

Slovakia's Strategic Dilemma: Facts Over Speculation

Findings from Public Opinion Research on Slovakia's Security, NATO, and Geopolitical Orientation

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Introduction: Facts Instead of Assumptions

Slovakia finds itself at a geopolitical crossroads. Our latest survey, conducted by FOCUS agency on a representative sample of 1,006 Slovak adults, sheds light on how Slovaks perceive their security, alliances, and global threats. The results reveal a mix of strategic clarity, deep-seated paradoxes, and alarming vulnerabilities to misinformation.

This report presents data-driven insights—not assumptions—on Slovakia's security orientation, public attitudes toward NATO, defense spending, and perceptions of global threats. The results are crucial for Slovakia's democratic partners, policymakers, and civil society actors who are committed to strengthening Slovakia's resilience in an era of heightened geopolitical tension.

Key Findings: The Numbers Behind Slovakia's Security Thinking

1. Slovaks Overwhelmingly Want NATO Membership - Yet Some Are Uncertain

- 3.13 million Slovaks (70.6%) support remaining in NATO.
- Only 18.4% (820,000 citizens) favor leaving.
- Yet, 1.7 million Slovaks (38.6%) do not see Russia as a threat, highlighting the success of misinformation narratives.

Strategic Implication: Even among those with pro-Russian sympathies, many still prefer NATO's protection. This suggests a disconnect between ideological alignment and practical security concerns.

2. Widespread 'Security Without Responsibility' Mentality

- 2.82 million Slovaks (63.5%) identify with the West, yet...
- Half of respondents (49.6%) oppose any increase in defense spending, even as NATO allies ramp up their commitments.
- Only 500,000 Slovaks (12%) support military involvement in regional conflicts.

Strategic Implication: Slovaks overwhelmingly favor security guarantees from NATO but hesitate to contribute to the alliance's defense efforts. This gap reflects a passive security mentality that must be addressed through leadership and public discourse.

3. Perceived Threats: The Russia Paradox

- 51.5% of Slovaks recognize Russia as a security threat—a significant majority but not an overwhelming one.
- 38.6% do not see Russia as a risk, and 440,000 respondents remain uncertain.
- Meanwhile, 38.7% perceive the U.S. as a threat—a lingering effect of long-term anti-American propaganda.

Strategic Implication: The data confirms that Slovakia remains a primary battleground for Russian disinformation, with a large segment of society still resistant to acknowledging Moscow's aggressive foreign policy.

Misinformation & The Role of Political Leadership

Slovakia's current government does not openly advocate for NATO withdrawal, yet its actions have sabotaged cooperation within European defense efforts. At the same time, populist rhetoric has exploited public skepticism about defense spending, NATO obligations, and military alliances - fueling the illusion that Slovakia can remain 'neutral' in an era of hard geopolitical realities.

Strategic Implication: A country that sees security as a one-way street - demanding protection while rejecting responsibility - becomes vulnerable to external manipulation and internal political instability.

What Must Be Done: Strengthening Slovakia's Strategic Anchoring

1. A Coordinated Strategy Against Misinformation
Western allies and Slovak civil society must invest in countering Russian disinformation, particularly narratives that equate NATO with U.S. imperialism while downplaying Russia's military threats.
2. Reframing the Public Debate on Defense Responsibility
Slovakia cannot afford to be a passive consumer of security. Strategic leadership from democratic political forces is essential in shifting the narrative from 'protection without cost' to an active security partnership within NATO.
3. Engaging Political Elites in Long-Term Planning
Slovakia's political elites (both in government and opposition) must shape public attitudes by taking bold, responsible positions even when they contradict prevailing public sentiment. This is essential in preventing Slovakia from drifting into strategic ambiguity that benefits authoritarian influences.

Conclusion: A Call to Slovakia's Partners

Slovakia's security orientation is clear but fragile. Pro-Western sentiment dominates, but the population remains vulnerable to political manipulation and deeply ingrained free-rider mentalities. The current government's stance - while not officially anti-NATO - undermines collective security through passive obstruction and nationalist rhetoric.

The data makes one thing clear: Slovakia's democratic partners must stay engaged. Supporting strategic communication, investing in counter-disinformation efforts, and encouraging proactive Slovak leadership on security issues are crucial steps in ensuring that Slovakia remains a committed, reliable NATO ally in the years ahead.

Survey Methodology & Technical Details

SURVEY DETAILS:

- Agency: FOCUS
- Methodology: Online panel
- Sample Size: 1,006 respondents (representative of Slovakia's adult population)
- Data Collection Period: March 3 - 6, 2025
- Number of Questions: 13

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- 176 individual donors contributed, with an average donation of €26.

EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS:

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- Michal Vašečka – sociologist, public opinion expert, Board Member of Aspen Institute CE, and Director of Bratislava Policy Institute.
- Martin Slosiarik – public opinion specialist, Director of the FOCUS agency responsible for conducting the survey.
- Milan Nič – Senior Fellow at German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), expert on Central European security.
- Miroslav Kollár – experienced politician and policy strategist, former MP and mayor.



Future Slovakia Forum Panel:
Discussing Slovakia's Security,
NATO, and Public Opinion –
March 6, 2025 (left to right):

Juraj Petrovič – Discussion Moderator
Miroslav Wlachovský – Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia
Michal Vašečka – Sociologist & Expert on Public Opinion
Dávid Bořuta – Chairman of Future Slovakia Forum
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