CEE

National identity
in CEE coutnries

Case study
Slovakia

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Introduction

Changes in the European socio-political landscape in the past 20 years such as expansion and deepening integration of the EU and immigration has once again drawn the attention to the issues of ethnic and national identities. Changing social context of the population of Europe has posed certain challenges to the old identities of the nation-states particularly Central European ones defined in the 19th century by ethnic and cultural principles rather than civic and territorial ones.[1] In the recent years, Slovakia has been actively adopting nation-building policies thus continuing the construction of the state in ethnic terms. Such policies are in line with the widely accepted foundational myth of a state of ethnic Slovaks who share common culture, history, language, past, present and future and who were finally able to establish their own state after centuries of subjugation from other nations, primarily Hungarians. Historical argumentation is used not only as a means to construct Slovak national identity but had also political meaning of constructing relations with Hungary and Hungarian minority in Slovakia.[2] Currently, no political party dares to counter such arguments of the nationalists in order not to be ostracised. Most political representatives shift their attitudes to the issue of Slovak-Hungarian relations to the 'middle'. Any party or organization that takes the side of Hungarians in a dispute becomes suspicious immediately.[3]

This paper adopts the position that conceptualizes nation as a social construct. According to Anderson[4] nations are imagined political communities existing in the minds and memories of the nationalized subjects (individuals) and should be thought of in constructivist rather than essentialist manner. One cannot 'have' a nationality in the essentialist sense; nation is neither natural, nor genetically or biologically determined attribute that one is born with. Calhoun[5] argues that nation exists only when individuals share certain representations and interpretations of a community and perceive themselves through the framework of belonging to a community called nation that is attributed autonomy and other rights. For a nation to exist there must be a consensus on the content of the nation and national identity.

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[1] De Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (1999). The discursive construction of national identities. *Discourse & Society, 10 (2),* 149-173.

[2] Zelenák, P. (2005). Kontroverzné roviny slovensko-maďarských vzťahov v 20.storočí. In A. Simon (Ed.), *Mýty a predsudky v dejinách* (pp.13-22). Šamorín-Dunajská Streda: Fórum inštitút pre výskum menšín- Lilium Aurum.

[3] In 2008, Open Society Foundation published a research study indicating that attitudes of primary school children towards Hungarians and Hungarian language have worsened. The then government of Robert Fico claimed the research was manipulated in order to serve the interests of foreign agents. C.f. Petöcz, K. (2009). Najčastejšie stereotypné tvrdenia týkajúce sa slovensko-maďarských vzťahov, využívané v národno-populistickej rétorike. In K. Petöcz (Ed.), *Národný populizmus na Slovensku a slovensko-maďarské vzťahy* (pp. 255-281). Šamorín: Fórum inštitút pre výskum menšín.

[4] Anderson, B. (1991). Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. London and New York: Verso.

[5] Calhoun, C. (1997). Nationalism. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

It is important to say that the present paper is not aspiring to be an exhaustive analysis of the political discourses on national identity. It is merely a pilot exploration striving to sketch the major issues related to the construction of national identity in the political discourses.

Methodology

This paper is based on a critical discourse analysis (CDA) as defined by Wodak[6] who conceptualizes discourse as both being shaped by and shaping the social practices. Situational, institutional and social settings shape discourses and at the same time discourses influence discursive as well as non-discursive social and political processes. The paper is based only on analysis of available online documents created and published by the relevant political parties. It was decided that only texts publicly shared by the party and/or party members will be analysed since they are most representative of what the party wishes to communicate. The database thus includes mainly blogs by several party members, articles published on party websites and transcripts of public speeches shared via parties' websites or social networks. While we recognise that it is of utmost importance to analyse also the form of message (whether it is a blog or a public speech) it is outside the scope of the present analysis and would merit a separate analysis.

Only selected political parties were analysed – SMER-SD (ruling party) and opposition parties SDKU-DS (Christian and Democratic Union – Democratic Party), SaS (Freedom and Solidarity), Most/Híd, KDH (Christian Democratic Movement) and OĽaNO (Common People and Independent Personalities).

Public speeches were transcribed verbatim. All texts were then read and re-read in order to identify dominant topics associated with the nation, nationhood, national identity. In the course of this initial analysis three dominant topics were identified: Slovaks as a constituting nation and its relation to national minorities, historical myths and traditions and nation-building initiatives and Slovakia in the international community. The analysis was then focused on the strategies of the topics' communication, (re)production and re-interpretation by relevant political party. Not all selected parties endorsed each of the identified topics which is why only relevant parties' discourses on each of the topics are mentioned. The focus lied upon insinuations, meanings and the ideological statements based on the content: What notion and understanding of nation, national identity and the Other respective acts convey? How are the relations between the nation (in-group) and the Other (out-group) constructed?[7]

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[6] Wodak, R. (2001). What CDA is about- a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 1-13). London, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.

[7] Jäger, S. (2001). Discourse and knowledge: theoretical and methodological aspects of a critical discourse and dispositive analysis. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 32-62). London, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.

I) Slovaks as the constituting nation and national minorities

Previous analyses revealed that legislative political discourse conveys national identity in Slovakia as a tangible identity and strives to elicit emotional attachment to the constituting nation, i.e. ethnic Slovaks while conceptualising national minorities as someone who just "tags along." The very core of the Slovak legislation, the Constitution, is itself composed in a manner explicitly manifesting essentialist conceptualisation of the nation:

"We, the Slovak nation, bearing in mind the political and cultural heritage of our ancestors and the centuries of experience from the struggles for **national existence** *and our own statehood, mindful of the spiritual heritage of Cyril and Methodius and the historical legacy of Great Moravia recognizing the* **natural right of nations** *to self-determination,(...)"*[8] (emphasis added)

The constituting nation thus asserts its positive distinctiveness via asserting its dominance over national minorities.[9] The present analysis also confirmed that particularly SMER-SD construes nation as a tangible entity with human agencies – will to act and a capacity to think and make decisions.

"From the whole declaration of the sovereignty shines first and foremost the courage and determination that the Slovak nation has decided to establish its own state – free and democratic Slovak Republic."[10]

The nation thus isn't something that people create or constitute; it is rather an entity existing on its own in some objective reality. People do not have national identity; the national identity simply exists and includes some people while excluding others based on its nature. On the other hand, SDKU-DS construes the nation rather as a community that has its representatives speaking and acting on its behalf (*"Legitimately elected political representatives showed the will to re-define the constitutional arrangement."*).[11]

Ethnic plurality has been proved to be a concept that some political elites (mainly SMER-SD and their former coalition partner Slovak National Party) refuse as it poses a risk of the state's

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[8] Preamble to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, Act No. 460/1992 Coll. the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.
[9] c.f. Chudžíková, A. (2011). National Identity in the Political Discourse in Slovakia. *Romanian Sociology, IX (1),* 110-127.
[10] The Prime Minister's Speech commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Slovak Republic. Available at http://www.vlada.gov.sk/slovensko-si-pripomenulo-20-vyrocie-prijatia-deklaracie-o-zvrchovanosti-sr/.
[11] Frešo, P. (2012). Pripomínať si treba 17. júl, ale aj 1. január a 28. október. Available at http://www.sdku-ds.sk/article/showArticle/pripominat-si-treba-17-jul-ale-aj-1-januar-a-28-oktober.

authority fragmentation. Ethnic homogeneity is thus a norm that some political elites strive to achieve. Due to their distinct ethnic identity minorities are conceptualised as a deviation from this norm.[12]

Our moral selves vs. their moral decay

According to Tajfel[13], maintenance of a positive group identity is the prime driver of intergroup relations. This is achieved via intergroup comparison on relevant dimensions. Positive distinctiveness of the nation (the in-group) is achieved via comparison with most visible national minorities, i.e. the Roma and Hungarians. Visibility of the Roma lies in the fact that this is a population group that is worst off in the country living in extreme poverty and segregated ghettos. Hungarians, on the other hand, are at the same socio-economic level as the majority and are politically mobilised striving to assert their distinct national identity. Their political mobilisation is, however, perceived as a threat to the state's territorial integrity due to the turbulent history of Slovak-Hungarian relations. However, it seems that political elites are only able to be concerned with one minority at a time. It was revealed that polarisation between "us" and "them" was the means of maintaining positive group identity, particularly with respect to the Roma.[14]

Such discourse on minorities was confirmed also in the present analysis. However, there were no specific mentions of the Hungarian minority in the collected data but substantial attention was paid to the Roma.

The relations between the ethnic majority (i.e. the constituting nation) and the national minorities are constructed via sink-or-swim perspective. That is, any minority rights are at the expense of the majority's rights:

"It is a strange tendency that problems of minorities are intentionally emphasized at the expense of the constituting nation. As if Slovaks didn't even live in Slovakia. In twenty years we have built an independent and democratic Slovak Republic that provides equal opportunities to all, that does not prefer anybody neither does it trivialise anyone's rights. I wish that minority rights are no longer used for blackmailing; it doesn't matter if it's a Roma minority, people with different orientation, minority with a different worldview or ethnic minority. The state is national and the society is civic. We did not found our independent state for national minorities, no matter how much we esteem them, but first and foremost for the Slovak nation because it was the Slovaks

[12]   Chudžíková, A. (2012). Minorities in the Political Discourse. In Jarmila Lajčáková (ed.), *Minority Policy in Slovakia in 2011. Annual Report.* Bratislava: CVEK. Available at http://cvek.sk/uploaded/files/Minority%20policy%20in%20Slovakia%20in%202011_Annual%20Report.pdf.

[13]   Tajfel (1981). Human Groups and Social Categories. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

[14]   *Supra* note 12

who could not nurture their skills and talents in the former Czechoslovakia. It is fashionable to see only gimmes from the minorities but no obligations to the state; rather outstretched hands but minimum civic virtues."[15]

The PM's quote contains several key representations of minorities and the majority in Slovakia. First of all, these two groups are put in a stark contrast by evoking minorities' privileged status which is at the expense of the ethnic majority. Such myth of oppression is further corroborated by the emphasis on the Slovaks' subjugated status in the former Czechoslovakia which implies that dominant position in the state is their prerogative deserved by decades of servitude. Minority claims are here presented as if minorities were trying to undermine the just nature of the independent Slovak Republic as they want special treatment, special privileges that would negate the equality of opportunities that the PM presents as an essence of the Slovak Republic. By emphasizing that minorities only take but do not give the PM suggest their parasitism on the good will of the constituting nation. Minorities are thus construed as a threat to the state's very nature. By saying that *"we did not found our independent state for national minorities"* it is implied that members of national minorities are perceived as second-class citizens with a patronizing show of respect *("no matter how much we esteem them")*.

Defining relations between the majority and minorities in ethnic terms is almost exclusively typical for social democratic party SMER-SD. In comparison, current opposition parties such as SDKU-DS and SaS, parties of the right political spectrum although the former is more conservative and the latter more liberal, is not concerned with minorities *per se,* but mainly with the Roma.

Political elites often use the term "Roma problem" or "solution to the Roma problem" which is sometimes accompanied by a mention of exaggerative political correctness: *"We use vocabulary that is so politically correct that it actually prevents us from precisely describing the problem."*[16] OĽaNO that brought the first Roma MP into the parliament, for instance, tends to emphasize that measures of their proposed so called "Roma Reform" are not based on one's ethnicity but are aimed on Roma as well as non-Roma. [17] Nonetheless, the document is called Roma Reform and was introduced by the government plenipotentiary for Roma communities. Moreover, the OĽaNO proposals pertaining to the Roma are based on several of their MPs' tour across Roma settlements.[18]

[15]   The Prime Minister's Speech at the conference "Matica slovenská in the National History", 26.02.2013. Available at http://www.vlada.gov.sk/robert-fico-na-konferencii-matica-slovenska-v-narodnych-dejinach/.
[16]   Sulík, R. (2012). Riešenie rómskeho problému – práca dospelým, vzdelanie deťom. Available at http://richardsulik.blog.sme.sk/c/309621/Riesenie-romskeho-problemu-praca-dospelym-vzdelanie-detom.html.
[17]   Pollák, P. (2012). Mať práva ale aj povinnosti zákony dodržiavať. Available at http://peterpollak.blog.sme.sk/c/316324/Mat-prava-ale-aj-povinnosti-zakony-dodrziavat.html
[18]   Matovič, I. (2012). Tour de Roma – 14 postrehov jedného Gadža a jedného Cigána. Available at http://matovic.blog.sme.sk/c/304210/Tour-de-Roma-14-postrehov-jedneho-Gadza-a-jedneho-Cigana.html

The Roma are across the political spectrum framed either as a subject in the need of a helping hand due to their social backwardness (KDH[19]) or as the conflict between the "decent law abiding and tax-paying citizens" and the "maladjusted fellow-citizens" (partly SDKU-DS, OĽaNO, SaS).

Somewhat missionary discourse of KDH suggests the party's assumption of Roma's inferiority even though on the other hand they value distinct Roma cultural identity including the language. This might imply the party's respect for a God's creation.

The conflict discourse is mainly based on the negative representations of Roma that are aggravated by the use of hyperboles when describing the minority's negative attributes and actions, while negative actions of the in-group are downplayed and trivialised. The in-group is thus constructed as morally superior while the minority is immoral. Significant comodification was identified with respect to the Roma in the discourses of both parties – i.e. a person's (or a group's) value as a human being is contingent upon the extent to which they are usable.

"I see the only solution in starting with small children all the while respecting there is going to be some generation of Roma fellow-citizens – with all due respect to those who normally work and take care of themselves – respecting that there already is a generation that is hardly usable."[20]

First, the term "fellow-citizens" is in the public discourse almost exclusively applied to the Roma. Similarly to the assertions of national minorities contained in the Preamble of the Constitution, Roma are construed as someone who "tags along" the full-fledged citizens, i.e. lower value of Roma is implied. This is further corroborated by the PM's emphasis on the respect to those who *"normally work"* which suggests who is worthy of the state's respect – those who work and take care of themselves. The PM thus implies individualism and meritocratic approach towards one's status in the society. Interestingly enough for a social-democratic party, with respect to the Roma, unemployment is conceptualised as an individual failure. The PM expects the Roma to *"normally work and take care of themselves"* to deserve the state's respect while the party promises people the state's protection and promotes that *"people deserve social security."* [21] It seems that social security is not universal and with respect to Roma even social-democratic party practices meritocracy as is the case of SDKU-DS and SaS.

"There is hardly doubt about the fact that Roma settlements, their way of life and solutions to this problems are a serious issue...Through various allowances welfare benefits reached the amount of a salary. For many people it was not worth going to work any longer. But on the other

19   Mikloško, J. (2013). Rómovia, horúci zemiak Európy. Available at
http://jozefmiklosko.blog.sme.sk/c/343733/Romovia-horuci-zemiak-Slovenska-a-Europy.html
20   The discussion of the Prime Minister with the students of the College of Economy and Public Administration Management in Bratislava. Available at http://www.vlada.gov.sk/robert-fico-prednasal-studentom-o-slovensku-v-eu-diskutovali-aj-o-romskej-otazke/
21   The Programme Manifesto of SMER-SD. Available at http://www.strana-smer.sk/3239/nas-program

hand, there was a baby boom and natality in Roma settlements became a money making business....We need to apply the same duties for all including welfare benefit recipients. Today it is not the case. And first and foremost, we have to stop paying for giving birth to babies."[22]

Even though the SaS party mainly construes long-term unemployment as an individual failure it also implicitly acknowledges the fact that socially excluded Roma have fewer opportunities to find employment. This is corroborated by the party's proposals of a "trade for aid" programme, i.e. securing job opportunities for a minimal wage for those who are currently claiming social benefits. Te programme is justified by the right to work and the state's obligation to ensure that this right is observed.

Stereotypes about the Roma and their *"life style"* circulating in the public discourses are presented as universal truths also by the PM: *"It is impossible that Roma families -and we all know it, I am telling you very openly – have so many children just as a source of money"*.[23] The current *status quo* or Roma life style is described as being financed by the hard-working and tax-paying majority. In this so called social contract Roma are construed as the ones who chose such life style in return for not bothering the ethnic majority.[24] Furthermore, the fact that political elites from their position of authority use these stereotypes as arguments in advocating their political stances legitimizes the stereotypes and lends them substantial credibility. Well known stereotypes about Roma's alleged caginess further suggest enormous demographic growth (*"baby boom")* and the risk of them overtaking public administration on the local level (*"We have municipalities where the number of Roma fellow-citizens is significantly higher than the number of the remaining population. If they take control of these municipalities they can elect their own mayors, members of local councils. This is a situation that can happen."*[25]). Particularly the latter (Roma taking over public administration) pinpoints the bottom line of the overall majority-minority relations, i.e. stereotypes and the distribution of power. The fear of Roma governing some municipalities is rooted in the assumption that all Roma are "maladjusted" and incapable of running a municipality - such situation could only result in catastrophe. At the same time, there would have to be a substantial power redistribution which would inevitably disrupt the *status quo* and the dominance of the constituting nation.

Interestingly, SDKU-DS does not stand united on the issues of the Roma minority and various discourses were identified even within this party. The most obvious split occurred after two SKDU-DS MPs introduced their bill on demolition of the so called 'black constructions'. As a venue for their press conference they chose an impoverished Roma settlement suggesting that their primary motive is to deal with so called illegal Roma dwellings. The bill ensued from them ignoring the structural roots of Roma exclusion and origins of Roma settlements and expressed their assumption that Roma

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[22]   Kaník, Ľ. (2012). Necigáňte, pán premier. Available at http://moje.hnonline.sk/node/10510
[23]   *Supra* note 20.
[24]   *Supra* note 16.
[25]   *Supra* note 20.

deliberately build houses and shacks on other people's private property.[26] Only a minority of SDKU-DS MPs refused such proposals:

"I declare a personal boycott of all better or worse opposition bills that will solve the Roma problem in Slovakia by a wave of a hand. Don't take it personally but I am no longer willing to participate in this fratricidal struggle (for a better or a worse, a more or a less radical, a comprehensive or a non-comprehensive bill) while being quietly watched by amused SMER MPs. The right has always had courage to enforce big and often unpopular measures. But it has never intentionally incited negative emotions."[27]

The MP refused the radicalisation of the opposition's rhetoric and introduction of shortcut solutions.[28] Use of these discourses within a single party, their interactions and negotiations would merit a separate research and is outside the scope of the present analysis.

The only party that somewhat refrains from generalizations and homogenization of the Roma population is the Most/Híd which endorses ethnic diversity and is in fact mainly composed of members of Hungarian minority. In the 2012 parliamentary elections, several Roma were on their ballot but did not make it to the parliament. The Most/Híd party has recently drafted a strategic document Vision 2016 which addresses social exclusion of a significant proportion of Roma population while avoiding overt stereotypisation and overgeneralisations.[29]

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[26]   Kaník, Ľ. (2013). Máme sa tváriť, že čierne stavby a krádeže poemkov nevidíme? Available at http://ludovitkanik.blog.sme.sk/c/333860/Mame-sa-tvarit-ze-cierne-stavby-a-kradeze-pozemkov-nevidime.html

[27]   Žitňanská, L. (2012). Všetkým mojim opozičným kolegom. Available at http://zitnanska.blog.sme.sk/c/310064/Vsetkym-mojim-opozicnym-kolegom.html

[28]   Beblavý, M. (2012). Médiá: Rómovia rozdelili SDKÚ, Žitňanská štrajkuje. Available at http://www.beblavy.sk/2012/10/media-romovia-rozdelili-sdku-zitnanska-strajkuje/

[29]   Most/Híd (2014). Vízia 2016: Politika riešenia chudoby a rómska politika. Available at http://www.most-hid.sk/sites/default/files/spravy-files/most-hid_vizia_2016_-_politika_riesenia_chudoby_a_romska_politika.pdf

II) Historical myths and traditions in nation building initiatives

The data revealed that numerous references to historical myths and traditions are particularly important in nation building initiatives. Within this area several main topics were identified serving as strategies conveying particular representations of national identity in the two party's discourses.

The concepts of nation and national identity asserted by SMER-SD and SDKU-DS differ substantially. While SMER-SD construes the nation in ethnic terms, SDKU-DS uses terms such as "population" and "citizens" when referring to the nation. In their discourse nation is conceptualised rather in geo-political terms than in ethnic. When referring to history, SDKU-DS usually traces the roots of Slovakia to events associated with civic as opposed to ethnic events, e.g. establishment of the first Czechoslovakia and of the independent Slovak Republic. Some of the strategies described below are not featured in the SDKU-DS discourse at all.

The myth of subjugation and endangered existence

As mentioned earlier, the very core of the Slovak legislation, the Preamble of the Constitution, asserts the dominant status of the Slovak nation. In his speech at the conference of Matica slovenská in February 2013 the PM conveyed a representation of the Slovak nation that seems to summarise all its key dimensions that are more or less obviously manifested in legislation and public policies pertaining to (not only) minorities.

"I understand what this unique cultural and social institution has done for the Slovak nation. Because, not only did she save the Slovaks from extinction but Matica slovenská resurrected our nation."

Matica slovenská, as one of the national symbols, prevented the 'death' of the nation which is conceptualised as an inevitable result of the centuries of oppression and subjugation by other nations within the Autro-Hungarian Empire. This also puts the nation in the position of a moral winner who prevailed despite all the wrongs and injustices done by its rulers (i.e. Hungarians and later also the Czechs) which gives it certain privileges. After centuries of being wronged the time has come to excerise the natural right to found the nation state in which the dominant status lies with the constituting nation. The nation state is a reward that cannot be denied.

Divinity of the nation

The status of the 'chosen' nation is further corroborated by using references to the divine, e.g. *resurrection of the nation* or *national prophets.* SMER-SD also elaborates the spatial dimension of the national identity by evoking places in which several key historical events took places. These are almost exclusively associated with the Great Moravia and the so called old Slovaks which is, however, a historically incorrect term.[30] All these places are ascribed a divine nature, e.g. *sacred Devín* or *sacred days* which, again, is a means to confirm the privileged position of the ethnic majority and its claims. Tracing the national identity back to the roots of **Christianity** the PM confirms the 'holiness' of nation and thus legitimacy of its claims. Christianity is an important source of national identity also for SDKU-DS although in this respect the nation is not construed in ethnic terms but rather as a part of a larger European community whose origins are rooted in Christianity.

"With a great awe the SDKU-DS noted the information on objections of the European Commission to the portrayal of Constantin and Method that is to be placed on a two-euro coin. Based on this requirement the halos and crosses are to be removed from the draft portrayal. The Commission's statement calls for religious neutrality. It is entirely incomprehensible to us how it is possible that in Europe which is undoubtedly built on Christian foundations it is a problem to portray figures that are parts of Christianity and that are undoubtedly parts of cultural and spiritual heritage of not only Slovakia but the whole Europe."[31]

Even though there are certain similarities with regard to the status of Christianity in the history of Slovakia, SDKU-DS clearly construes the nation in more geo-political terms while SMER-SD refers to the Christianity as a means of developing the language and culture of the 'old Slovaks'. Language, moreover, is another important source of national identity that is even subject to special protection. Reference to Christianity as an inherent attribute of the Slovak nation also excludes all those who profess different religious beliefs. References to Christianity and common Great Moravian history thus create an ethno-space and suggest ethnic definition of the Slovak nation.

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[30] Svätopluk, one of the sovereigns of the Great Moravia (9th century A.D.), is often referred to as the „King of Old Slovaks" which is historically incorrect; Svätopluk was neither a king nor did he reign Old Slovaks who at the time could be hardly labelled a consistent community. Slovaks before 1850 could only be described as ethnic category, not as an ethnic community. Despite these severe inconsistencies the term „Old Slovaks" is widely used in the political discourse in Slovakia when referring to the common national ancestry (see for instance the dispute over SMER-SD's installation of the statue of 'Svätopluk- the King of Old Slovaks' at the Bratislava castle. C.f. Smith, A.D. (1991). National Identity. London: Penguin Books; Kováčová, M., Piško, M. (2010). Svätopluk pritiahol dve demonštrácie. *SME,* [Online] (Last updated at 21:18 on 4 August 2010) Available at < http://www.sme.sk/c/5492168/svatopluk-pritiahol-dve-demonstracie.html > [Accessed on 11 May 2011].

[31] Kaník, Ľ. (2012). Nesmieme vytrhávať korene našej histórie! Available at http://www.sdku-ds.sk/article/showArticle/sdku-ds-nesmieme-vytrhavat-korene-nasej-historie

Patriotism as a source of morals

Affectionate attachment to the nation is seen as a means of preventing moral decay since the nation is construed as pure and moral. SMER-SD construes the patriotism in ethnic terms tracing its roots back to the emancipatory struggles of Slovaks in the 19th century when „*Matica slovenská saved the Slovaks from extinction*" and since then *"she watches over the patriotism."*[32] Matica slovenská as one of the major national symbols is thus an important source of national identity. Finell & Liebkind[33] define national symbols as emotionally loaded material object that are used to make abstract notions visible. All state symbols in Slovakia are ethnically laden and rooted in the historical myth of a 'thousand-year-struggle' of the Slovak nation for independence from either Hungarians or Czechs referring to the shared memories of the putative Slovak nation. As Duckitt[34] proposed ethnocentric patriotism is associated with insecure group identification which encompasses greater need for distancing one's group from others. Such affective attachment to the nation thus can result in internalisation of antagonistic attitudes and behavioural dispositions towards members of the relevant out-groups. The ethnic dimension of patriotism is also corroborated in the notion of the unity of Slovaks living all around the world. Nation is thus not tied to borders or political community but is rather based on the 'blood' principle. In comparison, SDKU-DS asserts the nation in its civic terms:

> *"The patriotism must unite not divide the citizens of Slovakia."*[35]

Following ethnic rather than political principle in constituting the state is in fact incompatible with basic principles of constitutionalism, i.e. equality of all citizens, and with liberal democracy.[36] Again, further analysis is needed in order to explore how these distinct discourses are negotiated, for instance in parliamentary debates.

III) Slovakia in the international community

Both SMER-SD and SDKU-DS concurred in the construction of a success story of the Slovak Republic. But while SDKU-DS conceptualizes Slovakia in a geo-political sense, the SMER-SD discourse

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[32]   *Supra* note 15; The Prime Minister's Speech at the Celebratory Event Commemorating 1150th Anniversary of the Arrival of Constantine and Method to Slovakia. Available at http://www.snn.sk/index.php/slovensko/1651-budovanie-statu-je-nasa-stala-uloha

[33]   Finell, E., & Liebkind, K. (2010). National symbols and distinctiveness: Rhetorical strategies in creating distinct national identities. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 49,* 321-341.

[34]   Duckitt, J. (1989). Authoritarianism and Group Identification: A New View of an Old Construct. *Political Psychology, 10,* 63-84.

[35]   *Supra* note 11

[36]   Plichtová, J. Lášticová, B., & Petrjánošová, M. (2009). Konštruovanie slovenskosti vo verejnom priestore. Bratislava: Kabinet výskumu sociálnej a biologickej komunikácie SAV.

conflates the state and the nation (in its ethnic terms) to a great extent.[37] Differences between the two parties' discourse lie also in the nuances of the perceived status of Slovakia in the European community. SDKU-DS asserts the image of Slovakia as an equal partner to the old Member States of the EU who shares their responsibility for the future developments.

Slovakia's EU membership is, on the other hand, criticized by the SaS party, particularly its financial aspects: *"Slovakia is in the state of an economic slavery."*[38] The SaS leader further calls the EU policies a "Brussels socialism"[39] referring to the lack of autonomy and freedom. Slovakia is conceptualized as a 'sell-out', i.e. a country that traded freedom for some economic benefits which are not even real: *"Slovak matters are decided in Brussels and most of Slovakia's parliament has been reduced to a puppet show."*

SMER-SD on the other hand strives to explicitly refute the doubts about diminished sovereignty resulting from the country's membership in international structures.

"We are often criticised for the close cooperation with the EU bodies that leads to the loss of sovereignty, the loss of supremacy. To the contrary, implementation of commitments ensuing from our membership in the EU and the Euro-zone is not the loss or a restriction of our sovereignty but the fundamental prerequisite of the strong and successful Slovakia. The worst scenario for Slovakia would be isolation."[40]

In the SMER-SD discourse EU membership is construed as a matter of utility not as a matter of professing the same values. Since Slovakia is a small country it must espouse solidarity and human rights principles in order to prevent international isolation. It is thus implied that Slovakia submits to the EU dictate in order to gain both politically (inclusion in the international community) and economically (structural funds). This is somewhat similar to the SaS discourse which asserts that there once was a time when Slovakia was willing to submit to any requirements imposed by the EU and other international structures in order to join the league of relevant European stakeholders. However, it is time to put the country first and to *"protect Slovakia's interests."*[41] The SaS's concept of the country is not based ethnic affiliation and does not use the term 'nation.'

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[37]   *Supra* note 9.
[38]   Sulík, R. (2013). Bez peňazí z Bruselu by sme neprežili. Available at
http://richardsulik.blog.sme.sk/c/343796/Bez-penazi-z-Bruselu-by-sme-neprezili.html
[39]   Sulík, R. (2014). V Bruseli budem bojovať za viac slobody. Available at
http://richardsulik.blog.sme.sk/c/347484/V-Bruseli-budem-bojovat-za-viac-slobody.html
[40]   *Supra* note 10.
[41]   Sulík, R. (2012). Jasné odpovede na kľúčové problémy Slovenska. Available at
http://richardsulik.blog.sme.sk/c/313048/Jasne-odpovede-na-klucove-problemy-Slovenska.html

Summary

The study identified that political parties construct national identity as a tangible entity and strive to elicit emotional attachment to it through references to shared notions of historical wrongdoings and achievements (e.g. self-liberation from the thousand-year-yoke evokes national pride). However, such representations of shared history and ancestry create schemes that also organize perception of the relevant out-groups (e.g. Hungarians) and intergroup relations resulting in potentially antagonistic attitudes and hostile behaviour towards out-group members. Constructing intergroup relations as conflicting in fact brings the conflict into being. Instead of supporting an inclusive society differences are emphasized and even exaggerated. The so called constituting nation, i.e. the Slovak nation, is constructed through constituting its distinctiveness with its dominant position being the source of it. Such representations of the national identity are far from establishing inclusive and integrated society and it may imply potential (or real) discriminatory behaviour as demonstrated by Ng[42] whose study showed that dominant groups were more discriminatory towards the low-power groups than vice versa. Grant's study[43] suggested that perception of threat to the core values of the in-group motivates ethnocentric attitudes and reactions towards the out-group with the emphasis on the uniqueness of the in-group being a part of the ethnocentric reactions. If applied to the intergroup relations in Slovakia it explains the construction of distinctiveness and uniqueness of the Slovak nation as a response to threat whether symbolic or realistic. Constituting groups (nations) as either dominant or subordinate with obvious preferential treatment of the dominant group members might lead the subordinate group members to adopting various strategies of maintaining their positive self-image. From social-psychological perspective it could be expected that members of the low-power group would decide to leave their in-group and join the out-group (assimilation), i.e. the dominant group. Ellemers et al.[44] explains this by the fact that individuals tend to be more affectively committed to groups with positive image and distance themselves from less attractive groups.

[42] Ng, S.H. (1982). Power and Intergroup discrimination. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (pp. 179-206)*.* London: Cambridge University Press.

[43] Grant, P.R. (1990). Ethnocentrism Between Groups of Unequal Power Under Threat in Intergroup Competition. *Journal of Social Psychology, 131(1)*, 21-28.

[44] Ellemers, N., Kortekaas, P., & Ouwerkerk, J.W. (1999). Self-categorisation, commitment to the group and group self-esteem as related but distinct aspects of social identity. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 29,* 371-389.