catholic Church. The left-leaning participants in the discourse condemn the human rights record of Israel and challenge Israel’s right to

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the identity of the new state. The mainstream political views were framed by ethnic as well as religious discourse, and the main figures of the Slovakian state, including Tiso, expressed openly antisemitic views.

33. This form of antisemitism is often expressed in public demonstrations by such groups as Slovak Togetherness and in online discussions, including readers’ comments on the Web sites of mainstream media outlets. It has close ties to parts of the Slovak Peoples Party.

exist and defend its territorial integrity. The left is also slightly biased against the United States, since it views it as being controlled by the “Zionist lobby.”

Among the antisemitic discourses, the historical antisemitic discourse has been, so far, dominant in Slovak politics, although in no way did it play a crucial or overall role in that arena, nor did it structure the political competition. The central issue that divides antisemitic and extremist elements in Slovakia from their liberal and democratic counterparts is the attempt to whitewash the record of the fascist state and to rehabilitate its key figures. The divisions were observable in 1999, during the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Slovak state (established in 1939). The celebrations of the anniversary took place mainly in the Žilina region, where the leader of the SNS, Ján Slota, served as mayor. In 2000, Slota was planning to place a commemorative plaque honoring Tiso, but he had to abandon the plan due to the international pressure.

Media outlets were active in the late 1990s in their efforts to rehabilitate the WWII Slovak past as well. The periodicals *Kultura* [Culture] and *Zmena* [The Change] vigorously manipulated historical memories in order to justify the role played by Tiso, the Hlinka Guards, and other key figures of the Slovak state during the war. These periodicals resorted to the old antisemitic rhetoric of such canards as the blood libel in describing the contemporary reform efforts. The official Slovak authorities were largely lenient and ineffective in curbing antisemitic activities.

The Slovak public knows little about the history of the Jewish population in Slovakia and the active role of the Slovak state in the Holocaust. The lack of a large public debate about the character of the Tiso state creates fertile ground for speculations and interpretations of the past. Some public debate about the Tiso regime might be encouraged in the near future due to the recent detention of the 97-year-old Hungarian citizen László Csatóry, a war criminal. Csatóry, condemned to death in Czechoslovakia in 1948, was accused of organizing the deportation of Jews from Košice in 1944 and charged with “unlawful torture of human beings.” The Slovak Jewish community called on the government to request Csatóry’s extradition and a trial in Slovakia. In August 2012, Tomáš Borec, the Slovak minister of justice, declared that his ministry would request that Csatóry stand a trial in Slovakia. The municipal court of Budapest will eventually determine whether Csatóry will be extradited. Despite the fact that Tiso, as a historical figure, is highly unpopular in Slovakia,<sup>34</sup> the extent of the anti-Jewish policies embraced by the Tiso regime are downplayed in the public discourse

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34. Tiso was mentioned as one of the top three most unfavorable historical figures in a 2011 survey. Slovaks are most ashamed of the former PM Vladimír

due to its historical importance as a first free (semi)-independent Slovak state. A high-profile trial can serve to educate the public about the anti-Jewish character of the Tiso regime.

#### CONCLUSION

The aim of this article is to consider a multilevel theoretical framework (Kovács, 2010) that focuses our attention on three levels of analysis: a) individual, b) public discourse, and c) political parties. We characterize antisemitism over the last twenty years in Slovakia, provide an empirical analysis at each of these levels, and discuss the results in terms of their implications for understanding and explaining antisemitism. We show that antisemitic perceptions evolve over time and that antisemitism in Slovakia does not have a stable party base. We have five main results.

First, examining aggregate trends over time and across regions, we find that antisemitism has declined considerably since the early 1990s, yet its current level (around 10%) is not trivial, especially considering how few Jews actually live in Slovakia today.

Second, we find that there is a significant regional variation, with the capital city of Bratislava displaying the lowest levels of antisemitism, compared to other regions (in order of decreasing levels of antisemitism over the 20-year period)—Žilina, Trnava, Prešov, Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Košice, and Trenčín.

Third, although most voters expressing social distance toward Jews are found among voters of the Slovak National Party, the Christian Democratic Movement, and Mečiar's nationalistic-populist Movement for Democratic Slovakia, the political base of anti-Jewish support is highly unstable. We suggest that this is partly because the primary political cleavage in Slovak politics is between Hungarians and Slovaks, and the secondary cleavage is between Roma and Slovaks. The Jewish-Slovak divide occupies a third and relatively unimportant dimension of political competition.

Fourth, this instability is also suggested by the somewhat stochastic characterization of Jews as similar to other ethnic minorities and, in other periods, to other social minorities as well.

Fifth, when we investigate the relationship between conceptions of nationalism and antisemitic prejudice, respondents who display social hostility toward Jews tend to have a view of Slovak citizenship that attributes greater weight to factors such as Slovak ancestry and being born in Slovakia. Yet, compliance with Slovak social norms and laws is also

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Mečiar, who was mentioned by 19 percent of respondents, followed by Jozef Tiso (16%), and the leader of the Slovak National Party, Ján Slota (14%) (IVO, 2011).

deemed to be extremely important to being a true Slovak citizen. Regardless of antisemitic prejudice, however, we found that speaking the Slovak language is paramount to being a true citizen of Slovakia. This result, we suggest, further highlights that the key political cleavage in Slovakia over the past twenty years is not antisemitism or Jews, but rather the Hungarian (minority) language question.

Recent events in Slovakia, especially the high-level smear campaign against Daniel Lipšic for his alleged ties to Mossad, relate both to the change in public opinion polls and to changes in political rhetoric. Primary antisemitism has declined significantly since the breakdown of Czechoslovakia. Secondary antisemitism, however, such as the anti-Israeli bias and underplaying the severity of the anti-Jewish policies of the interwar Tiso regime, is more likely to become significant in political discourse in the future. Compared to ten years ago, we have observed a slight increase in antisemitic prejudice among the public, as reflected by the public opinion surveys. In the public-political domain, however, antisemitism has increased considerably due to the Lipšic affair. Combined with the current fragmentation of Hungarian parties, antisemitism may not be dead in Slovakia, but may now be experiencing a (it is hoped) fleeting revival.

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