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Slovakia's Fico Says Country Must Prepare for Normalization With Russia

On November 30, Slovakia's left-wing and anti-globalist prime minister Robert Fico said that his country must "prepare for the period after the end of the war in Ukraine and the normalization of Slovak-Russian relations."

Speaking to both the U.S. and Russian ambassadors to Slovakia in Bratislava, Fico said that while Slovak foreign policy was impacted by its membership in both the EU and NATO, it still harbors certain "sovereign positions."

These stances "are not always in line with the policy of one single correct opinion promoted in the European Union," Fico added.

Fico's priority in the sphere of foreign policy is to enable "the protection and promotion of Slovak national interests," which back "peace initiatives," and not conflict in Ukraine.

Fico's statements were bound to incense many of his partners in NATO and the EU, according to observers. Moreover, Fico's remarks, which came alongside virulent criticism of the American and EU strategy toward Ukraine, followed meetings with U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia Gautam Rana and Russian Ambassador to Slovakia Igor Bratčikov on November 30, as per [reports](#) by the Slovakian newspaper *Hospodárske Noviny*.

Fico, whose SMER party won the parliamentary [elections](#) on September 30 this year on an election platform that promised to immediately cease all military aid to Ukraine, has effectively digressed from his EU and NATO allies in hinting that Slovak-Russian relations will be regularized after the end of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

By October 11, the SMER party had set up a [coalition](#) government with the left-wing Hlas party and the ultra-nationalist Slovak National Party.

In early November, the newly appointed Slovak government refused to deploy a €40.3 million (\$43.2 million) military aid package for Ukraine that had been suggested by its predecessor.

Under its former government, Slovakia supplied Ukraine with widespread humanitarian and military assistance including artillery, fighter jets, and other support.

"The Slovak Republic is a member state of the EU and NATO, which naturally affects our foreign policy priorities. On the other hand, it cannot limit us in sovereign positions, which are not always in line with the policy of one single correct opinion promoted by the European Union," Fico [wrote](#) in a social media post.

During the meetings, Fico also outlined the national priorities of his left-sovereignist government and



AP Images
Robert Fico



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his views regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, perspectives which mirror those of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Reinforcing statements made time and time again by Orbán, the latest of which [came in Switzerland](#) days ago, Fico declared that he, too, regarded the strategy pursued by the EU and United States in Ukraine as a blatant failure.

Similarly, during an [interview](#) with Bloomberg's editor-in-chief John Micklethwait at the Qatar Economic Forum in [Doha](#) on May 23 this year, Orbán stated that the West should concentrate on ceasefire negotiations between Kyiv and Moscow rather than weapons shipments to Ukraine to fight against Russia to avert further bloodshed.

"Looking at the reality, looking at the surroundings, looking at the fact that NATO is not ready to send troops, it's obvious that there is no victory for the poor Ukrainians on the battlefield," the Hungarian prime minister said during the Bloomberg interview.

Furthermore, Fico contended that his intended foreign policy "protects and promotes Slovak national-state interests," which he said included the "support of peace initiatives and not war in Ukraine."

Fico's statements after a state visit to the Czech Republic — a staunch military supporter of Ukraine — on November 24, where he [referred](#) to the Russia-Ukraine crisis as a "frozen conflict" that cannot be solved militarily.

Known for his views that, like Orbán's, often went against the mainstream EU narrative regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Fico, after assuming the office of prime minister, [proclaimed](#) that Slovakia would "no longer supply weapons to Ukraine" and would only deploy humanitarian aid to Kyiv.

"I will support zero military aid to Ukraine.... An immediate halt to military operations is the best solution we have for Ukraine," he said.

Earlier this month, nonetheless, Fico said that his government would not ban weapons exports to Ukraine by [private defense companies](#).

"We have communicated very clearly and I want to communicate — we are talking about weapons, about ammunition from Slovak army storage, about state material. When some company wants to make weapons and send them somewhere, nobody is going to obstruct that," Fico said after his first meeting with Slovak Defense Minister Robert Kaliňák.

Meanwhile, in mid November, Štefan Kuffa, the state secretary of Slovakia's culture ministry, pledged to make Jesus Christ the king of Slovakia during a speech at a Catholic basilica during a Mass and urged the Catholic Church in his country to back his suggestions.

Kuffa, a member of the nationalist-conservative Slovak National Party, which is a junior partner in the present Fico government, stated that he hoped to see Jesus Christ installed as king and vowed to make this notion a reality, according to a [report](#) by the Slovakian newspaper *Pravda*.

"On behalf of the Ministry of Culture, we give a promise ... that we will be the ones who will initiate to achieve as soon as possible that Christ the King will be enthroned and become the king of Slovakia," Kuffa said.

However, the Slovak Bishops' Conference replied to the proposal saying, "The Slovak Bishops' Conference distances itself from the words spoken by the representative of the Ministry of Culture during the Trnava Novena, which is prepared annually by the Trnava Archdiocese."

The Bishop's Conference also slammed Kuffa for making the proposal within the St. Nicholas Basilica,



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saying, “The temple is a place of prayer and should not be a place for appeals that divide believers. Mixing a political agenda with a spiritual word provokes resentment and negative reactions that we understand.”

At first, the Mass was broadcast online but was taken down from social-media networks only to be uploaded later with the 10 minutes of Kuffa’s speech cut out from the broadcast.

Opposition politicians [were](#) riled by Kuffa’s remarks, including Alojz Hlina, an independent MP elected on the liberal SASKA list.

“I’m horrified by it. I really do not want that. May they give holy peace to the churches, all these traffickers with faith,” Hlina said.

František Majerský of the Christian Democrats added, “I am also surprised that he was given the opportunity in the church to comment on political matters, it absolutely does not belong there.”

Former Slovakian Deputy Prime Minister Veronika Remišová of the liberal pro-European For the People Party also slammed Kuffa, [saying](#), “It has never happened before that a high-ranking politician preached at a Holy Mass and misused the church grounds for his political purposes.”

The Ministry of Culture was also not overly eager to back Kuffa, writing a statement saying, “This initiative has been considered by the Ministry of Culture from the beginning as a private activity of State Secretary Stefan Kuffa.”

Declaring Jesus Christ as king is not an unprecedented move in Europe. In 2016, the Polish government [declared Christ king](#) at a ceremony at the Church of Divine Mercy in Kraków.

Polish Catholics across the country came together to pray a prayer to install Christ as king, stating, “In our hearts, rule us, Christ! In our families, rule us, Christ!... In our schools and universities, rule us, Christ!... Through the Polish nation, rule us, Christ!... We pledge to defend Your holy worship and preach Thy royal glory, Christ our King, we promise!”

Like Poland, Slovakia is a majority-Catholic country with an estimated three million Roman Catholics, about [56 percent of the country’s population](#) based on figures from the EU. A total of approximately 3.8 million Slovaks deem themselves religious, with just 111,000 of them being non-Christian.

The statistics also revealed, however, that the number of Catholics within the country has fallen since 2001 by nearly 700,000.



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