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**MATERIALISM: THE CASE OF POST-COMMUNIST  
SLOVAKIA**

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## **Declaration of Originality<sup>1</sup>**

I hereby declare that this bachelor's thesis is my own work and has not been published in part or in whole elsewhere. All used literature and other sources are attributed and cited in the Bibliography.

Bratislava, February 20, 2024,

Silvia Hrubá

Signature:

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis uses AI-powered tools for grammar, such as Grammarly and DeepL. Since the author's first language is not English, these tools were used to check spelling, syntax, and overall language. No tool was used to create the content and all thoughts are the author's own.

## Abstract

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The aim of this thesis is to show that many Western European countries have been able to move from materialist and survival values, such as economic growth and the maintenance of order, to post-materialist and self-expression values, such as environmental protection, freedom of expression, and gender equality. Although, the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe are lagging in this regard. Individuals in these countries often base their personal self-worth on the materialistic acquisition of goods, property, and money, resulting in a lower quality of life. The thesis is mainly based on Inglehart's theory of post-materialism, which he first wrote about in his book *The Silent Revolution* (1977). This thesis will also define important terms such as consumer behavior, materialism, and post-communism. Furthermore, with Slovakia as a case study, it will analyze data from existing surveys such as Eurobarometer and World Value Survey. The analysis will mainly be a comparison of Slovakia within different time periods and age groups. However, there will also be a comparison of data between Slovakia, as a post-communist country, and Austria, as a Western, non-communist country.

*Keywords: Slovakia, materialism, post-materialism, post-communism, shift in values*

## **Abstrakt**

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Cieľom tejto práce je ukázať, že mnohé západoeurópske krajiny dokázali prejsť od materialistických hodnôt a hodnôt prežitia, ako je hospodársky rast a udržiavanie poriadku, k post-materialistickým hodnotám a hodnotám sebavyjadrenia, ako je ochrana životného prostredia, sloboda prejavu a rodová rovnosť. Postkomunistické krajiny východnej Európy však v tomto smere zaostávajú. Jednotlivci v týchto krajinách často zakladajú svoju osobnú sebaúctu na materialistickom získavaní tovarov, majetku a peňazí, čo vedie k nižšej kvalite života. Táto práca vychádza najmä z Inglehartovej teórie post-materializmu, o ktorej prvýkrát písal vo svojej knihe Tichá revolúcia (1977). V tejto práci budú definované aj dôležité pojmy ako spotrebiteľské správanie, materializmus a post komunizmus. Okrem toho bude na príklade Slovenska analyzovať údaje z existujúcich prieskumov, ako sú Eurobarometer a World Value Survey. Analýza bude predovšetkým porovnaním Slovenska v rámci rôznych časových období a vekových skupín. Porovnávať sa však budú aj údaje medzi Slovenskom ako postkomunistickou krajinou a Rakúskom ako západnou nekomunistickou krajinou.

*Kľúčové slová:* Slovensko, materializmus, post-materializmus, post komunizmus, zmena hodnôt

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## **Introduction**

Consumption is driven by the desire to illustrate power and status. This is the central theme of Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), which is an economic and sociological analysis of the phenomenon of what he calls conspicuous consumption. Although more than one hundred and thirty years have passed since its publication and society has changed a lot, some things seem to persist. In his work, Veblen argues that for many people, social status is defined by possessions and that this definition creates an endless drive to acquire ever more impressive possessions. However, attempting to derive a sense of self-worth from materialistic pursuits appears to be a dubious proposition. In fact, several correlational studies suggest that people who score higher on materialism have lower levels of mental and physical well-being.

Veblen in his work focuses on the concept of conspicuous consumption, which refers to the lavish and often wasteful spending by the leisure class as a means of displaying social status and prestige. Veblen explains that the motivation to consume is primarily to improve one's social status in the eyes of others. Veblen sees conspicuous consumption as the most important factor that determines consumer behavior, not only among the rich but universally among all social classes because each class seeks to imitate the consumer behavior of the class one level above it. Even the poorest classes are then under pressure to engage in conspicuous consumption - conspicuous in terms of their social status (Chorvát, 2015).

Bourdieu (1977) extends the argument, arguing that all consumption is with the intent to present the status of the consumer and that a person's specific tastes are largely related to his or her position in society. Similarly, Bauman (2007) claims that in a society that prioritizes individualism and social comparison, consumers have turned into commodities and are once again becoming saleable subjects. According to these theorists, the desire to use consumer goods to improve or communicate one's status is still the foundation of individual motivation (Kennedy, 2008).

The role of consumption is addressed in a variety of disciplines from consumer studies to business and economics to anthropology. From the sociological point of view, the focus is primarily on the causes of consumerism on individual and societal levels. First of all, it is important to distinguish between the terms consumption and consumerism. Stern (2000) defines consumption as an action that usually includes the purchase, use,

and disposal of consumer goods. Consumption is inherent and inevitable in the world of humans. Because of the environmental impact of consumption, some have suggested that scholars should distinguish between the two terms since consumption can be minimized to meet basic human needs with as minimal use of natural resources as possible. On the other hand, consumerism has nothing to do with basic human needs but more with meeting non-material needs, such as security, with material goods (Kennedy, 2008).

In sociology, materialism is part of consumer behavior (Belk, 1986). However, it should not be confused with conspicuous consumption.”While some materialists engage in conspicuous consumption, it is possible to have materialistic values without engaging in this particular behavior, particularly if status is not an important life goal for a consumer” (Richins, 2010, p.1).

The concept of materialism is complex and there are various interpretations of it. This thesis aims to explain the concept of materialism to understand Inglehart's theory of post-materialism. Further, the concept of post-communism should be answered as the communist regime had an impact on all aspects of life, and with its fall, these implications rendered in various forms in post-communist countries, like Slovakia.

In this thesis, the case of Slovakia will be examined in detail. This thesis aims to show that Inglehart's theory applies to Slovakia and that society can shift its priorities to post-material ones, but only when it is not in a state of scarcity of basic needs. Therefore, when looking at Slovakia and other post-communist countries, the study wants to examine its historical journey and situate the current state of individuals in Slovakia in terms of post-materialism.

The purpose of this thesis is not to argue for different levels of materialism between Western and post-communist European regions. Instead, it aims to illustrate that individuals in post-communist countries, with Slovakia as a case study, tend to prioritize material values over post-materialist ideals, including aspects such as quality time with family, environmental concerns, and equal rights for minorities. While many Western European nations have successfully transitioned from conventional materialist values, such as economic growth and social order, to post-materialist values, post-communist Eastern European countries, including Slovakia, are lagging in this regard.

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These nations often derive personal self-worth from the acquisition of material goods, property, and wealth, resulting in a comparatively lower quality of life.

## **Chapter I: Theoretical Background**

This chapter aims to offer a broad understanding of the fundamental terms, concepts, and theories related to the topic. Firstly, the chapter explores various definitions and approaches to materialism while delving into its individual and social implications. The goal is to provide a detailed examination of the aspects associated with materialist perspectives and their broader societal implications.

The chapter then examines Ronald Inglehart's (1997) theory of post-materialism, highlighting the two central hypotheses proposed by the theory. Furthermore, the focus extends to the sources that contribute to the value shifts outlined by Inglehart. This section aims to provide an understanding of post-materialist perspectives and their role in shaping societal dynamics.

Finally, the chapter turns its attention to the concept of post-communism. It seeks to comprehensively define post-communism and clarify the implications and manifestations of a post-communist state. The section is multidimensional, exploring the impact of post-communism on various aspects of life. By addressing its ramifications, the chapter aims to provide a holistic understanding of the complex nature of post-communism and its significance in the broader societal context.

### **I.I Materialism**

Within the field of sociology, materialism is considered to be a part of consumer behavior (Belk, 1985, p. 266). There are several interpretations of materialism. According to Belk (1985), materialism is a consumption-based orientation, and he defines it as "the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction" (p. 265). Belk characterizes materialism through the personality traits of possessiveness, non-generosity, and envy. Belk (1984) developed three materialism scales to measure possessiveness, non-generosity, and envy.

In contrast, Richins and Dawson (1992) perceive materialism as a value orientation, not merely behavior, associated with strongly held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one's life. They identified three elements of materialism: the belief that acquiring material possessions is essential for happiness, the tendency to judge one's

own and others' success based on their heir possessions, and the significance of acquisition and possessions in one's life. Richins (2004) defines materialism as "the importance attached to the possession and acquisition of material goods in achieving important life goals or desired states" (p. 210). This concept encompasses three domains related to success, happiness, and centrality.

Browne and Kaldenberg (1997) take a stance, suggesting that materialism is both a set of values and a trait centered on possessions. While Inglehart (2008) takes it further by distinguishing between material values, where an individual is concerned with economic and physical security, and post-material values, where an individual is more concerned with concepts such as freedom of speech and participation in government decisions. He thus connects materialism as a value orientation to other aspects of life, such as culture or politics.

As there are different definitions of materialism, there are different assessments of the nature of materialism. These definitions can be broadly classified within a two-dimensional framework, and the assessments can be based on either social or individual consequences, falling into either positive or negative categories. This results in four different classifications to describe the effects of materialism: positive social, positive individual, negative social, and negative individual (Kilbourne & LaForge, 2010, p.781).

Arguments supporting the positive social aspects of materialism revolve around conventional economic criteria that contribute to society's overall standard of living. Materialism is seen as both a consequence of the capitalist system and a driving force for further growth. Thus, materialism is seen as a positive attribute that fosters and benefits growth. On the other hand, concerns regarding the negative social consequences of materialism primarily focus on its impact on the environment. The argument is that while individuals are free to pursue material possessions, the environment will inevitably suffer from degradation because not everyone can realize the full picture (Kilbourne & LaForge, 2010, p.782). Furthermore, Hirsch (1976) emphasizes how materialistic tendencies can limit social and physical growth by designating certain goods as "positional goods", meaning they are valuable to individuals only when others do not possess them. For example, having a college

degree is only advantageous in the job market if not everyone has one. As more people with degrees enter the job market, this advantage diminishes.

Research on the value of consumption to individuals (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) suggests that materialism may not be universally negative. Consumption behavior can contribute to developing individual identity, identity formation, and promoting collective experiences and brand communities. In addition, consumption can enhance a sense of belonging, especially for those with strong needs that predispose them to materialism. Thus, consumption can provide a sense of meaning and empowerment to achieve individual life goals (Kilbourne & LaForge, 2010, p.783). On the other hand, research on negative individual consequences suggests that material goods cannot satisfy higher-order intrinsic needs. This contradicts the idea that material possessions bring happiness. Materialism is also associated with psychological problems such as compulsive buying, neuroticism, envy, and general mental health problems. Measures of life satisfaction show a negative relationship with materialism (Kilbourne & LaForge, 2010, p.784).

This research will work primarily with Inglehart's (1977; 2008) theory of post-materialism since Inglehart sees materialism as a value orientation that is connected with other aspects of life. The focus will be on materialism as a value orientation that affects various aspects of life, including politics, culture, identity, and overall quality of life. While acknowledging the positive dimensions of materialism, this research will primarily explore its negative aspects, as these are of greater relevance to the specific aims of this study.

## **I.II Postmaterialism Theory**

Post-materialism is a value orientation theory that prioritizes self-expression and quality of life over economic and physical security. Coined by social scientist Ronald Inglehart in 1977, this term represents a departure from the previously dominant focus on materialist values, such as economic growth and maintaining order, which prevailed before the 1970s. Especially in many Western countries, individuals with post-materialist orientations prioritize objectives like environmental conservation, freedom of expression, and gender equality. This shift is attributed to the post-World War II period when survival became more assured, significantly impacting the formative years

of individuals born in advanced industrial societies. The establishment of the welfare state further solidified this sense of security, leading to a generational shift in values that subsequently influenced political and cultural norms (Inglehart, 2007).

Inglehart conducted a study comparing the value priorities of different generations in six Western European societies. Older generations were found to prioritize "materialist" values, focusing on economic and physical security, while younger generations tended to prioritize "postmaterialist" values, emphasizing autonomy and self-expression. The shift in values was evident, with postmaterialists outnumbering materialists in younger cohorts. The author argues that if these age differences reflect an intergenerational shift in values, then a gradual shift from materialist to postmaterialist values would occur as younger cohorts replace older ones in the adult population. The implications of this shift are significant, affecting political participation, freedom of expression, and support for new issues and political parties (Inglehart, 2008, pp. 130-131).

Inglehart argues that the processes of value change and political skill are mutually reinforcing, with a decline in the legitimacy of hierarchical authority, patriotism, and religion contributing to a decline in trust in institutions. The shift in the balance of political skills between elites and the mass public allows for the political expression of new values (Inglehart, 1977, p. 4). The fundamental value priorities of Western societies were changing as these societies moved into a post-industrial development phase. This shift was expected to create new issues that would influence the public's choice of candidates and political parties and ultimately shape the policies of Western elites (Inglehart, 1977, p. 21).

### **Source of Value Change**

The author proposes two main hypotheses, the scarcity and socialization hypotheses, about the sources of value change. First, this change is linked to socioeconomic factors, such as rising levels of education, shifts in occupational structures, and the expansion of mass communication networks. Two important phenomena are highlighted: the unprecedented prosperity of Western nations after World War II and the absence of total war for three decades. These factors provide security and adequate sustenance and have profound implications for value priorities (Inglehart, 1977, pp. 21-22).

The expectation that the value priorities of the Western public are changing is based on the hypothesis that people prioritize what is scarce. In times of scarcity, such as economic instability or threats to physical survival, people tend to emphasize "materialistic" goals such as economic security. In times of abundance, however, there is a shift toward valuing "post-materialist" goals such as autonomy, belonging, and aesthetic satisfaction. (Inglehart, 1977, p. 22; Inglehart, 2008, p. 131).

The second key hypothesis is that people tend to maintain a set of value priorities established in their formative years throughout adult life. This suggests that significant differences in values would be observed between different age groups. Older people are likely to reflect the relatively insecure material conditions of their formative years. At the same time, younger groups, especially those who grew up after World War II, may place less emphasis on economic and physical security (Inglehart, 1977, p. 23). In addition, the relationship between material conditions and value priorities is not direct. Instead, one's basic values are formed primarily in the pre-adult years and change through intergenerational population replacement. Younger generations growing up under different conditions than their predecessors lead to gradual shifts in societal values (Inglehart, 2008, pp. 131-132).

While acknowledging the possibility of some change in values during adulthood, Inglehart argues that the likelihood of such change diminishes significantly after adulthood. The distribution of post-materialist values is expected to vary predictably across nations and age groups, reflecting the history of each nation during the lifetimes of the individuals surveyed (Inglehart, 1977, p. 23).

In 2008, Inglehart revisits and further explored his original work because over three decades have passed since then and many of his predictions have come true. He explores the concept of post-materialism in the context of a broader cultural shift. This shift affects various aspects of advanced industrial society, influencing politics, religion, gender roles, and sexual norms. Inglehart and Baker (2000) conducted a factor analysis to identify the main dimension of global cultural change. He argues that two significant dimensions emerged: a polarization between traditional and secular-rational values, and a polarization between survival and self-expression values (Inglehart, 2008, pp. 137-139).



Inglehart argues that the shift to post-materialism within the two dimensions involves several changes. First, the shift from survival to self-expression values involves changes in child rearing as parents emphasize imagination and tolerance. Societies with high self-expression values also have higher levels of interpersonal trust and subjective well-being. Second, the rise of self-expression values is associated with a rejection of deference to external authority. Moreover, the shift away from survival values implies a shift in the axis of political conflict away from class-based issues, such as income redistribution and state ownership of industry, and toward quality-of-life issues. Third, self-expression values are closely linked to the rise of gender equality (Inglehart, 2008, pp. 139-144).

Inglehart (2008) suggests that as other regions of the world also experience high levels of existential security, they may also experience intergenerational shifts toward post-materialist and self-expression values.

### **Critique of Inglehart**

Inglehart's concept of post-materialism is seen by many scholars as insightful, and many agree with him that there has been a shift in values in most of Western Europe. Almond (1990) argues that "Inglehart's work is one of the few examples of successful prediction in political science". Inglehart is also considered one of the most cited political scientists of his time. As of 2011, Inglehart (1990) had 4,469 citations according to Google Scholar (Abramson, 2011, p. 1, p. 43). Nevertheless, Inglehart and his value change thesis have not escaped criticism from some scholars. For the purposes of this paper, general criticisms will be summarized to remain objective.

First, some authors (Ike, 1973; Marsh, 1975) question whether Inglehart's theory applies to non-Western countries, claiming that his theory is based on studies conducted in Western societies and may not accurately capture the values and priorities of societies with different historical, cultural, and economic contexts. Second, some claim that his theory oversimplifies the complexities of cultural change by emphasizing primarily generational differences in values. Third, some scholars argue that the theory downplays the role of economic factors in shaping values and attitudes. Finally, some critics argue that the theory struggles to make accurate predictions and should rather be used retrospectively (Abramson, 2011). Inglehart responded to most of the criticisms,

but this paper will not go into detail because this is not the scope of the thesis. It should be mentioned that the latter has been refuted by Inglehart's (2008) "Changing Values among Western Publics from 1970 to 2006".

### **I.III Communism and Post-Communism**

After the revolutions of 1989, countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia were faced with the struggle to build a new system of liberal democracy. The main problem of post-communism after the fall of the Soviet Union was the gap between the democratic demands of the West and the socio-political realities of these countries (Schopflin, 1993, pp. 183-184). Such a transition cannot be expected to happen overnight.

The legacy of communism in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe remains and is an ongoing issue. Post-communism is still an unresolved issue of political transition, and although the term 'post-communism' is perceived by some (Rupnik, 1999) as outdated and irrelevant, this is not the case. Even forty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the term is not outdated. Decades of communist rule have affected various aspects of society (Lánczi, 2007, p. 66). Although the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland) have adopted a democratic system of government, democratic rules, democratic customs, undergone institutional reforms, and even passed the test of being truly democratic by becoming members of the European Union, the shadow of communism remains. This lingering influence manifests itself in various ways, affecting not only political structures but also social norms and cultural dimensions (Lánczi, 2007, p. 67).

The coexistence of democratic rules with remnants of communist thinking and diluted communist culture highlights the challenges of not being able to rid oneself of the legacy of the past fully. It suggests that the transition from communism to democracy is not a linear process but a complex and multifaceted one. The interplay between democratic norms and historical legacies creates a unique mixture that shapes the political, social, and cultural landscape of these post-communist states, such as Slovakia.

The term "post-communism" is a relatively new concept in political science. It has many competing terms, such as "Eastern European societies", "new democracies", "ex-Soviet block countries", "post-totalitarianism", "new democracies" etc. This suggests that there is an abundance of difficulties and explanations when it comes to the transition from communism. Although there are many interpretations, explanations, and approaches, the progressive position dominates. That is to say, post-communism is a subject that is on its way to recovery (Lánczi, 2007, p. 69-71).

The recovery from communism and, subsequently, navigating the road from post-communism is difficult and complex. The case of Slovakia is no different. The history of Czechoslovakia is unique among the Central and Eastern European countries of the former Soviet Union. During the inter-war period, the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938) had a parliament-style democracy. This period renewed significance in 1968 when Slovaks and Czechs sought to revive their democratic heritage. Public opinion polls at the time emphasized the vivid memory of the First Republic, with Slovaks and Czechs expressing pride and nostalgia for that era (Batt, 1993, p. 35).

However, the positive memories associated with the First Republic do not automatically translate into a smoother or easier transition. Schopflin (1993) argues that building a new social and political system is far more difficult than destroying an existing one. The challenges of post-communist transitions include not only the deconstruction of outdated political and economic structures but also the complex task of building new institutions and fostering a democratic political culture.

In the specific context of Slovakia, the historical trajectory of Czechoslovakia and its dissolution in 1993, leading to the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic, adds a layer of complexity. This pivotal moment demanded the creation of new institutions and the shaping of a distinct national identity. While the experience of the First Czechoslovak Republic may have influenced the Slovaks during this period, it did not guarantee a seamless transition.

Moreover, economic challenges, social transformations, and geopolitical shifts play a crucial role in shaping the post-communist landscape. The transition requires precise navigation between embracing democratic principles and market-oriented reforms while addressing the diverse concerns and expectations of the population.

Recognizing that each post-communist country's experience is inherently unique, shaped by its particular historical, cultural, and geopolitical context is crucial. The transition from communism unfolds as a specific journey to each country, marked by opportunities and obstacles that collectively influence the trajectory of political and social development.

## **Chapter II: The Case of Slovakia**

This chapter aims to trace the development of Slovakia after 1970, using Inglehart's (1977) theory of value change to illustrate that Slovakia, as part of Czechoslovakia during the communist era, would not be able to transition to post-material values. The overarching political structure, heavily influenced by the Soviet Union, limited the possibilities for such a shift. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the division of Czechoslovakia occurred, and Slovakia found itself not only in the midst of a transformation of its political system but also with the task of establishing itself as an independent nation. Consequently, the transition to post-material values remained impossible for another three decades due to nation-building and political restructuring complexities.

### **II.I How the Communists Came to Power**

Slovakia was part of Czechoslovakia until 1993. After the Second World War, Czechoslovakia was re-established in 1945 as an independent state. However, in 1948, the Communist Party staged a coup and consolidated its control over the nation. The communists ruled in Czechoslovakia until the events of 1989, known as the Velvet Revolution. During this time, the nation struggled with political repression, censorship, and a centralized planned economy based on the Soviet model. Despite having its own government and representation in the United Nations, Czechoslovakia was often perceived as a 'satellite' or 'puppet state' of the USSR. Located behind the Iron Curtain, the country was influenced by the Soviet Union and was a member of the Warsaw Pact, aligning itself with the military strategies of the wider Eastern Bloc during the Cold War.

The year 1989 marked a turning point. The Velvet Revolution, characterized by non-violent protests, led to the end of the Communist regime and opened the door to democratic reforms. This transformative period peaked in the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, creating two sovereign nations, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, each bearing the post-communist burden.

The post-war period in Czechoslovakia was turbulent, and a lot happened in a few months. From the so-called "wild transfer" of ethnic Germans by force to the confiscation of property from collaborators and German and Magyar minorities to the

revocation of citizenship from Germans and Magyars (Mahoney, 2011, pp. 193-195). The Košice Programme played a decisive role in shaping the composition of Prague's post-war National Front government.

The Košice Programme defined the fundamental framework of the people's democratic system. It recognized the identity of the Slovak nation and guaranteed equality between Slovaks and Czechs. Although it laid down general principles for Czech-Slovak relations, it did not specify the responsibilities and competencies of each nation. It did not have a federal type of constitutional arrangement, as it did not mention Czech national bodies (Barnovský, 2011, p. 234).

The exclusion of right-wing parties from the political process meant that the dominant voices in the government belonged to the National Socialists, the People's Party, the Slovak Democrats, the Social Democrats, and the two branches of the Communist Party - the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of Slovakia. The Communists emerged as the most influential players, with the National Socialists as their competitors. Despite their contribution, Czech and Slovak resistance organizations were largely ignored. The Slovak National Council (SNR) continued to exist but lobbied unsuccessfully for the establishment of a federal system. Instead, Slovakia was granted its parliament and a committee of commissioners in an asymmetrical system. This arrangement gave the Slovaks at least some influence over their affairs (Mahoney, 2011, p. 196).

In the Constituent National Assembly elections on 29 May 1945, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) won 38.12% of the vote nationally and over 40% in the Czech territory. Its Slovak allies, the Slovak Communist Party, won 30.3% in Slovakia. However, the Slovak Democrats outvoted the Communists in Slovakia with 62% of the Slovak vote. While they won only 13.13% in Czechoslovakia as a whole, the Communists were angered by their defeat in Slovak territory. As a result, the communists pushed for less autonomy for the Slovaks and increased the power of the Prague government over Slovak affairs (Mahoney, 2011, pp. 197-198). This was the basis for the unequal division of power between the Czechs and the Slovaks in Czechoslovakia. The first Czechoslovak government was appointed by the President on

4 April 1945. However, only nine positions in the 25-member government were occupied by Slovaks (Barnovský, 2011, p. 235).

In 1947, following the introduction of the Marshall Plan, Czechoslovakia sent representatives to Paris because it found it attractive. At the same time, however, Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk Chairman of KSČ, and Prime Minister Klement Gottwald traveled to Moscow to meet with Stalin and the Soviets. They claimed that American money was just a way of bringing European nations under American influence. So Czechoslovakia shifted its allegiance eastwards and joined the Cominform. At the same time, internal conflicts were emerging in the government. The communists could not agree on anything with the social democrats and demanded that Masaryk and Czechoslovakia's Minister of National Defence Ludvík Svoboda resign from their positions, but they refused (Mahoney, 2011, pp. 198-200).

In February 1948, a series of events occurred that led to the complete communist takeover of the country, the end of the democratic era, and the subsequent resignation of President Edvard Beneš. The turbulent month began with Justice Minister Prokop Drtina informing the cabinet that the commander of the National Security Corps in Bohemia, with the support of Interior Minister Václav Nosek, had ordered the transfer of eight non-Communist district police chiefs from Prague. Non-communist cabinet members objected and decided to order Nosek to reverse his position. On the 17th, non-Communist ministers threatened to resign if Nosek refused to cooperate. They planned to bring down the government, and President Beneš would either appoint a short-term government and call new elections or refuse to accept the resignations, forcing the communists to negotiate or take responsibility for dissolving the government. However, a few days later, on the 21st, the Communists organized a mass rally in Prague's Old Town, seeking the support of the trade unions and mass organizations. On the 24th, two and a half million people took part in a one-hour general strike in support of the Communists. The pressure on Beneš grew as the mass rallies continued, and Defence Minister Svoboda assured the crowds that the Czechoslovak army would support them. Under pressure, Beneš accepted the resignations only a day later and allowed Communist leader Gottwald to form a new government. Finally, on 7 June, Beneš resigned, and Gottwald took over (Mahoney, 2011, pp. 200-201).

## **II.II Slovakia Under Communism**

Between 1945 and 1947, efforts were initiated by the communists to transform Czechoslovakia's market economy into a planned one. After February 1948, nothing stood in the way and the communists continued this process. The state managed the Czechoslovak economy according to the principles of Marxist-Leninist economic theory. This involved the nationalization of industry, the collectivization of private agriculture production, and the expropriation of tradesmen and craftsmen. These changes were often carried out by force and violence. A homogeneous single-sector planned economy gradually took shape, aligning with Moscow's interest. Moreover, a common feature of all socialist economies is the centralization of power, i.e. decision-making from the center about all aspects of life. Czechoslovakia was no exception.

The developments made to change the economy were not the same in the Slovak and Czech lands. The process of "socialist industrialization" began in Slovakia, mainly because there was a large and easily mobilized labor force, which was one of the main pre-conditions for an industrialized Slovakia. With almost 50% of the Slovak population working in agriculture, this was easily achieved. At the same time, only about 22% worked in industrial and craft production. In the Czech lands, on the other hand, the reverse was true: more people worked in industry and crafts than in agriculture. The political context dictated that Slovakia embarked on the path of socialist industrialization within the non-market framework of a planned economy, centrally directed from a unified and centralized Czechoslovakia (Londák & Londáková, 2011, pp. 330-331).

Slovak national institutions had limited influence over the management of the national economy, and all attempts to give Slovakia more control over its economy were consistently rejected by the central authorities. The central institutions viewed the Czechoslovak national economy as a single entity. Slovakia, on the other hand, pursued a policy of raising its economy and society to the level of the Czech lands. The national economy operated within the framework of five-year plans, but these plans were in constant change, resulting in the management of the economy through annual development reviews. Industrial enterprises received directives from higher authorities on production targets, products, suppliers, workforce numbers, and other aspects. Operating in isolation from real markets, investments across sectors and regions were



centrally determined. Despite inherent challenges, this direct management approach resulted in positive economic growth, particularly in quantitative terms, driven primarily by the expansion of the industrial workforce (Harris, 2010, p.184; Londák & Londáková, 2011, p. 332).

The initial phase of the first five-year period (1949-1953) was marked by a significant increase in industrial production in Slovakia compared to the previous period. Several new plants were built, which contributed to a 128% increase in production within five years. Slovakia's share of the country's industrial production increased from 13.2% to 15.6%, and its share of total investment in the Czechoslovak industry rose to 25% (Cvrcek, 2009, pp. 438-440). However, the overall rapid growth of industry throughout Czechoslovakia, driven by the party's ambition to achieve world engineering leadership and Soviet support for the arms industry, came at a considerable cost. The agricultural sector and living standards suffered due to the low levels of investment, resulting in severe shortages of consumer goods. This led to the accumulation of unusable purchasing power among the population, encouraging the Communist Party and the state leadership to introduce a currency reform in 1953. The leadership formulated this as a blow against the former capitalists. However, not only old deposits were converted to the new currency, but also funds deposited after 1948, introducing a very unfavorable exchange rate of 50:1. This was felt most acutely by the people, who experienced a decline in their standard of living and a loss of their savings. The economic trajectory became unfavorable, with inefficiencies throughout the economy. The reform provoked widespread discontent, which manifested itself in strikes and protests (Londák & Londáková, 2011, pp. 332-333; Pešek, 2011).

Moreover, Slovakia has not been able to create enough industrial jobs for those who have lost their jobs in agriculture. In contrast, the already highly industrialized Czech economy was able to provide enough jobs for workers from agriculture and even created over thirty thousand additional jobs in industry. Additionally, while the number of people employed in material production decreased in Slovakia, it increased in the Czech Republic (Londák & Londáková, 2011, p. 333).

At the beginning of the 1960s, Slovak society was characterized by three main groups: firstly, employees in state organizations, secondly, employees in cooperative

organizations, and thirdly, independent producers. The first group, which represented 79% of the population, was the dominant group in terms of social structure. The second group was represented mainly by workers in agriculture, which accounted for 14% of the population. The last group, consisting of 7% of the population, were independent producers, also mainly working in agriculture (Londák & Londáková, 2011, p. 334).

Around 1963 or 1964, Slovakia reached an important turning point when, for the first time in its history, the number of people employed in industry exceeded the number of people employed in agriculture. This meant that the primary goal of industrialization had been achieved and Slovakia began to take on the character of an industrial rather than an agricultural country. At about the same time, Czechoslovakia fell into a deep economic crisis. An economic crisis of this magnitude, with a real decline in national income, was unprecedented in the post-war development of the socialist countries, let alone in the development of the advanced Western states. As a result, Slovakia slowed down on its way to catch up with the Czech lands. (Londák & Londáková, 2011, pp. 334-336).

Because of the crisis economic reform was implemented. However, the reform further hindered Slovak progress. In 1967 restructuring of wholesale prices negatively affected Slovak enterprises that produced raw materials for the Czech industry. In September 1967, Alexander Dubček, the leader of the Communist Party of Slovakia, criticized the economic reform's impact on Slovakia. This intensified his conflict with Antonín Novotný, the leader of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, extending into politics and ultimately leading to the Prague Spring. By 1968, preparations were underway for more radical economic reforms, including laws on socialist enterprises and workers' councils. However, the Warsaw Pact's occupation of Czechoslovakia abruptly stopped these changes. Despite this setback, there was hope in Slovakia that federalization could provide new opportunities for positive participation in the national economy. (Londák & Londáková, 2011, pp. 137-138).

### **II.III Slovakia as an Independent State**

Slovakia is considered to be one of the slowest post-communist countries to reform in Central and Eastern Europe (Goldman, 1999, p. vii). Its post-communist journey has been difficult and has had many ups and downs. While still part of Czechoslovakia,

Slovakia was in the same category as Poland and Hungary, considered to be on the fast track to reform. However, after the "Velvet Divorce" from the Czech Republic in 1992, a more authoritarian government took over Slovakia, making it the black sheep of the Visegrad family. This shift resulted in Slovakia being blocked from progressing towards the European Union due to its failure to meet the EU's democratic criteria. As a result, Slovakia was excluded from the first rounds of both NATO's eastward expansion and the EU's negotiations with potential new members. Although Slovakia faced many problems, by the end of the 1990s it seemed to be back on the right track (Auer et al., 2002, p. 173; Harris, 2010, p. 185).

After 1993, Slovakia was not only recovering from communism but also transitioning from its division with the Czech Republic. Since Slovakia had no history of being an independent state, it faced the problem of establishing statehood. This allowed nationalist, populist parties to gain popularity, and the main figure in politics at the time was Vladimír Mečiar and his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) party. The party won three consecutive elections and consolidated its power by making the independence of the media, NGOs, the presidency, and the judiciary irrelevant. The separation of powers was also at stake, as Mečiar and his party did everything possible to strip the president of his powers (Auer et al., 2002, pp. 175-176).

At the time, several scholars (Gati, 1996; Šimečka, 1997) suggested that Slovakia was on the authoritarian path rather than on the liberal democratic path of its neighbors, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. Others (Carpenter, 1997; Vachudová and Snyder, 1997) argued that Slovakia should be categorized alongside nations such as Romania and Bulgaria. Carpenter argued that these countries shared characteristics of political subjugation and a poor socio-economic environment, resulting in authoritarian populism in contemporary politics. The tendency to group Slovakia with Bulgaria and Romania still prevails. In several surveys conducted by the European Union, Slovakia was more in line with the political development of these countries than with the Czech Republic or Poland. It is worth noting that Hungary has also experienced a shift in its trajectory since the 1990s.

Slovak economic situation gradually improved as it transitioned to a market economy. Despite facing challenges and setback, due to the government corruption, the future

appeared promising. In the period before the financial crisis, Slovakia managed to catch up with the Western and Czech economic levels, but in recent years we have been stagnating. Slovakia's starting position (like that of Hungary and Poland) was not good in the early years of Slovakia's existence, when in 1995 gross domestic product per capita in purchasing power parity was not even half that of today's EU27. However, between 2000 and 2010, Slovakia made significant progress, reaching 76.7% of the EU27 average and around 90% of the Czech level, and significantly outperforming Hungary and Poland. After 2010, however, Slovakia's economy lost breath, and catching up with the West almost stopped (Novák et al., 2023).

GDP growth has also translated into growth in average wages at constant prices, which roughly doubled between 1993 and 2021. Similarly, the average old-age pension has reached roughly 1.9 times its 1993 level. However, Slovak wages and pensions have lagged behind developments in the Czech Republic, with the Czech average wage in 2021 up to 2.5 times higher than in 1993. However, in addition to the increase in real wages, household indebtedness has also risen. According to available data, household debt in Slovakia has increased by 30 pp since 1995. In terms of the V4 countries, Slovakia has the highest household debt (Novák et al., 2023).

Slovakia also had a worse starting position in the case of the labour market. The economic transformation hit Slovakia harder and in 1993 the unemployment rate in Slovakia reached 14.4%, which was three times higher than in the Czech Republic. Further developments in Slovakia were also problematic, with unemployment rates approaching 20% at the turn of the century. However, a gradual decline followed, which was only temporarily interrupted by the financial crisis and its aftermath in 2008-2010 and the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. The unemployment rate thus reached a historic low during the existence of the independent republic in the pre-pandemic year 2019 at 5.7% (Novák et al., 2023).

### **Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology**

The research design is qualitative and aims to analyze existing survey data to establish correlations between individual values and the economic status of the country, drawing on the theoretical insights presented in Chapters I and II. While the focus is on Slovakia as a case study, there are some elements of the comparative method. These include contrasting data within Slovakia over different years and extending the comparisons to data from Slovakia and Austria. The comparison with Austria is noteworthy not only because Austria has followed a different historical trajectory, never having experienced communism, but also because of its geographical proximity to Slovakia. The comparison with Austria highlights the contrasting paths taken by the neighboring countries and provides insights into the impact of historical and political contexts on their respective journeys. The technique used in this research is data analysis.

The research begins by examining two waves of World Value Survey from the years 1988 and 2022, the only two waves that Slovakia took part in, evaluating the data from Slovakia and identifying changes over time. Attention then shifts an examination of the European Union Youth Survey from 2021 will provide insights into the attitudes of young people. This comprehensive approach, incorporating different data sources, aims to provide a holistic understanding of the materialist/post-materialist dynamics within the given context.

The validity of this research is primarily guaranteed by choosing a research design that aligns with the goal of exploring the materialist/post-materialist situation. Since gathering data would not be possible for the purpose of this thesis, the secondary analysis of existing data fits well within the scope of this thesis. The chosen approach is justified by its suitability for analyzing existing survey data and establishing correlations between individual values and economic conditions, drawing on the theoretical background established in chapters I and II. By focusing on Slovakia as a case study, the research gains contextual depth, and the comparative aspect adds credibility to the findings. In addition, the use of established surveys such as the Eurobarometer and World Value Survey enhances the validity of the research. The use of data from different sources contributes to the overall strength of the study and allows for a comprehensive examination of materialist/post-materialist trends.

The reliability of this research is ensured by the clear and systematic methodology used. The research design, which focuses on data analysis, provides a structured and replicable framework. The reliance on reputable and widely used surveys, such as the Eurobarometer and World Value Survey, enhances the reliability of the data collected. In addition, by comparing data over different periods within Slovakia and across borders with Austria, the research seeks to identify consistent patterns and trends, further contributing to the findings' reliability. The use of World Value Survey data from different years and the inclusion of the European Union Youth Survey from 2021 add to the reliability of the research, ensuring that the information is up-to-date and relevant. The comparative analysis throughout the research process reinforces the reliability of the conclusions drawn in this study.

## **IV.I Analysis of Data**

### **World Value Survey**

Based on their post-materialist theory of values, Inglehart and Welzel launched a global collaboration of social scientists, the World Value Survey (WVS), to study evolving values and their influence on social and political dynamics (World Value Survey Association, 2023).

The project began in 1981 with the goal of using reliable, high-quality research methods in each participating country. Covering nearly 100 nations, representing nearly 90 percent of the world's population, the WVS uses a standardized questionnaire. It is the most comprehensive non-commercial, cross-national, time-series study of human beliefs and values, involving interviews with nearly 400,000 respondents. Notably, the WVS is the only academic study to cover the full spectrum of global variation, from economically disadvantaged to affluent countries and across all major cultural regions (World Value Survey Association, 2023).

Over the years, the World Values Survey (WVS) has provided crucial insights into the significant role that people's beliefs play in various aspects of societal development. These include economic progress, the establishment and thriving of democratic institutions, the promotion of gender equality, and the effectiveness of governance in societies (World Value Survey Association, 2023).

### **Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map**

The Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map, developed by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel based on analysis of WVS data, illustrates significant cultural shifts and the enduring presence of distinct cultural traditions. The central thesis is that socioeconomic development is associated with specific value orientations. As mentioned in Chapter I, the analysis identifies two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation: traditional values versus secular-rational values and survival values versus self-expression values (World Value Survey Association, 2023).

Traditional values prioritize aspects such as religion, parent-child relationships, deference to authority, and traditional family values. Adherents of these values tend to oppose divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. Societies that emphasize traditional values often exhibit high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook. Secular-rational values, on the other hand, have preferences opposite to traditional values. These societies emphasize religion, traditional family values, and authority less. Concepts such as divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide are considered more acceptable (World Value Survey Association, 2023).

Survival values focus on economic and physical security and are associated with a relatively ethnocentric perspective and lower levels of trust and tolerance. Self-expression values, on the other hand, prioritize environmental protection, greater tolerance of foreigners and people of different sexual orientations, and gender equality. There is also a growing demand for participation in economic and political decision-making.

Figure 1: Cultural Map - WVS wave 4 (1996)

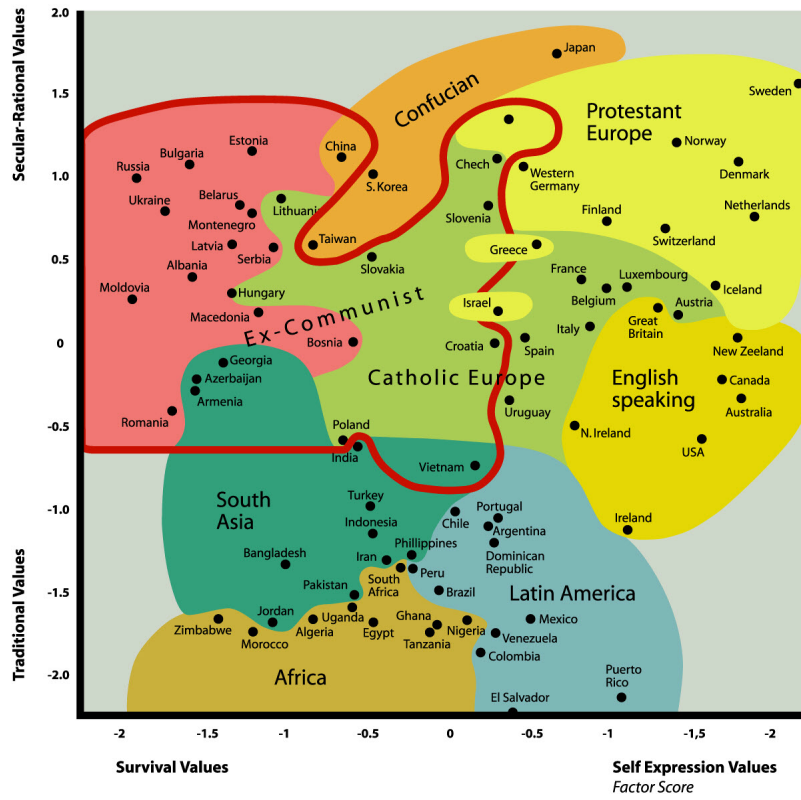


Figure 2: Cultural Map - WVS wave 5 (2008)

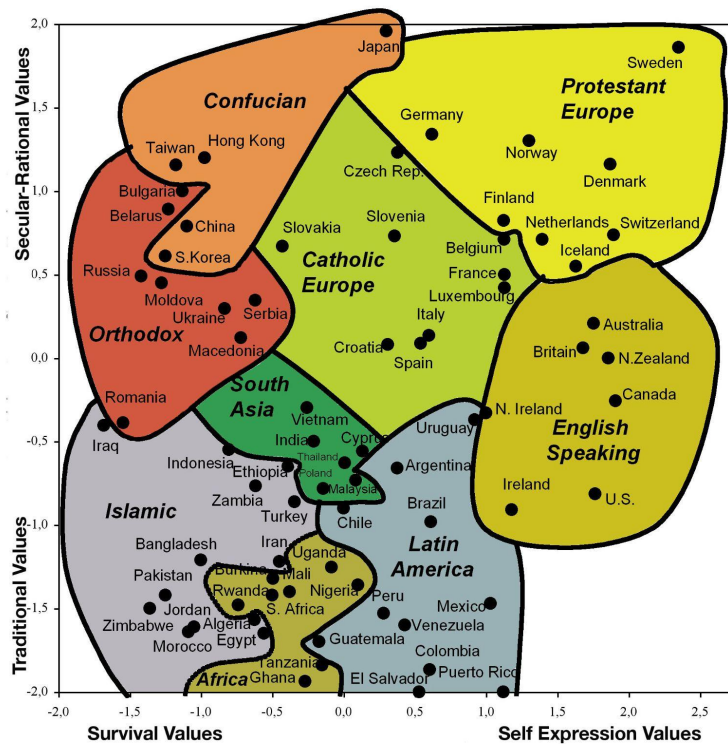




Figure 3: Cultural Map - WVS wave 6 (2010-2014)

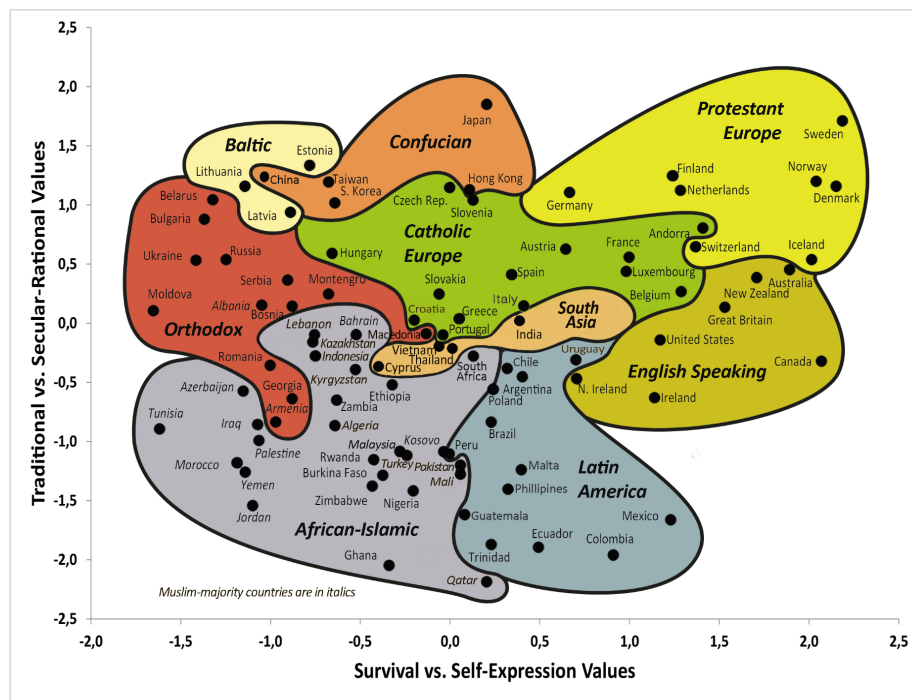
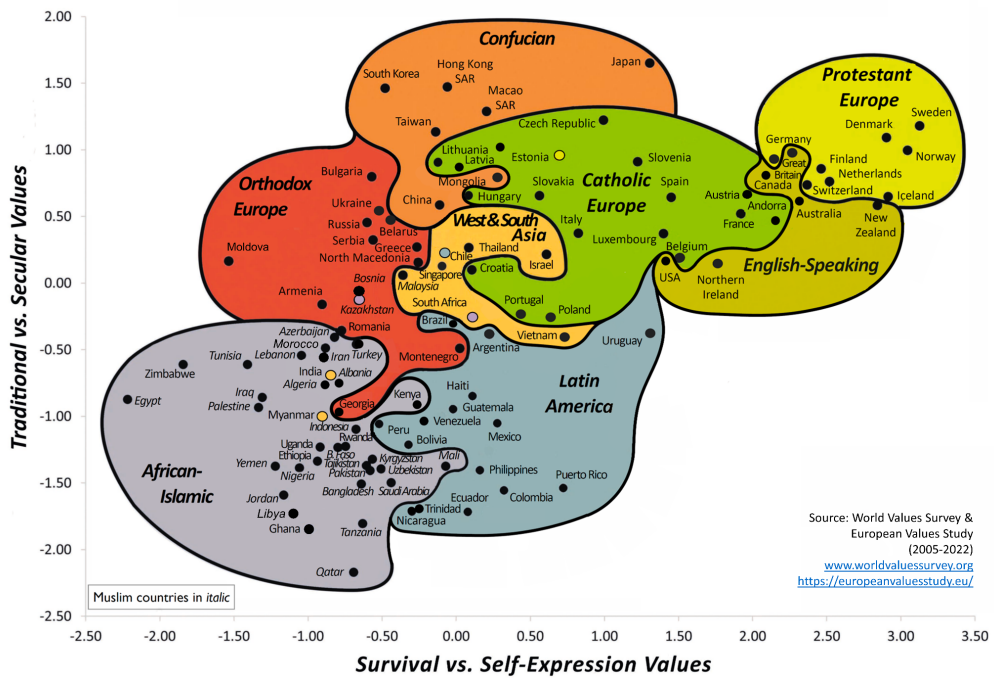


Figure 4: Cultural Map - WVS wave 7 (2017-2022)

The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map 2023



An examination of the cultural maps reveals a shift in Slovakia's values over time. In each wave of the survey, there is a clear trend showing Slovakia's increasing inclination toward self-expression values over survival values. Interestingly, when measuring the spectrum between traditional and secular values, Slovakia consistently positions itself in the middle, with a slight tendency towards secular values.

In addition, this study attempts to provide a comprehensive analysis of the survey data, delving into specific questions to provide more detailed insights. It's worth noting that Slovakia's participation is limited to two waves: the most recent in 2022 (wave 7) and the one conducted in 1998 (wave 3). This selective focus allows for an in-depth examination not only of the observed change in values over the two decades but also of any generational shifts that may have occurred during this period. The richness of the data set promises a wealth of information for analysis, contributing to a thorough exploration of the evolving landscape in Slovakia.

### Comparison of WVS Wave 3 (1998) and WVS Wave 7 (2022)

**First set of questions:** For each of the following aspects, indicate how important it is in your life. Would you say it is very important, rather important, not very important, or not important at all?

**Figure 5: Family**

WVS Wave 3 (1998)				WVS Wave 7 (2022)			
Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)		Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)	
very important	90.9%	very important	86.5%	very important	87.5%	very important	81.9%
not important	0.8%	not important	0.9%	not important	1.2%	not important	1.1%

**Figure 7: Friends**

WVS Wave 3 (1998)				WVS Wave 7 (2022)			
Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)		Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)	
very important	32%	very important	47.5%	very important	52.3%	very important	60%
not important	8.5%	not important	1.4%	not important	7.5%	not important	6.3%

**Figure 8: Leisure Time**

WVS Wave 3 (1998)				WVS Wave 7 (2022)			
Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)		Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)	
very important	25.6%	very important	34.7%	very important	47.6%	very important	58.7%
not important	18.3%	not important	13.5%	not important	7.1%	not important	4.1%

**Figure 9: Politics**

WVS Wave 3 (1998)				WVS Wave 7 (2022)			
Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)		Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)	
very important	3.7%	very important	0.5%	very important	6.9%	very important	6.9%
not important	70.3%	not important	76.1%	not important	74.3%	not important	74.3%

**Figure 10: Work**

WVS Wave 3 (1998)				WVS Wave 7 (2022)			
Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)		Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)	
very important	47.1%	very important	0.5%	very important	36.8%	very important	38.2%
not important	9.9%	not important	8.6%	not important	18.3%	not important	13.6%

**Figure 11: Religion**

WVS Wave 3 (1998)				WVS Wave 7 (2022)			
Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)		Total (%)		Up to 29 (%)	
very important	23.7%	very important	13.1%	very important	19.6%	very important	11.5%
not important	43.5%	not important	54.9%	not important	49.2%	not important	60.2%

**Second set of questions:** Here is a list of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important? Please choose up to five.

**Figure 12: Children Qualities**

Quality	WVS Wave 3 (1998)		WVS Wave 7 (2022)	
	Total (%)	Up to 29 (%)	Total (%)	Up to 29 (%)
<b>Hard work</b>	70.3	62.2%	63.3	46.6

	WVS Wave 3 (1998)		WVS Wave 7 (2022)	
Quality	Total (%)	Up to 29 (%)	Total (%)	Up to 29 (%)
Independence	22.4	35.5	27.7	39.9
Imagination	4.6	6.8	13.5	21
Tolerance and respect for others	57.2	58.1	56.5	51
Obedience	26.8	25.2	17.8	11.9

**Third set of questions:**

Do you agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly with following statements?

**Figure 13: Work should always come first, even if it means less spare time**

WVS Wave 3 (1998)				WVS Wave 7 (2022)			
Total		Up to 29		Total		Up to 29	
agree	58%	agree	46.8%	agree	49.2%	agree	38.8%
neither	2.6%	neither	3.6%	neither	27.8%	neither	30.3%
disagree	15.6%	disagree	22.6%	disagree	21.7%	disagree	30.9%

Here are two statements people sometimes make when discussing the environment and economic growth. Which of them comes closer to your own point of view?

- A. Protecting the environment should be given priority, even if it causes slower economic growth and some loss of jobs
- B. Economic growth and creating jobs should be the top priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent

**Figure 14: Environment vs Economic growth**

	WVS Wave 3 (1998)		WVS Wave 7 (2022)	
	Total	Up to 29	Total	Up to 29
Protecting environment	43.4	48.2	50.6	51.8
Economic growth	39.9	35.6	41.3	39.2

**Fourth set of questions:**

How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household? If '1' means you are completely dissatisfied on this scale, and '10' means you are completely satisfied, where would you put your satisfaction with your household's financial situation?

**Figure 15: Financial situation**

WVS Wave 3 (1998)			WVS Wave 7 (2022)		
10-7	6-4	3-1	10-7	6-4	3-1
21.9%	43.8%	33.9%	43.6%	43.8%	17.6%

All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? Please use this card to help with your answer.

**Figure 16: Satisfaction with life**

WVS Wave 3 (1998)			WVS Wave 7 (2022)		
10-7	6-4	3-1	10-7	6-4	3-1
46.8%	38.1%	14.8	63%	30.1%	6.8%

**Analysis of the data**

From the first set of questions, we can see that there have been some changes over the decades. In both waves, young people up to the age of 29 gave quite different answers

than the representative sample for the country as a whole. This set of questions is more indicative of the dimension of traditional values versus secular-rational values. However, the questions on work and leisure are also indicators of the dimension of survival values versus self-expression values.

While there has been a slight decline in the percentage of respondents who consider family very important from WVS wave 3 to wave 7, family values remain highly important to people across ages and times. On the other hand, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who consider friends to be very important. This suggests a shift towards placing more importance on social relationships and connections other than family, indicating post-materialist and secular-rational values.

Moreover, the importance of leisure is gradually increasing, while the importance of work is decreasing slightly, especially among those up to 29 years old. This may reflect a greater emphasis on personal well-being, enjoyment, or personal development, aligning with post-materialist values.

Lastly, the importance of religion remains largely the same between the two waves. In both waves, about half of the population considers religion to be either not very important or not important at all. As Wave 3 was conducted during the communist period, it is not surprising that not many people would say that they are religious. What seems to be most interesting and important is the data on the importance of politics. In both waves, across all age groups, people do not consider politics to be important in their lives, and in both waves, over 70% do not consider politics to be important or important at all. This shows that people's materialistic values remain, as people do not see the importance of political engagement and participation in decision-making.

The data from the second set of questions suggest a shift in values over the years, with a decreasing emphasis on hard work, independence, and obedience, and an increasing recognition of the importance of imagination. Tolerance and respect for others have maintained their importance, albeit with a slight decline. Notably, hard work is seen as one of the most important qualities in children by over 70% and 60% of respondents in Wave 3 and Wave 7, respectively. In contrast, a quality such as imagination is considered important by only 4.6% and 13.5% in each wave, respectively. This may

indicate that while there is a shift towards post-materialist values, materialism still prevails.

The data from the third set of questions confirm some of the assumptions. In Wave 3, a higher percentage of respondents of all ages agreed that work should come, even if it means less spare time. On the other hand, in Wave 7, the percentage of respondents up to age 29 who agreed with this statement decreased by about 10%. In addition, the data on environmental protection versus economic growth show that respondents in Wave 3 had a balanced view on prioritizing environmental protection (43.4%) versus economic growth (39.9%). However, there is a noticeable increase in the percentage of respondents who prioritize protecting the environment over economic growth, and a similar trend can be seen among respondents under the age of 29. Overall, this once again shows the shift towards a post-materialist mindset, valuing quality of life, environmental sustainability and a more balanced approach to work and leisure.

The data from the fourth set of questions show that in Wave 3, only 21.9% of respondents were very satisfied with their financial situation and 33.9% of respondents were highly dissatisfied with their financial situation. In Wave 7, there is a notable shift in the responses, with 43.6% of respondents being very satisfied with their financial situation and only 17.6% being highly dissatisfied. This suggests that the shift seen in all the other categories mentioned so far correlates with the improvement in the financial situation. In addition, respondents expressed greater satisfaction with their lives as a whole. While the percentage of respondents with the highest level of satisfaction has increased, the percentage in the lowest category has decreased, which may indicate a correlation between the financial situation and the shift to post-materialistic values that can improve an individual's life as a whole.

### **Flash Eurobarometer: Youth Survey 2021**

This survey was conducted on young people, aged 16-30. Since one of the conditions for a shift to post-material values in security economics in the formative years of life, it is important to analyze answers from young people who were growing up when the economic situation of Slovakia was getting better and compare it with data that represent whole Slovakia. The research will focus only on questions relevant to this thesis, such as about politics, values, or economics.



Figure 16: EU Youth Survey 2021

Question	Slovakia	Austria	Europe
To be a good citizen, how important do you think it is for a person to form their own opinions (On a scale from 0 - is extremely unimportant, to 10 - is extremely important)	73% answered between 8-10 <sup>2</sup>	63% answered between 8-10	68% answered between 8-10
To be a good citizen, how important do you think it is for a person to help those who are less fortunate	58% answered between 8-10	49% answered between 8-10	53% answered between 8-10
To be a good citizen, how important do you think it is for a person to express their opinion on political or social issue	33% answered between 8-10	29% answered between 8-10	38% answered between 8-10
In your opinion, which three of the following <u>issues</u> should be given priority? <sup>3</sup>	Combatting climate change and protecting the environment, Combatting climate change and protecting	Tackling poverty and inequality, Combatting climate change and protecting the environment,	Tackling poverty and inequality, Combatting unemployment /lack of jobs, Improving population

<sup>2</sup> The author chose to merge the responses from the 10-8 on the scale because they all represent importance to the respondents and that is what is analyzed - importance/non-importance.

<sup>3</sup> They were supposed to choose from: Combatting climate change and protecting the environment; Improving access to education and training; Tackling poverty and inequality; Combatting unemployment/lack of jobs; Improving population health and wellbeing; Tackling cyber/online threats (hacking, ransomware, identity theft); Dealing with the challenges of immigration; Tackling the rise of extremism; Tackling terrorism; Tackling financial/political corruption

	the environment, Tackling poverty and inequality,	Combatting unemployment /lack of jobs	health and wellbeing
In your opinion, which three of the following <u>values</u> are most important? <sup>4</sup>	The protection of human rights and democracy, Freedom of speech, Solidarity between people	The protection of human rights and democracy, Freedom of speech, Gender equality	The protection of human rights and democracy, Freedom of speech, and Gender equality

Several conclusions can be drawn from the survey. First, young people in Slovakia place a high value on forming their own opinions, with 73% considering it very important. This indicates a trend towards individualism and a desire for independent thinking among the younger population. Second, 58% of young people in Slovakia believe it is very important to help those who are less fortunate. This reflects a sense of social responsibility and a willingness to contribute to the well-being of others. Compared to the EU average of 53%, this suggests a slightly higher level of importance in Slovakia. Thirdly, expressing opinions on political or social issues is considered very important by only 33% of young people in Slovakia. This contrasts with the EU average of 38%. This may indicate that political engagement is generally low even among young people. Finally, the importance of forming one's own opinion is consistently high across the questions (73% in both questions 1 and question 4. This consistency indicates a

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<sup>4</sup> They were supposed to choose from: The protection of human rights and democracy; Freedom of speech; Gender equality; Solidarity with weaker members of society; Solidarity between people; Solidarity between European Union Member States; Solidarity between the European Union and poor countries around the world; The protection of minority groups; Getting rid of the death penalty throughout the world

strong emphasis on individual thinking, suggesting that young Slovaks value autonomy in shaping their beliefs and perspectives.

Moreover, Young people's responses are consistent with the conditions for a shift to post-material values as Slovakia's economy improves. The emphasis on individual expression and social responsibility may indicate a broader societal shift toward post-material values, in which non-material factors such as self-expression and social concerns become more important than material considerations.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this extensive study examines the theoretical background, historical development, and empirical aspects of materialism, post-materialism, and post-communism in Slovakia. It begins by exploring different interpretations of materialism, recognizing its nature and different understandings. These different perspectives lead to opinions on how materialism influences society and individuals both negatively and positively.

Moving on to Inglehart's post-materialist theory, the analysis reveals a generational shift from materialist values concerned with survival to a prioritization of post-materialist values that prioritize self-expression and quality of life. The subsequent examination of post-communism in Slovakia sheds light on the enduring influences of communism on political, social, and cultural realms, highlighting the diverse challenges faced post-communist states.

These theoretical foundations serve as a basis for the analysis of empirical data to comprehensively explore materialism and post-materialism in the context of post-communist Slovakia. Tracing Slovakia's development from the communist era through its post-communist challenges reveals the complex interplay of political, economic, and social forces. The legacy of the Soviet structure hindered the adoption of materialist values, while the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993 further complicated not only the transition from communism, but also the need to establish itself as an independent state.

The qualitative research design using data analysis as a technique ensures comprehensive and in-depth empirical findings. The use of data from the World Value Survey and the Flash Eurobarometer: EU Youth Survey ensures the validity and reliability of the methodology. Chapter III is the key part of this thesis, as it focuses on the analysis of existing data from Slovakia between generations, giving a high priority to examining the responses in terms of materialism/post-materialism.

The shift in values over time in Slovakia is evident and shows that Slovakia is slowly moving towards post-materialist and self-expression values, especially when looking at the age group up to 29 years in 2022. Overall, the responses from 1998 and 2022 have changed significantly. The data suggest that social relationships other than family

become more important to respondents. Also, the importance of leisure time is increasing, while the importance of work is slightly decreasing. This means that people are beginning to appreciate the free time they can spend with friends and family, rather than working all the time just to afford material things. All this happens while the sense of satisfaction with the financial situation and happiness increases, showing that the shift towards post-material values is accompanied by an improvement in the financial situation.

This thesis is an introduction to the issue of materialism in Slovakia, which has spread to various academic aspects, such as environmental studies or economics. It can be concluded that as the economic situation in Slovakia improves, each generation will be more inclined to post-material values. As post-materialism is a broader cultural change, it influences politics, culture, and society itself. Being aware of this can shed a positive light on Slovakia's future. This thesis allows the researcher to continue this topic at the Master's level, focusing on the aspect of happiness related to post-materialism and how happier people create a better society.

In summary, this research provides valuable insights into materialist/post-materialist dynamics in Slovakia, encapsulating historical trajectories and generational shifts. The integration of data from the World Value Survey and the EU Youth Survey enriches the analysis.

## Resumé

V sociológii je materializmus súčasťou spotrebiteľského správania. „Hoci sa niektorí materialisti zapájajú do nápadnej spotreby, je možné mať materialistické hodnoty aj bez tohto konkrétneho správania, najmä ak status nie je pre spotrebiteľa dôležitým životným cieľom“ (Richins, 2010, s. 1).

Pojem materializmus je zložitý a existujú jeho rôzne interpretácie. Cieľom tejto práce je vysvetliť tento pojem, aby sme pochopili Inglehartovu teóriu post-materializmu. Ďalej je potrebné analyzovať koncept post-komunizmu, keďže komunistický režim mal vplyv na všetky aspekty života a s jeho pádom sa tieto dôsledky prejavili v rôznych podobách v postkomunistických krajinách, ako je aj Slovensko.

Cieľom tejto práce nie je argumentovať o rozdielnych úrovniach materializmu medzi západnými a postkomunistickými európskymi regiónmi. Jej cieľom je skôr ilustrovať, že jednotlivci v postkomunistických krajinách, na príkladovej štúdií Slovenska, majú tendenciu uprednostňovať materiálne hodnoty pred post-materialistickými ideálmi, vrátane takých aspektov, ako je kvalitne strávený čas s rodinou, starostlivosť o životné prostredie a rovnaké práva menších. Zatiaľ čo mnohé západoeurópske krajiny úspešne prešli od konvenčných materialistických hodnôt, ako je hospodársky rast a spoločenský poriadok, k post-materialistickým hodnotám, postkomunistické východoeurópske krajiny vrátane Slovenska v tomto smere zaostávajú. Tieto národy často odvodzujú osobnú sebaúctu od získavania materiálnych statkov, majetku a bohatstva, čo vedie k relatívne nižšej kvalite života.

V prvej kapitole sú definované kľúčové pojmy, koncepty a teórie tejto témy. V prvej časti sa skúmajú rôzne definície a prístupy k materializmu a skúmajú sa dôsledky materializmu na spoločenskej aj individuálnej úrovni. Cieľom je poskytnúť podrobný pohľad na mnohostranné aspekty spojené s materialistickými perspektívami a ich širšie spoločenské dôsledky.

Kapitola následne skúma teóriu post-materializmu Ronalda Ingleharta (1997), pričom zdôrazňuje dve ústredné hypotézy, ktoré táto teória navrhuje. Okrem toho sa pozornosť rozširuje na skúmanie zdrojov, ktoré prispievajú k hodnotovým posunom načrtnutým Inglehartom. Cieľom tejto časti je poskytnúť dôkladné pochopenie post-materialistických perspektív a ich úlohy pri formovaní spoločenskej dynamiky.

V záverečnej časti kapitoly sa presúva pozornosť na koncept post-komunizmu. Snaží sa komplexne definovať post-komunizmus a objasniť rôzne dôsledky a prejavy postkomunistického štátu. Diskusia je viacrozmerná a skúma vplyv post-komunizmu na rôzne aspekty života. Tým, že sa kapitola zaoberá jeho dôsledkami, má za cieľ poskytnúť ucelené pochopenie viacvrstvovej povahy post-komunizmu a jeho významu v širšom spoločenskom kontexte.

Druhá kapitola sa zameriava na sledovanie vývoja na Slovensku po roku 1970, pričom využíva Inglehartovu (1977) teóriu zmeny hodnôt na ilustráciu toho, že Slovensko ako súčasť Československa v období komunizmu by nebolo schopné prejsť na post-materiálne hodnoty. Nadradená politická štruktúra, silne ovplyvnená Sovietskym zväzom, obmedzovala možnosti takéhoto posunu. Po rozpade Sovietskeho zväzu došlo k rozdeleniu Československa a Slovensko sa ocitlo nielen uprostred transformácie svojho politického systému, ale aj pred úlohou etablovať sa ako samostatný národ. Následne prechod k post-materiálnym hodnotám zostal kvôli zložitému budovaniu národa a politickej reštrukturalizácii nemožný ďalšie tri desaťročia.

Výskumný projekt je kvalitatívny a jeho cieľom je analyzovať existujúce údaje z prieskumov s cieľom zistiť korelácie medzi jednotlivými hodnotami a ekonomickým stavom krajiny, pričom sa opiera o teoretické poznatky uvedené v kapitolách I a II. Hoci sa zameriava na Slovensko ako na prípadovú štúdiu, obsahuje niektoré prvky komparatívnej metódy. Patrí k nim porovnávanie údajov v rámci Slovenska v rôznych rokoch a rozšírenie porovnávania na údaje zo Slovenska a Rakúska. Porovnanie s Rakúskom je pozoruhodné nielen preto, že Rakúsko prešlo inou historickou trajektóriou, keďže nikdy nezažilo komunizmus, ale aj pre jeho geografickú blízkosť k Slovensku. Porovnanie s Rakúskom poukazuje na kontrastné cesty, ktorými sa vydali susedné krajiny, a poskytuje pohľad na vplyv historických a politických súvislostí na ich príslušné cesty. Technikou použitou v tomto výskume je analýza údajov.

Výskum sa začína skúmaním dvoch vln World Value Survey z rokov 1998 a 2022, jediných dvoch vln, ktorých sa zúčastnilo Slovensko. Vyhodnotené budú dáta zo Slovenska s identifikáciou zmien v čase. Ako druhé sa bude skúmať prieskum Európskej únie medzi mládežou z roku 2021, ktorý poskytne pohľad na postoje mladých ľudí. Cieľom tohto komplexného prístupu, ktorý zahŕňa rôzne zdroje údajov,

je poskytnúť komplexné pochopenie materialistickej/post-materialistickej dynamiky v danom kontexte.

Celkovo tento výskum poskytuje cenný pohľad na materialistickú/post-materialistickú dynamiku na Slovensku, zachytáva historické trajektórie a generačné nuansy. Integrácia údajov zo Svetového prieskumu hodnôt a bleskového prieskumu Eurobarometer medzi mládežou obohacuje hĺbku a relevantnosť štúdie a poskytuje základné pochopenie vyvíjajúceho sa kultúrneho prostredia na Slovensku.

Tieto teoretické východiská slúžia ako základ pre analýzu empirických údajov s cieľom komplexne preskúmať materializmus a post-materializmus v kontexte postkomunistického Slovenska. Sledovanie trajektórie Slovenska od komunistickej éry cez postkomunistické výzvy odhaľuje zložitú súhru politických, ekonomických a sociálnych síl. Dedičstvo štruktúry Sovietskeho zväzu bránilo prijatiu materialistických hodnôt, zatiaľ čo rozpad Československa v roku 1993 ešte viac skomplikoval nielen prechod z komunizmu, ale aj potrebu etablovať sa ako nezávislý štát.

Kvalitatívny výskumný dizajn, ktorý ako techniku využíva analýzu dát, zabezpečuje komplexné a hĺbkové empirické zistenia. Využíva údaje zo Svetového prieskumu hodnôt a bleskového Eurobarometra: EÚ pre mládež zabezpečuje platnosť a spoľahlivosť metodiky. Kapitola III je kľúčovou časťou tejto práce, pretože sa zameriava na analýzu existujúcich údajov zo Slovenska medzi generáciami, pričom

Posun hodnôt v čase na Slovensku je evidentný a ukazuje, že Slovensko sa pomaly posúva k post-materialistickým a seba-vyjadrovacím hodnotám, najmä pri pohľade na vekovú kategóriu do 29 rokov od roku 2022. Celkovo sa odpovede od roku 1998 a 2022 výrazne zmenili. Údaje naznačujú, že pre respondentov sú čoraz dôležitejšie iné sociálne vzťahy ako rodina. Taktiež sa zvyšuje dôležitosť voľného času, zatiaľ čo dôležitosť práce mierne klesla. To znamená, že ľudia si začínajú vážiť voľný čas, ktorý môžu tráviť s priateľmi a rodinou, namiesto toho, aby neustále pracovali len preto, aby si mohli dovoliť materiálne veci. To všetko sa deje za súčasného zvyšovania pocitu spokojnosti s finančnou situáciou a šťastia, čo ukazuje, že posun k post-materiálnym hodnotám je sprevádzaný zlepšením finančnej situácie.



Táto práca je úvodom do problematiky materializmu na Slovensku, ktorý sa rozšíril do rôznych akademických aspektov, ako sú napríklad environmentálne štúdiá alebo ekonómia. Možno konštatovať, že so zlepšujúcou sa ekonomickou situáciou Slovenska sa každá generácia bude viac prikláňať k post-materiálnym hodnotám. Keďže post-materializmus je širšou kultúrnou zmenou, ovplyvňuje politiku, kultúru a samotnú spoločnosť. Uvedomenie si tejto skutočnosti môže vrhnúť pozitívne svetlo na budúcnosť Slovenska. Bolo by zaujímavé pokračovať v tejto práci aj na magisterskom stupni a zamerať sa na aspekt šťastia súvisiaci s post-materializmom a na to, ako šťastnejší ľudia vytvárajú lepšiu spoločnosť.

Celkovo tento výskum poskytuje cenné poznatky o materialistickej/post-materialistickej dynamike na Slovensku, pričom zahŕňa historické trajektórie a generačné posuny. Integrácia údajov zo Svetového hodnotového prieskumu a prieskumu EÚ o mládeži obohacuje analýzu.

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