

THE ANTI-SYSTEM IN THE SYSTEM: THE FAR RIGHT IN SLOVAKIA

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Abstract

The study deals with the Slovak far-right movement known as Republika. The objective is to substantiate the theoretical concept of accommodation as it pertains to radical and anti-system political subjects within a liberal-democratic system. The research employs the original Far Right Index (FRIx) to analyse the ideological profiling of the Republika movement. The FRIx quantifies the theoretical concept of accommodation in a measurable form. Based on an in-depth political analysis of the positions and pronouncements of the Republika movement in the period 2021-2024, the study demonstrates how they present their political programme effectively without activating democracy's defence mechanisms, while preserving their true ideological framework. The paper reveals that Republika demonstrates attributes of far-right ideology, but from both a normative and a public perspective, it is regarded as a conventional right-wing party with a populist narrative.

Keywords: Democracy, Accommodation, Far right, Extremism, Radicalism, Republika, Slovakia.

INTRODUCTION

Given the existence of discernible characteristics commonly associated with far-right political entities in the field of political science, it is imperative that research concentrates on the manner in which far-right ideologies are manifested in the political activities of these entities within the context of the Slovak Republic. It is uncommon for far-right entities to explicitly articulate their intentions in programme documents, as this might precipitate the implementation of measures designed to safeguard democratic processes. Historically, far-right entities have exploited crises to undermine the authority of responsible governments. They offer easy solutions for solving

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complex issues and present themselves as an alternative to current solutions and sometimes to the system blamed for the problems. Moreover, far-right discourse is often intertwined with populist narratives, which mask their true ideology and appeal to broader audiences by exploiting popular sentiments and fears (Wodak, 2021, p. 35).

This research is centred on the Republika movement in Slovakia from 2021 to 2024, and is based on Kolman's (2021) concept of far-right accommodation. While Kolman originally focused on Kotlebovci - Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko (Kotlebists – People's Party Our Slovakia; ĽSNS), we have examined the Republika movement. Our primary objective is to substantiate the theoretical concept of accommodation (Kolman, 2021) of radical and anti-system political subjects within the democratic system, exemplified by the Republika movement. This study yields an original Far Right Index (FRIx), which enables us to quantify the extent to which originally non-democratic political subjects adapt to democratic conditions (accommodation). Applying the theoretical concept of far-right accommodation in a quantitatively measurable form constitutes the authors' contribution to the advancement of existing knowledge.

The research is based on qualitative analysis of the documents of the Republika movement and her predecessor ĽSNS in order to ascertain the fundamental ideological stances of the political entity examined. Our article is divided into six main parts. After introducing the relevant background to the research in this introductory part, the first section is devoted to an overview of the most relevant literature in the field to date, with a special focus on authors dealing with far-right movements operating in today's democracies (which Kolman identifies as accommodation). This enables us to present the theoretical framework of the study in the second section, and this is critical for the research as our original *Far Right Indicators* were identified based on this framework. The subsequent third section on methodology details the methods used to gain the results and findings presented in the fourth section, which is followed by the last section, conclusion.

It is essential to examine this subject because ĽSNS and the Republika movement are currently characterised by a multitude of far-right typologies. However, a more comprehensive analysis of the existing literature reveals a dearth of empirical evidence in the research on Republika's to date. Consequently, we need to develop a methodology that utilises sources obtained in an authentic environment. We note that although some members of ĽSNS and Republika have been prosecuted for their extremist and radical pronouncements, this did not lead to the Supreme Court of the Slovak

Republic formally dissolving these parties (Hanák, 2019). In terms of the Slovak political landscape, both entities are operating within the confines of the constitution, with no restrictions on democratic competition. This allows them to be considered as having the fundamental characteristics of a systemic party (Kysel', 2022).

1 STATE-OF-THE-ART RESEARCH AND CRITICAL LITERATURE OVERVIEW

The definitional basis of the far-right family is a complex matter for political science research, despite the substantial body of literature on the subject. The terms 'right-wing extremism', 'extreme right', 'far right', 'Rechtsextremismus' or 'ultra-right' are frequently used in political science to designate such parties (e.g. Mudde, 2000, p. 12; Smolík, 2013, p. 387; O'Sullivan, 2002; Katuninec, 2010; Mann, 2004; Eatwell, 2011, Griffin, 2021). In this study, the term 'far right' is employed to describe subjects and individuals whose actions and ideological orientation are situated at the farthest extent of the right wing of the political spectrum. Their agenda is an expression of their antagonistic stance towards democracy, encompassing anti-social and terrorist activities.

Our research is based on the Backes and Jesse (2003) conceptualisation of political extremism as the antithesis of the democratic constitutional state. This term is used to denote anti-democratic views and actions, which are directed against the basic values, rules and institutions of the democratic state (Backes, Jesse, 2003, p. 464). Furthermore, it is used to describe a political position that denies the modern concept of human equality, which is considered to be one of the fundamental foundations of a democratic constitutional state (Backes, Jesse, 2003, p. 53). Nevertheless, there is no comprehensive rejection of democracy and its fundamental tenets, principles and mechanisms, though it should be noted that certain values, rights and obligations are subject to questioning in specific instances (Mareš, 2003, pp. 34-35). Notwithstanding their proclivity towards anti-systemic deviations, the radical right currently evinces a constitutionally conformist orientation while operating within the system (Rataj, 2015, p. 1; as activist style at O'Sullivan, 2002).

It is evident that the far-right political spectrum is not a monolithic entity, yet it does display a number of shared characteristics and activities. These are incorporated in the FRlx. The Far Right Index (FRlx) introduced in this research helps us determine the degree of inclination towards

far-right ideologies. It also allows us to identify discrepancies between officially declared programmes ('compatible' with democratic and rule-of-law conditions) and the actual rhetoric used in communicating with voters ('incompatible'). This index is crucial for understanding the nuanced differences within the far-right spectrum and provides a more comprehensive analysis of their political strategies and communication methods.

Some recent studies (e.g. Bartels et al., 2023; Coppedge, 2023) indicate that democracy is experiencing a decline and confronting novel challenges, underscoring the pressing need for research on the far right. The far right is the subject of numerous academic studies bringing a variety of interpretative approaches. As Orosz and Mihálik (2023) posit, the term 'far right' encompasses a diverse array of political ideologies and movements that espouse radical and populist tenets. As posited by Štefančík (2013), Štefančík and Hvasta (2019), Drábik (2014, 2019) and others, the term 'political extremism' is a complex and ill-defined concept that encompasses a range of ideas and ideologies. These ideologies and movements are, therefore, characterised by a tendency to combine themes present in diverse conceptions and ideologies through the so-called 'isms', including radicalism, populism, extremism, communism, fascism and neo-fascism, religious fundamentalism, racism, Nazism and neo-Nazism, nationalism and neo-nationalism, right-wing and left-wing radicalism, populism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and, in the contemporary era, anti-immigration ideologies. Consequently, a number of ideological currents are categorised as political extremism.

As demonstrated by Katuninec (2010) and Mihálik (2019), the far right has had a profound impact on the trajectory of modern Czech and Slovak history, as well as on the formulation of policy in both states. In the context of research on LSNS's programme and critical topics reflected in their programme, it is pertinent to cite Mesežnikov and Gyárfášová (2016), whose research was based on the results of public opinion polls conducted on the aforementioned topics. The development and foundations of fascist doctrine in Italy, Germany, Great Britain the Czech Republic and Slovakia is also mapped by Drábik (2019). In defining fascism, he primarily draws upon Griffin's concept (2021), which is based on the myth of rebirth, and he offers a brief analysis of LSNS, openly identifying it as a neo-Nazi party (Drábik, 2014; Drábik, 2019, p. 20). As Smolík (2013) asserts, the concept of the nation occupies a pivotal position in contemporary political far-right research. Despite this, it is not explicitly defined; rather, it is delineated through attitudes towards culture, language, history, other ethnicities and foreigners.

Political science research of the far-right therefore primarily concerns the content or ideological orientations of its representatives, including both formal and informal groupings. Furthermore, an emphasis is placed on the examination of power systems, which represent the ideological basis of the current far-right doctrine, and its associated philosophical and ideological roots.

This research builds upon the theoretical concept of accommodation, as presented by Kolman (2021), which identifies efforts to align anti-systemic political subjects with the constitutionally guaranteed democratic standard through programmatic means. As Kolman posits, the fundamental objective of accommodation is to avoid triggering the defensive mechanisms of democracy, which could culminate in the dissolution of the 'incompatible' entity or the curtailment of its right to take part in political competition. The process we now call 'accommodation' has been touched upon by a number of authors who have indirectly identified the concealing abilities of the far right in a democratic environment (Papasarantopoulos, 2023; Ganesh et al, 2020; Vicenová et. al, 2022; Žúborová, Borarosová, 2017; Kluknavská, Smolík, 2016; Kazharski, 2019).

As Kolman (2021) asserts, the process of accommodation is founded upon three fundamental elements. Firstly, there is no open questioning of the system of representative democracy. In lieu of a comprehensive critique, there is merely tactical criticism of the shortcomings of the system in which the subject operates. Secondly, the subject endeavours to reform the system with the objective of eliminating the political and institutional elements that permit the penetration of liberal and exogenous elements from external sources, or that themselves act as carriers of such elements. Thirdly, there are anti-systemic tendencies, which are deliberately concealed and aligned with the legal framework and constitutionality.

Kolman (2021, p.89) defines accommodation as the process of functioning of a political entity, where *'Despite the anti-democratic tendencies inherent in the ideological basis of this ideological stream (the far right; note)... At the same time. This intention, in its latent form, exhibits anti-systemic tendencies, which are, however, deliberately concealed and aligned with the legal framework and constitutionality.'*

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section presents the fundamental theoretical framework of our investigation into the far right and also defines the concepts that will be employed in the course of the research.

The investigation of value attitudes within any ideological spectrum must be approached in a holistic manner, bearing in mind that freedom has its constitutional and legal limits and it is difficult to combat anti-systemic tendencies without compromising democratic values. Freedom of expression can only be restricted when strictly necessary, as it is a fundamental prerequisite for the establishment and sustenance of a democratic system. The term 'suppression' refers to measures by the State aimed at enforcing non-restriction of fundamental rights and freedoms.

In the case of the Slovak Republic, the acts of 'suppression' are covered by the Penal Code (Act No. 300/2005, § 421, §422), which also applies to their violation in the online space, including social networks. Slovakia, like the majority of democratic countries, responds by limiting the political participation of groups and political parties that are deemed to be acting in an unacceptable manner or espousing opinions that violate human rights and freedoms. Consequently, the LSNS party – Republika's predecessor – underwent a gradual process of systemic accommodation (Kolman, 2021) due to the pressure exerted by criminal prosecutions and court proceedings.

The predecessor party of LSNS, Slovenská Pospolitosť – Národná strana (SP-NS) was dissolved by a Slovak court judgment in 2006, which is an example of the paradox of democracy, whereby the protection of democratic principles may inadvertently limit freedom of expression and narrow the political and electoral arena by excluding certain subjects (Diamond, 1990). These democratic restrictions on freedom of speech and political competition are of great importance for the protection of the so-called fragility of democracy. Our fundamental premise is that the primary protective mechanism of the democratic establishment is the prohibition of extremists' participation in the electoral arena. There are many historic examples in which extreme political actors have aligned with democratic norms and practices in order to maintain their activities or enhance their electoral prospects. It is therefore essential that political scientists pay close attention to the survival tactics and operational strategies of such political actors, who seek to maintain their political activities without facing criminal prosecution or court proceedings for their extremist rhetoric. This is particularly relevant in contexts where such rhetoric may lead to the banning of their activities as a means of safeguarding the democratic process, as happened in the case of SP-NS.

We determined, and subsequently analysed, Republika's ideological framework based on criteria that are characteristic of far-right thinking and methods of political work (see, for example, Drábik, 2019; Charvát,

2007; Smolík, 2013; Griffin, 2021; Papasarantopoulos, 2023; Ganesh et. al, 2020; Vicenová et. al, 2022; Žúborová, Borarosová, 2017; Kluknavská, Smolík, 2016; Kazharski, 2019). We used the work of these authors, who had conducted research on far-right entities in democracy, including works devoted to aspects of ‘accommodation’, to identify the key elements that define the essence of far right (including fascism). The group of 16 indicators we identified is listed in Table 1. These characteristics are presented as a set of interconnected indicators, which are referred to below as Far Right Indicators (FRIs).

Table 1: *Far Right Indicators (FRIs)*

Indicator	Definition
Ultrationalism	A particular form of nationalistic fervour predicated on the utopian notion of the nation as a robust, virtuous and heroic organic entity. It contrasts to the liberal concepts of citizenship, multiculturalism, individualism, or the general acceptance of human rights or cultural assimilation as the foundations of society.
Belief in a crisis threatening the nation	Presence of real or imaginary threat is interpreted in the sense of ‘crisis’, ‘decadence’, and ‘degeneration’ (i.e. narratives associated with demographic, moral or cultural decline, collective loss of memory regarding the heroic past, racial mixing with racial, ideological, dysgenic, or moral enemies).
A new order	Departure from decadence is interpreted as a process of renewal and a new beginning for the ultra-nation, based on traditionalist values and, in some cases, on the concept of the ‘purity’ of the superior race.
The spread of conspiracy theories	Fear, emotions and a focus on conspiracy theories to secure political capital in contrast to rationality and correctness. Furthermore, it gives rise to the formation of an internal and external adversary perceived as a threat to the nation.
Racial concept of the nation/ Ethnoculturalism	Assumption that a nation represents an organic unit, comprising members characterised by a common identity primarily based on biological characteristics. In contrast to migrants within the nation, while simultaneously excluding all members of ethnic minorities.
Economic programme and social doctrine	Preference of strong economic and social doctrines with a superior role of the state evidenced by a chauvinistic social security programme predicated on the assumption that a robust state should undertake social policy exclusively for the benefit of its own nation. It is primarily family-oriented, with the overarching objective of ensuring the future survival of the nation or race.
Historical continuity	Adoration of and reference to, historical patterns. In our context of the Republika movement, the Slovak Republic (1939 – 1945) - a cleric-fascist regime - is thus key. Fundamentalist Catholicism forms part of the ideological basis of neo-fascists and the far right (Charvát, 2007, pp. 74–77).

Anti-rationalism	Directed against the Enlightenment, which exalted reason in contrast to fascism, which preferred the soul, emotions and natural instincts.
Struggle	Fascism, as the historical ideological foundation of the far right, built upon Darwin's ideas of natural selection, with a particular emphasis on the value of strength and the perceived harm of weakness.
Leadership and elitism	Refusing equality in the light of natural and desirable leadership. Society was thus divided into three parts: the leader, the military elite and the masses.
Socialism	According to O'Sullivan (2002) and Katuninec (2010, p. 7), the economy should be governed by the ideology of 'national socialism,' which involves active government intervention in the economy, in contrast to socialist principles.
Anti-capitalism	A collectivist approach and implementation of a compatible economic policy.
Corporatism and syndicalism	Regarded as an alternative to both capitalism and socialism. O'Sullivan (2002, p.130) states that the fascist interpretation of corporatism is based on the idea of unity between employers and workers, which must be achieved through the use of various economic methods and institutions, such as unions.
Permanent revolution	A rejection of reason and stability is evident, with an emphasis on myth and dynamism. This has led to the concept of permanent revolution.
Messianic mission	The concept of a redemptive mission, one nation is deemed to be inherently superior to another, and the entity is a vital part of this mission.
Self-sufficiency	The capacity of the state to operate autonomously, without being unduly influenced by external factors. The objective is to reduce reliance on imports and foreign corporations.

Source: Authors based on Heywood (2008), O'Sullivan (2002), Griffin (2021), Papasasantopoulos (2023), Ganesh et. al. (2020), Vicenová et. al. (2022), Žúborová and Borarosová (2017), Kluknavská and Smolík (2016), Kazharski (2019).

Our research focuses on the period after 9th of March 2021 when the Republika Movement (MINV, 2024) has been attempting to create a new identity for the far right (MINV, 2024). This was launched by individuals who left ĽSNS following an internal party split (TASR, 2021). Despite ongoing efforts to reform ĽSNS's communication and accommodate far-right ideology within the system, Republika continues to bear the historical burden of the activities, symbolism and membership base of ĽSNS.

The Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Milan Uhrík was appointed as the new chair of the Republika movement, while former prominent ĽSNS members assumed the roles of vice-chairs. Other individuals with unconventional political backgrounds were also given a platform in Republika, including Andrej Janco, a proponent of Vladimir Putin, opponent

of homosexuality and purveyor of misinformation and Marek Géci, a former colleague of the far-right politician Tomáš Taraba (Benčík, 2017), who in 2023 became the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment of the Slovak Republic in Robert Fico's fourth government.

In contrast to the personal party cast, the Republika movement does not officially declare any far-right ideology. As Uhrík stated, *'We are establishing Republika as a movement for all citizens who are dissatisfied with the liquidation policy of this government coalition and at the same time frustrated by the scandals of the compromised and corrupt opposition,'* (TASR, 2021). Uhrík was keen to emphasise that the new entity would not be a clone of ĽSNS, but there was no clear rejection of ĽSNS's activities to date. In 2021, in his farewell video on ĽSNS's social network page, he emphasised his previous efforts towards achieving an independent and free Slovakia. He also expressed gratitude to the ĽSNS leader and other party members in his video on the social network: *'I would like to express my gratitude for your friendship over the past few years. For all the fruitful collaborations we have enjoyed. ... I will always remember them with pride'* (Facebook, 2021). By doing so, the leadership of the new entity was effectively endorsing the far-right rhetoric of ĽSNS without attempting to disassociate themselves from their previous statements.

The visual identity of Republika has undergone a significant transformation, moving away from the original ĽSNS symbols. The Republika movement has omitted the symbolism of the clerico-fascist first Slovak Republic (1939-1945) from its official materials. Republika has gradually adapted its own identity to align with Slovakia's constitutional framework, particularly by modifying the styling of the guardist double cross and incorporating a traditional triple crest. The basic visual sign is a blank map of the Slovak Republic with the prominent inscription 'Republika' in a white-blue-red design, which refers to the Slovak tricolour. The name 'Republika' is derived from the initial letters of Slovak words that encapsulate the core values of the movement: reasonable, energetic, professional, successful, militant, humane, innovative, conservative, and authentic.

Despite their clearly conservative and anti-globalist stance, they reject being labelled as a fascist association. On their website, in the 'Our Opinions' section ('Naše názory'), they provide explanations or refutations of their previous activities. To this end, a separate, freely available brochure entitled 'We Explain the Most Common Hoaxes About the Republika Movement' (Hnutie Republika, 2023b) was produced. In the introduction, the authors primarily criticise the media and the non-governmental sector

for labelling Republika's members as fascists: *'The use of the term 'fascist' is a simplistic and unsubstantiated characterisation employed by those who are unable to engage in a reasoned debate.'* The term 'fascist' is primarily used by Republika to label progressive political groups collaboration and NGOs activists (funded by the EU, NATO or the USA as proclaimed in this brochure). The brochure provides an overview of Republika's fundamental political positions, including its foreign policy. It believes that the war in Ukraine was instigated by Western powers, specifically the USA and NATO, Republika provides support for Russian interests and justifies Russia's reasons for invading Ukraine in this brochure.

The Republika movement is particularly active on social networks. At the time of Slovakia's 2023 parliamentary election, the political accounts of prominent Republika members were among the most influential. In terms of the number of interactions, its leader, Milan Uhrík, ranked second among Slovak politicians on the Facebook social network between January and April 2023, followed by other Republika's representatives, with Tomáš Špaček in third place and Milan Mazurek in fifth position. This also shows that Republika is particularly interested in engaging with young voters. Almost 40% of the movement's electorate falls into the 35-54 age category, with a further 36% under the age of 34. After the liberal *Progresívne Slovensko* (Progressive Slovakia) party, Republika has the second youngest electorate in Slovakia (Miškerík, 2023).

However, due to the dissemination of content that is the subject of controversy on social networks, Republika is regularly faced with the blocking of its accounts on social networks, and is therefore gradually implementing a strategy of diversification and content selection based on tolerance. This involves publishing controversial topics on alternative, less controlled platforms, including Telegram, Tik Tok, Rumble and Odysee. The publication of risky content is primarily facilitated through related proxy sites and media outlets that Republika indirectly funds and controls, as detailed below. From a legal standpoint, it is the medium, rather than the movement itself, that is held accountable for the content published. In the event of sanctions or cancellation, the direct activity of Republika remains unaffected. Such was the case of the portal of the movement, 'Denník Republika', which features the visuals of the movement and its individual posts are mainly comments from its members but it is officially operated as an independent entity. The movement declares that *'Denník REPUBLIKA is not the official website of the REPUBLIKA movement, but a fan website created by sympathisers of the movement.'* (Denník Republika, 2024).

Furthermore, the movement has been outsourcing political campaigning for an extended period through the formally 'independent and apolitical' conservative media portal Kulturblog, which is registered as a civic association of young conservative people aimed at disseminating values associated with national identity and Christianity through audiovisual media. Kulturblog has declared its independence, with funding sourced exclusively from contributions from fans and subscribers. At the time of the portal's establishment, the main personnel of Kulturblog were paid assistants of ĽSNS parliamentary deputies. The leaders of Kulturblog also held positions within the ĽSNS youth organisation (Ľudová mládež) and were remunerated for the production of promotional materials. Following the dissolution of the ĽSNS parliamentary group, Kulturblog's collaboration with the newly-established Republika movement (Benčík, 2019) continued also due to personal ties. Republika's Vice-President (Mazurek) is a regular contributor to Kulturblog, together with the wife of the portal's founding member, Lívia Pavlíková, who has been a member of Republika since 2023. Other contributors are the founder of Kulturblog and former ĽSNS candidate Ján Pastuszek, or Uhrík's assistant in the European Parliament and conspiracy theorist, Ľubomír Huďo.

A portal that analyses alternative media (Konšpiratori.sk) has given Kulturblog a negative assessment for the dissemination of content that is both conspiratorial and extremist in nature. The content is characterised by the presentation of information in a manipulative and emotionally charged manner with the intention of creating a false impression of threats posed by liberalism, multiculturalism, globalisation, Western Europe, various religious or sexual minorities and migration. *'The website plays on various fears and stereotypes, particularly on the topics of migration and, more recently, vaccination.'* (Konšpiratori.sk, 2024) Furthermore, ongoing analysis of Kulturblog reveals signs of the accommodation process analysed here as far-right ideology adapting to the norms of the democratic system in which it operates.

3 METHODOLOGY

The key tool for identifying the profile and degree of accommodation of the political subject investigated will be a series of selected indicators (FRIs = far right indicators). Each of the indicators represents a condition that allows us to determine the extent to which the subject in question is aligned with the ideas typically associated with the far right. In the absence of a

general definition, the indicators will serve to define the parameters of far-right groups in accordance with the theoretical framework of the research.

We have compiled an initial Table 1 presenting 16 selected indicators of leaning towards the far right. In line with the primary objective of the project, the goal is to confirm the theoretical concept of accommodation (Kolman, 2021) of radical and anti-system political subjects within the system, using the far-right movement *Republika* as a case study. The indicator fulfilment values (1 – P=present, 0 – N=absent; Table 2) will be assigned to two independent categories based on *Republika*'s official declaratory programme ('programme') and activities on social networks or public gatherings ('activity'). The use of binary values minimises the risk of inconclusive results that could be affected by the symptoms of accommodation, i.e. ambiguous attitudes relative to a particular indicator. The degree of leaning towards the far right (DoFR) will be determined by scaling, namely by the ratio of the sum of points obtained in individual categories to the total number of indicators in the table.

Table 2: *Sixteen 'far right indicators' (FRIx)*

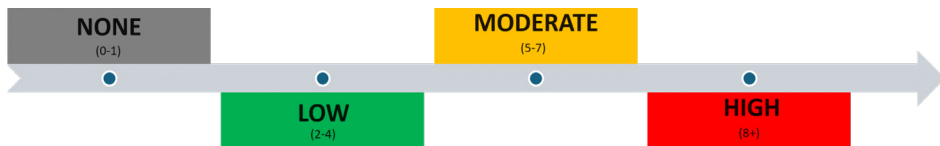
FRIs order	FRIs	Programme	Activity
1.	Ultrationalism	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
2.	Belief in a crisis threatening the nation	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
3.	A new order	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
4.	The spread of conspiracy theories	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
5.	Racial concept of the nation/ Ethnoculturalism	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
6.	Economic programme and social doctrine	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
7.	Historical continuity	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
8.	Anti-rationalism	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
9.	Struggle	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
10.	Leadership and elitism	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
11.	Socialism	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
12.	Anti-capitalism	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
13.	Corporatism and syndicalism	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)

14.	Permanent revolution	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
15.	Messianic mission	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
16.	Self-sufficiency	(1 – present, 0 – absent)	(1 – present, 0 – absent)
	The resulting DoFR score	(sum of indicators)	(sum of indicators)
		Low rate - from 5 to 8 Moderate - from 9 to 12 High rate - from 13 to 16	Low rate - from 5 to 8 Moderate - from 9 to 12 High rate - from 13 to 16
	Deviation	None - from 0 to 1 Low - from 2 to 4 Moderate - from 5 to 7 High - from 8	

Source: Authors based on Heywood (2008), O’Sullivan (2002), Griffin (2021), Papasarantopoulos (2023), Ganesh et al. (2020), Vicenová et al. (2022), Žúborová and Borarosová (2017), Kluknavská and Smolík (2016), Kazharski (2019).

The FRlx table indicating the degree of alignment with the DoFR’s right-wing stance contains a comparison of the presence of indicators between the official programme of the political entity and its public activities. The comparison is achieved by calculating the difference in scores in separate categories. This results in a deviation map that illustrates the consistency between the party’s official programme and the rhetoric of individual members on social networks and in the media space. The deviation is a quantitative representation of the degree of accommodation within the political system.

Picture 1: *FRlx- Based Deviation Rate*



Source: Authors

The scale determining the level of deviation is set more sensitively than the main measurement of the far-right inclination. In terms of content, each of the indicators examined represents relatively extensive areas of activity by a political entity and not their partial manifestations or aspects of activity. For this reason, we have set the degree of deviation rigidly in the sense that a value of 8 (out of a total number of 16 indicators) means a high deviation.

For example, deviation in an indicator ultranationalism represents a serious departure from the standard expressions of a democratic political actor, and the individual indicators are not indicators of democratic political parties (for example, according to Sartori), but are specific indicators expressing a leaning towards fascism (or to the far right), while respecting the set methodology.

In line with the established methodology, we concentrate on the comprehensive identification and analysis of pivotal indicators, which are represented in tabular form and quantified. The model presented will be applied in the research to the relevant far-right subject, namely the Republika movement. We also aim to provide a comprehensive descriptive narrative to complement the numerical data. This narrative will include an analytical assessment of trends identified and patterns and statistically significant differences, providing a deeper understanding and interpretation of the results in the context of the specific research interest.

A qualitative analysis of Republika's publications was conducted to ascertain the fundamental ideological stances of the political entities examined. This entailed a critique of the sources, coupled with an interpretation that considered the full range of contextual factors. The sources analysed primarily comprised party press, posts from the Facebook social network, recordings of speeches, photos, audio recordings and posts from the website archive. Furthermore, the subject of the analysis encompassed appearances of party representatives in the media, as well as videos sourced from the YouTube website. The key benefit of this approach is that the data is not susceptible to the potential errors or distortions that could arise from external influences. The analysis of sources from the far right-wing environment reveals that the documents examined are influenced by the ideological framework of their originator (Hendl, 2005, p. 133). We therefore believe that the qualitative analysis of documents is an effective method for clarifying basic ideological positions.

4 RESULTS

The main goal of this section is to introduce the results of the research defining the FRIx index as applied to the Republika movement based on the methodology outlined above, with a reasoning grounded in a theoretical framework and Republika's website and publications with an overview of basic values and vague political visions. As evidenced, a multiplicity of FRIs is sometimes present in a single statement.

The introductory information leaflet *Predstavujeme hnutie Republika*, (Hnutie Republika, 2021) explains the basic programmatic and ideological goals of the movement, which are based on ĽSNS's long-term priorities, and we have categorised them based on the FRIs above.

As illustrated in Table 5 below, Republika has continued the established trend of adapting far-right ideologies and narratives to align with the requirements of the democratic system. The fundamental objective of this programme is to avoid triggering the protective mechanisms of democracy, which would directly threaten the functioning of this political entity within the system. The current political system of the Slovak Republic is therefore undergoing a process of latent revision, during which far right-wing views are being presented. Republika's attitudes and opinions are aligned with legal norms and do not explicitly incite violence, in contrast to the original rhetoric of the ĽSNS.

Table 5: *The FRIx index applied to Republika (2021-2024)*

FRIs order	FRIs	Programme	Activity
1.	Ultranationalism	0	1
2.	Belief in a crisis threatening the nation	1	1
3.	A new order	0	1
4.	The spread of conspiracy theories	0	1
5.	Racial concept of the nation/ Ethnoculturalism	0	1
6.	Economic programme and social doctrine	1	1
7.	Historical continuity	0	1
8.	Anti-rationalism	0	0
9.	Struggle	0	0
10.	Leadership and elitism	0	0
11.	Socialism	0	0
12.	Anti-capitalism	0	0
13.	Corporatism and syndicalism	0	0
14.	Permanent revolution	0	0
15.	Messianic mission	1	1
16.	Self-sufficiency	1	1
	The resulting DoFR score	4/16= 0.25	9/16=0.56
	Deviation	5 - moderate	

Source: Authors

The ultra-nationalist Republika's nature is evidenced in their rhetoric by its rejection of the European Union and NATO, which *'are damaging both Europe and Slovakia through immigration, LGBTI+ and green policies'* and, as declared by the movement, are responsible for the outbreak of conflicts such as the one in Ukraine. At the same time, Republika will *'try to stop Brussels from accepting immigrants and forcing nonsense into our lives'*, with the ambition of pushing for a *'fundamental reform'* of the EU. Republika's official statements describe NATO as a relic, and its functioning is said *'to serve only as an extended arm of American interests in Europe'*, pushing Slovakia towards war with Russia. In the opening address of the Republika's leader, a negative attitude towards international organizations such as the EU and NATO is visible (FRIs 1, 16; Hnutie Republika, 2021).

A frequent theme is the appeal for *'absolute but decent change'* and the call to *'put your hand to work in saving and restoring our beautiful Slovakia.'* (FRIs 2, 15) Part of the opening page is also the vision to *'protect traditional, national and Christian values.'*

In this context, Republika fulfils another far right defining element, namely the belief that a crisis is threatening the nation (FRIs 2). They identify liberalism and *'perverted gender ideology'* as the primary external threat to Slovakia, emanating from Western Europe and the USA. The movement employs *'gender ideology'* to instil fear in the public about the potential risks of gender reassignment surgery, particularly the perceived risk of self-harm or mutilation.

Republika describes these influences as *'progressivism'*, perceived negatively. This is directly related to the movement's appeal to *'rescue and restore'* Slovakia, addressing the shortcomings that the system is unable to resolve (FRIs 3, 16).

Additionally, they disseminate conspiracy theories (FRIs, 4). Environmentalists, NGOs and the media, which are perceived to be influenced by Western oligarchs such as George Soros, are also regarded as adversaries. In their social media posts, the movement's negative stance towards liberalism and the non-governmental sector is highlighted as this sector is financially and ideologically influenced by George Soros, as declared by the movement. Republika, however, generally rejects the glorification of previous totalitarian regimes, although it has not specifically condemned Nazi and fascist ideology. In their brochure, attention is drawn to the *'totalitarian trends'* of the current establishment. The call for the *'rescue and restoration'* of Slovakia may be indicative of its anti-systemic nature, given the dissatisfaction expressed with current developments.

The far right's ideological foundation is further reinforced by the assertion that the first Slovak Republic (1939-1945) was a satellite of Nazi Germany, necessitating historical revisionism (FRIs, 5). In contrast to ĽSNS, the Republika movement employs a more moderate tone in its official communications and is inclined to accommodate the far right within the system. This is evident in their efforts to mitigate the negative legacy of the first Slovak Republic (1939-1945) and its president Jozef Tiso, while avoiding explicit mention of the Jewish issue: *'... many tragedies occurred during its existence ..., we consider this moment in history to be an undeniable historical milestone in the struggle for the self-determination of our nation... We view President Tiso as a leader who guided the nation through the most challenging period in human history. We believe that he did everything possible to protect Slovakia as much as possible in that difficult time.'* (Hnutie Republika, 2023b; (FRIs, 5). The official brochure presents a highly evasive stance on matters pertaining to the first Slovak Republic (1939-1945) and the Holocaust (Vražda, 2017). The movement maintains that *'people hold varying perspectives on historical events. Nevertheless, we will not tear ourselves apart and argue over them.'* It has a similarly ambiguous stance on the issue of mass murders. The text does not explicitly condemn the plan for the final solution of the Jewish question, but it does not deny the existence of the Holocaust, although there have been multiple accusations of Holocaust denial against Republika's representatives.

The movement's economic and social doctrine (FRIs 6) was presented in a consistent manner across the official programme and the rhetoric on social media.

Republika's negative attitudes towards minorities, migration and other nations and religions in their direct communication continuously emphasise the idea of national hegemony (FRIs 7). However, Milan Mazurek, the current Republika's vice chair, publicly apologised for the verbal attack on a Muslim family in 2015 (which he explained as the mistake of a youngster driven by anger; Osvaldová, 2021), although this apology only related to the form of the hatred towards foreigners presented and did not indicate any change in his stance to the acceptance of Islam as a religion. The movement has expressed concerns regarding the Roma people and the LGBTQ+ community. The Republika movement believes that the most appropriate way to resolve issues with *'settlers'* (i.e. Roma people) is to impose stricter penalties for breaking criminal and social norms with cuts in social benefits as one of the penalties suggested. Mazurek also accuses the LGBTQ+ community of promoting *'gender ideology'*, which he considers to be perverted, and he

regards any concerns about gender identity as a psychological disorder. The lack of public distancing from previous ĽSNS political views allows for a direct comparison of the rhetoric employed by Republika's representatives during their time in ĽSNS and then in Republika.

In conclusion, Republika has modified its stance on certain traditional mobilisation issues in order to gain broader societal support and in response to heightened scrutiny from state security and legal authorities. However, on social media, they have been vocal in their opposition to what they term as the *'ideology of liberalism'*. Yet despite their critical stance towards liberalism, the Republika movement does not officially oppose liberal democracy and supports the constitutionally enshrined establishment (Hnutie Republika, 2023a). Therefore, FRIs 8 – 14 show no deviation (value 0 in the programme and activities).

Individual Republikamembers provide examples of openly far-right rhetoric on unofficial proxy channels, including Kulturblog and Denník Republika. As a result of the regular moderation of these platforms, the content in question is regularly moved to new, unregulated social platforms, including Telegram, Rumble and Odysee, as discussed above. The original YouTube and Facebook accounts were removed on multiple occasions for violating the terms of the community (O médiách, 2022). Republika's members frequently present strongly-held opinions in a satirical manner, effectively avoiding prosecution and the blocking of web domains. However, this satirical approach was also employed during election campaigns (2023, 2024) and for promoting the Republika movement's positions (Dale, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study analysed the discourse of the most prominent representatives of the Republika movement, whose members have been active in the Slovak far-right environment for a considerable period of time. It is notable that they (to the date) declare themselves to be democratic, which suggests that there may be a discrepancy between the official form of the movement and its internal ideological basis.

Following an in-depth analysis of sources on their political attitudes, this study presents a new conceptualisation of the far right in the shape of an index measuring leaning towards far-right ideology in Slovakia. This index reflects the political activity and ideological framework of Republika, which is in line with that of its predecessor, ĽSNS party. To gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter, a qualitative document analysis was

conducted to provide a detailed clarification of Republika's political thinking, activity and establishment.

Kolman's (2021) concept of 'accommodation' was tested on a movement other than his original research subject, ĽSNS party, thus confirming the validity of his theoretical conclusion (Kolman, 2021). Our research has enriched Kolman's theoretical framework with the introduction of FRIx, which in future will also allow researchers to measure the degree of adaptation of originally non-democratic political subjects to the democratic conditions of political and electoral competition, referred to as accommodation. This index provides a nuanced approach to identifying subtle shifts and patterns that traditional methods might overlook. By analysing various indicators, the FRIx index helps to uncover the underlying ideologies that far-right entities attempt to conceal. Consequently, it plays a crucial role in safeguarding democratic principles by exposing efforts to undermine them from within. This study makes a contribution to the research and discussion on the potential ways that far-right entities can effectively implement their political programmes on an official level even in democratically constituted and functioning institutions.

This research identifies the discrepancy between Republika's declared programme ('programme') and its rhetoric ('activity'), which contains the ideological basis of the far right. Based on the deviation identified, the authors confirm the achievement of the set goal and present the real ideological profiling of the subject as being far right for the period 2021-2024. This finding, through the deviation measured, also allows us to identify a form of *accommodation by an anti-system/undemocratically positioned subject to the conditions of democratic competition*, in an active form. Such accommodation ensures that the democratic system does not resort to legal action against them, thereby highlighting the fragility of the democratic process.

The accommodative far right in the democratic system is defined by an integrally nationalist concept of the nation. This is achieved through the use of value-based traditionalist principles and historical myths, with the aim of building a homogeneous society that will ensure the future survival of the nation in today's globalised and multicultural world. Concurrently, there is a demarcation against liberalism, which is perceived through the lens of the penetration of foreign elements into society, resulting in a perceived decline in racial and moral standards. There is no open questioning of the system of representative democracy, only a tactical criticism of the system's shortcomings that the system is unable to address in the long term. By employing this approach, it is feasible for such entities to disrupt the system from within and establish a legal alternative.

One of the additional outcomes of the research is the confirmation of Kolman's concept (2021), which identifies a further far-right period, namely the *accommodation period*. In light of the above, we propose a *three-phase model for the evolution of the far right* in Slovakia, after 1989, based on a set of defining characteristics.

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