SLOVAKIA'S NATIONAL IDENTITY AND ITS POWER: HISTORICAL NARRATIVES, MYTHS AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between national identity, the creation of myths and historical narratives, and their impact on politics in Slovakia. By analysing the intersection of historical perceptions and political dynamics. The research aims to show the influence of national identity on political choices and decision-making processes. The article provides an overview of how the relationship between history, myths, and understanding national identity influences the dynamics of today's politics in Slovakia.

Key words: *Slovakia, National Identity, Myths, Politics.*

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are creatures who can actively create different ideas and at the same time search for meaning in life and in their history. Myths play an important role in this search for meaning. The function of myths is to explain the natural or cultural habits of the group in which they are expressed. On the basis of these myths, symbols are created that define the values that society promotes. Myths and mythology are the foundation of many civilisations and nations. The question that needs to be asked today is whether myths that have become national myths, national folklore or national symbolism still have their place in society.

National myths are important because they act as a simplifying factor in a complicated truth. They condition the understanding of the nation's origins and co-create its identity, answering the questions "Who are we?", "Who are we not?", "Who is our friend?", "Who is our enemy?", "What political order do we prefer?" It is possible to perceive them as images that represent inspiration for the future, using images of the past, be it the golden age or the age of oppression [Tesař, 2007].

From the point of view of our research, we consider the most important identity, the political identity, which in the European space is understood as national-ethnic and national-political. Each political identity belongs to a collective/social identity.

Collective social identity also includes ethnicity/national-ethnic identity, which is based on common cultural interactions and self-definition in relation to other ethnic groups. It should be noted that ethnicity is perceived more strongly at a lower social level, i.e. in smaller groups, e.g. minorities, immigrants [Tesař, 2007]. Identity at the level of the majority group is most often expressed through national identity.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In reviewing the literature on which the article is based, it is important to highlight several key authors and works that have provided a theoretical framework for understanding the issue. These authors include Ernest Gellner, whose work focuses on the formation of national identities. Equally important is Erik Hobsbwam, who provides an important historical perspective on the formation of national identities and the development of national movements in a broader historical context, which helps to explain the influence of myths and national identity on political and social effects in society. Equally important is the work of Henri Tajfel and John Turner on the theory of social politics, which provides a comprehensive view of how individuals identify within a group and shape their social groups. And since we are dealing with the space of Slovakia as an inseparable part of literature, we will also consider the work of Johann Gottfried Herder, who is one of the founders of the concept of national romanticism, which had a direct impact on the formation of national identity. Hegel's philosophical work provides a basis for understanding the development of national identity and historical development.

As far as Slovak authors are concerned, we consider the book Mýty naše Slovenské (Our Slovak Myths, ENG) by Krekovič, Krekovičová and Mannová (ed.), which provides relevant insights into the formation of national identity in the context of

the history of Slovakia and Slovak culture, to be relevant. The works of Gyarfášová, Miháliková and other scholars dealing with this issue extend these themes and provide important perspectives on the development of Slovak national identity. These sources provide a theoretical and empirical basis for understanding myths and myth-making in national identity and their significance in the Slovak political context.

2. NATIONAL MYTHS

A shared history is an important factor in the formation of national identity and pride. Perceptions of history are often heavily influenced by myths and mythologies. These are events and stories whose essence has been adapted to create the spectrum of opinion of the majority of society. This symbolic narrative aims to capture the mysteries of the world, life, the origin of things and other fundamental questions through the stories and experiences of other people. Myths have been created to help people understand the world around them. This understanding of the world helps us to identify with a particular community [Schöpflin, 1997], mainly because humans are a social species and need a group to live a satisfying life. Tajfel and Turner [1986] captured this need in their work within social identity theory. According to Tajfel and Turner's theory, people feel the need to have a social identity and to be part of a particular group. This results in groups in which individuals feel solidarity with each other.

Identity is a broad concept with many definitions, often used in the behavioural, humanities and social sciences. In addition to personal identity, which is tied to a specific individual and represents a set of specific characteristics and is considered the most basic, there is also collective or group identity [Kusá, 2005]. Group identity in this understanding is perceived as a group of individuals who have certain similarities. Group identity is based on the awareness of each individual belonging to the group to maintain a certain solidarity with its members and to share the same ideals and values. Identity in the sense of identification and self-determination is an important part of groups. However, it is necessary to realise that an individual does not have only one identity, but that they overlap and that social and group identities are also reflected in the personal identity [Novotná, 2010].

National identity has been and continues to be shaped by myths of nation-building. National myths are simplified in order to capture a wide range of people. We can say that practically every historical event or person of significant importance for the

state is subject to mythologisation, and its transmission from generation to generation is supported by mass communication and inclusion in the school teaching process. And despite their fictitious nature, they influence people's behaviour [Krekovič, 2013]. This thesis is also supported by Ernest Gellner, who claims that nations either have a real history or adapt and create one [Gellner, 2006]. Eric Hobsbawm attributes the mythologising of history to modern nationalism, which seeks to reconcile the history of the nation with the idea of national interest [Hobsbawm, 1992]. We can therefore argue that the main function of national myths is to mobilise and ensure the unity of modern, contemporary nations, thus creating a national-political identity and preserving values that prove to be mobilising over time.

Modern nations in Europe are based on political identity and, like political identity, they are divided along two main lines. An ethnic nation-state, typical of the area of states that emerged from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And a political nation state, typical of Western Europe, such as France.

National myths manifested themselves most prominently in the processes of nationalism in the 19th century. Their main function was to provide an answer to the question of how to reconcile political boundaries with cultural ones. To create a space that would reflect the bipolar division of groups into "us" and "them", or a space that is "known, good" and a space that can be considered "foreign and bad", because either we have an idea of the dangers we might face there, expected or not, and we are afraid of it as a group. For each group, myths represent a narrative of justification for its system of morality and values.

National myths base their efforts to create borders on a certain categorisation. It is important to make this distinction because all nation-states have at least one category of myth on which they have based their efforts to gain recognition. National myths can be categorised according to their interpretation or the reason for their creation. In his article Function of Myths and Taxonomy of Myths [1997], George Schöpflin divides myths into eight groups.

- Myths about the territory,
- Myths about salvation and suffering,
- Myths about unfair treatment,
- Myths about chosenness and civilizing mission,
- Myths about military valour,
- Myths about rebirth,
- Myths of antiquity,
- Myths about kinship and shared ancestry.

Within the framework of this division, we can observe that even in Slovakia, in the 19th century, during the period of nation-building, efforts at national revival and efforts at independence were manifested through the idea of national identity, where myths were used, which we can place in the appropriate category in specific cases. In the 19th century, myths associated with efforts to create a nation are justified. They highlight shining moments, build positive traits to identify with, condemn moments of oppression and warn against their repetition. The question remains: is there a need for myths in the 21st century? If so, how do they affect a nation's society? Can these myths be abused?

3. THE ROLE OF MYTHS IN THE FORMATION OF SLOVAKIA'S NATIONAL IDENTITY

Research into Slovak myths does not have a very long and extensive tradition in Slovakia. In terms of success and scope, the book Mýty naše slovenské (Our Slovak Myths, ENG) [ed. Krekovič, Mannová, Krekovičová, 2013] was the book dealing with Slovak myths from modern history to current events. Currently, when reviewing the literature dealing with the issue of myths in Slovakia, we can come into contact with the study of myths mainly through research in the field of art, art creation and its presentation. In the field of art, the term national myth can be used for research on the history of Slovak modernism after the creation of Czechoslovakia [Gregor, 20-23] or research on works related to specific national myths, for example about Jánošík [Koltaiová, 2013]. Research on Slovak myths is also carried out by linguists, who perceive language not only as an individual and social phenomenon, but also as a language that influences individual and group identity [ed. Ondrejovič, 1997].

It is necessary to point out that the study of myths through the lens of social/political sciences cannot be avoided, even if it is perhaps less extensive in terms of publication content than in other scientific fields. This is mainly due to the fact that the social/political sciences tend to use quantitative methods, which cannot fully explain the reasons for changes in society. Unfortunately, public opinion polls, election analyses and statistics on life satisfaction in the country cannot fully reflect the myths and symbols in politics.

However, the creation of myths, and especially their connection with politics, shows us that it is possible to unite on a general level "for all and for the people", but often in the interest of someone else. As a useful publication that examines political discourse through myths, symbolism, culture, language or memory, we include the

publication entitled The Place of Symbolism in the Political Culture of Slovakia by Silvia Miháliková [2018], in which she describes in three chapters the symbolism of the state from the historical development of the state, the symbolism of money and the symbolism of states. Oľga Gyarfášová has a different perspective on myths and their impact on the national agenda, in her research she examines the causes and links to the political regime and institutions through the lens of the historical memory of Slovak society and the impact of the national agenda [Gyarfášová – 1997, 2011, 2015].

The choice and form of political myths and mythology, symbols and rituals used indicate the direction of the political ideology and political regime established in the country. In order to understand the general perspective, it is also necessary to understand historical consciousness and collective memory as theoretical concepts, because the behaviour of political leaders influences the perceptions and attitudes of the public. According to Miháliková [2018], symbolic behaviour is a basic form of interaction between political representatives and the public and strengthens the authority of rulers. Symbols are used in political communication to evoke emotions, support a political programme and identify with a political line. Tendencies to use the issue of "national identity" and to transform it into nationalism in public discourse can bring a strong negative emotional charge into everyday life. An example of this is the current Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic, Martina Šimkovičová, a representative of the Slovak National Party (Slovenská Národná Strana, SNS), who is known for her hateful statements towards refugees and the LGBT+ community and for her efforts to forcefully manage the Ministry of Culture without public hearings [Šelestiaková, 2024]. Or the current deputy speaker of parliament, Andrej Danko, leader of the Slovak National Party, whose main motivation for running in the presidential elections is "not to let Slniečkars rule here", or a visit to the grave of the former Czechoslovak president from the era of socialism, Gustáv Husák, together with the current prime minister, Robert Fico, SMER-SD [Mikeš, 2024].

Collective memory is one of the concepts that have taken root in the social sciences, which deal with the study of identity and related concepts such as ethnicity, the nation state, patriotism and others. It is important to see collective memory as one of the key aspects in the creation of groups that form bonds based on a sense of solidarity and thus mobilise in times of danger. However, it should be remembered that collective memory is not a static concept, but an object of deliberate influence that acts as an activation point for the beginning of group action [Kusá, 2009].

Collective memory is created through mutual communication between individuals and their memories [Tesař, 2007]. Historical awareness is an essential part of national identity. Its success is based on language, culture and the representation of the opposites "us" and "them" [Gyárfášová, 2015]. National identity, collective memory and historical consciousness are concepts that are considered within the framework of nation-building. Anthony D. Smith [1989] sees a nation as a historical and cultural community with a unified territory and common laws. Other authors [Strauss, 2010] also include language, writing, religion, territory, consciousness and unconsciousness among the integrating factors of the nation.

Interpreting the current state of Slovak society, its past and future means combining rational and irrational elements and analysing their interpretation and impact on society. In the search for the beginnings of Slovakia, as in the case of other nations, we encounter an attempt to prove the greatest possible antiquity of the nation. How long have the Slovaks been here and who are they? We are Slovaks, but what does that mean? Is it possible to find "pure Slovaks" in the geographical area of Central Europe? We should forget about this possibility, because from the historical point of view of the geographical movements of various tribes, Hungarians, Germans, Turks, Tatars, Czechs, etc., through the area, we have to assume that there was a certain assimilation or at least the leaving of descendants [Krekovič, 2005]. We can conclude that Slovakia and the Slovaks have been here from a historical point of view since the establishment of the Principality of Nitra, whose inhabitants stood in contrast to the non-Slavic Hungarians. The medieval nation survived the fall of the Principality of Nitra and the Slovak nation was gradually formed from it on the territory of present-day Slovakia [Steinhübel, 2005, in Krekovič].

Modern nations as we know them today began to form in the 19th century under the influence of nationalism. In the Central European context, we consider Johann Gottfried Herder to be the most prominent author who influenced the perception of the nation, who understood the nation as: *"A nation is a community of people united by the same language, inhabiting a certain territory, having common customs and traditions, the same national consciousness formed by the historical process"* [Herder, 2006]. According to this definition, language, territory, customs, traditions and national consciousness are among the characteristics that every nation must have. For Herder, language is the most important part of the identification of a particular nation. The struggle for linguistic uniqueness and individuality was typical for Slovakia as a country situated in the geographical area of Central Europe. The language was an integrating factor of the nation and also a distinctive

sign against the Hungarian pressure on the territory, even though in the revolutionary years of 1848-1849 the idea of the territory of Slovakia was defined on the ethnic principle [Lipták, 2005 – in Krekovič].

There were two main schools of thought in Slovakia regarding language as a state-building concept. The Bernolák line, led by Anton Bernolák, the Catholic line, and the Štúr's line, led by Ľudovít Štúr, the Evangelical line. For the purposes of this article, we will focus on the Štúr's line, which contributed most to the creation of a Slovak national consciousness and to the codification of the literary Slovak language that is still used today. The Štúr's line was mainly influenced by the dialectical idealism of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel [Lapošová, 2013]. Hegel's philosophy is manifested in the "spirit of the nation", which is expressed in a civil society created on the basis of the free choice of individuals. Herder's philosophy, on the other hand, manifested itself mainly in the field of language, which emerged as part of the formation of a nation. They were thus created simultaneously.

$$\text{Nation} \longleftrightarrow \text{National language}$$

According to Herder's definition, another qualitative characteristic of a nation should be customs and traditions, which in the area of Central Europe, especially in the former territory of Austria-Hungary, are difficult to assign clearly and concretely to nation-states. Customs and traditions also give rise to national consciousness.

National consciousness, the process of identification based on the national-ethnic principle, ethnicity, began in Slovakia within the framework of the national revival movement, which culminated in 1848–1849 and contributed to the anchoring of the built national identity, although it was not successful in terms of political demands Ľ. Štúr [Jurčišinová, 2018].

The territory was not clearly defined until the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. The subsequent turbulent years of the independent Slovak state (1938–1945) and the second Czecho-Slovak Republic (1945–1993) changed the geographical positions of Slovakia's borders.

The modern history of Slovakia is mainly focused on the period of the communist regime (1948–1989). During this period there were active efforts to convince the population that there was a possibility of a classless, equal society, despite the fact that there were violations of the human and political rights of individuals. Forty years of one-party rule are still felt in society today, 30 years after the collapse of the bipolar division of the world. Despite the realisation that not everything was

ideal under the conditions of the totalitarian regime, we feel and witness the effort to defend it. "At least something was built under the Communists", "We couldn't go to the West, but we could go to Cuba", "The world was simpler", "Everyone had a place to live and a job", these are just a few of the phrases that are often used as an argument for that period.

In 2018, a survey was conducted on the current perception of socialism in the cultural, collective memory of Slovaks. The publication Socialism: Reality instead of myths [ed. Gonda, Zajac, 2020] examines the public opinion of Slovaks about the period of socialism in the chapter Myths through the lens of current surveys [Kuhn, Potočát, Zajac, Gonda, 2020]. The results of a nationwide quantitative survey confirm that more people in Slovakia are convinced that people lived better under socialism. These are mainly conditions of security in the field of work, housing and a more peaceful life. It should be noted, however, that opinions on this question are significantly influenced by the age of the respondent. In the 18–24 age group, 18 % of respondents hold this opinion, while in the over-65 age group, 73 % of respondents think that life was better under socialism.

After the fall of communism (1989), the question of what is typical of the Slovak nation and who are the Slovaks began to reappear in Slovakia. Research carried out after November 1989 revealed the weaknesses in the collective memory of Slovaks, who were unable to identify positive historical figures at the time. The survey was repeated in 1996 and 2000, when Alexander Dubček, Milan Rastislav Štefánik and Ľudovít Štúr took the place of figures of whom Slovaks are proud. However, it is interesting to observe the change in the perception of the Slovak state and the personality of Jozef Tiso, who as a member of the Catholic Church was perceived with greater leniency, and the representative of the communist regime Gustáv Husák, who began to show collective forgetfulness [Gyarfášová, 2015]. It is equally interesting to observe how politicians in the present day are reusing myths, not for the sake of unification, but for the sake of populist electioneering.

4. SNS – CASE OF ABUSING NATIONAL MYTHS IN POLITICS

From a political point of view, the post-November period can be seen as a period of possibility for the formation of several political parties. For the purposes of this article and its scope, we can consider the SNS and SMER-SD as the most important.

The Slovak National Party (SNS) has established itself in the Slovak party system as a representative of pro-national values based on the historical legacy of the previous, historic Slovak National Party. In the attitudes of the SNS after the

establishment of the independent republic, nationalism directed against ethnic minorities, in particular Hungarians and Roma, can be observed. This is evidenced by statements made by the former president of the SNS, Ján Slota:

The following statements reflect the mood of the post-November period, when political parties were trying to define themselves on the political spectrum against the emerging minority parties, but also against the parties in Hungary, which in this period began to reopen the issue of border areas.

"My pôjdeme do tankoch a pôjdeme a zrovnáme Budapešť... My budeme bojovať za svoje územia, za metre štvorcové, za každý meter štvorcový budeme bojovať... Chceme bojovať! Nedáme ani centimeter štvorcový tým hajzlom maďarským... 8. marca 1999, Rádio Twist"

"We will go in tanks and go and level Budapest... We will fight for our territories, for square meters, for every square meter we will fight... We want to fight! We will not give even a square centimeter to those Hungarian bastards... March 8, 1999, source: Rádio Twist"

Equally important in this statement is the repetition of the word "we", which seeks to evoke a sense of cohesion and a common struggle against a common enemy.

"My sme Slováci tu, my od rodu Kristového. Nebude tešik [in hun,: tessek]. (Ján Slota takto vykrikoval v bratislavskom Harley Pube) 20. mája 2006, TV Joj"

"We are Slovaks here, we are from the Christ family. There will be no tesik [in hun,: tessek]. (Ján Slota shouted like this in Bratislava's Harley Pub) May 20, 2006, TV Joj"

"Musíme držať spolu. Nejakí Maďari tu nebudú poskakovať v strednej Európe a nebudú tu vytvárať také napätie, ktoré môže prejsť do niečoho veľmi nedobrého, čo nikto asi v strednej Európe nechce. (...) A s prepáčením Nemci doslova a do písmena možno robili menšie zvrhlosti ako maďarskí fašisti na južnom Slovensku: povedal Slota v rozhovore pre ČTK. 23. septembra 2007"

"We have to stick together. Some Hungarians will not be jumping around here in Central Europe and will not create such tension here, which can turn into something very bad, which probably nobody in Central Europe wants. (...) And with apologies, the Germans, literally and figuratively, may have done less

depravity than the Hungarian fascists in southern Slovakia: Slota said in an interview for ČTK. 23 September 2007"

In these statements we can observe the metaphor of a nation belonging to Christians. There is an attempt to interpret the ancient tradition of Cyril and Methodius against the opposition of the later adoption of Christianity on the territory of Hungary, combined with an effort to avoid a repetition of the oppression of the Austro-Hungarian era.

It was also a statement not only for the Hungarian minority, but also for the Roma minority.

"Cigáni by pozornejšie chodili po uliciach. Na takýchto ľudí len malý dvor a dlhý bič! 16. decembra 1999". Sme.sk, 1999, cit. 2024

"Gypsies would walk the streets more carefully. Only a small yard and a long whip for such people! December 16, 1999" Source: Sme.sk, 1999, cit. 2024

However, the position of the Slovak National Party, even after the gradual decline of its electoral preferences and its subsequent 'rebirth' in 2012 with Andrej Danko as its leader, has not changed the degree to which it emphasises national identity. The key factor is the belief that Slovaks are under constant threat, which borders on the question of national survival. However, the problem is no longer the Hungarian or Roma minority, but also the area of liberal democracy, the LGBT+ community and the attitude to the war in Ukraine. The inspiration for the future direction is the creation of the 'Slovak Fidesz', which they see as a model for the management of society or the glorification of totalitarian regimes.

"Liberálna demokracia likviduje Slovensko, 12. decembra 2023". In: Majerčíková, 2023, cit. 2024

"Liberal democracy is destroying Slovakia, 12 December 2023". In: Majerčíková, 2023, cit. 2024

Other members of the party are also close to the national identity position.

Podpredsedníčka strany: Dagmar Kramplová
"CIEĽOM LIBERÁLNEHO EXTRÉMIZMU JE VYTVORIŤ DEZORIENTOVANÚ, DUŠEVNE I TELESNE ROZVRÁTENÚ BYTOSŤ! 24.júla 2023". In: Kramplová, 2023, cit. 2024

Vice-president of the party: Dagmar Kramplová

"THE GOAL OF LIBERAL EXTREMISM IS TO CREATE A DISORIENTED, MENTALLY AND BODYLY PERVERTED BEING! July 24, 2023". In: Kramplová, 2023, cit. 2024

Ministerka kultúry: Martina Šimkovičová

"Hovorím to skôr, ako sa zdvihne vlna nenávisti a hrubosti v niektorých médiách a na sociálnych sieťach. Takže na produkcii Pride-ov, školeniach mládeže a aktivistov v LGBTI témach po školách a baroch bude ministerstvo kultúry, tak ako v iných oblastiach, šetriť", "Už viackrát som sa vyjadrila, že odmietam progresívnu normalizáciu a moja zásadná predstava o ďalšej činnosti rezortu je návrat k normálnosti. Ctím si rôzne názory, ale nech je každému dovolené, a teda aj mne, vyslovovať svoj postoj", 13. januára 2024, Ta3, 2024, cit. 2024

Minister of Culture: Martina Šimkovičová

"I say this before a wave of hatred and rudeness rises in some media and social networks. So the Ministry of Culture, as in other areas, will save on the production of Pride, training of youth and activists in LGBTI topics after schools and bars", "I have already stated several times that I reject progressive normalization, and my fundamental idea of the department's further activity is a return to normality. I respect different opinions, but let everyone be allowed, including me, to express their position", January 13, 2024, Source: Ta3, 2024, cited 2024

"Rešpekt voči iným kultúram neznamená ich zmiešavanie s tou slovenskou. Ak máme byť uznaní ako národ s vlastnou kultúrou, postavme do popredia našich dejateľov, naše tradície, naše dejiny", 6. november 2023. Teraz, 2023, cit. 2024.

"Respect for other cultures does not mean mixing them with the Slovak one. If we are to be recognized as a nation with our own culture, let's put our actors, our traditions, our history in the foreground", November 6, 2023, Source: Teraz, 2023, cit. 2024.

In all these statements, there is an attempt to limit manifestations of otherness or "accidental mixing" of cultures. However, it is necessary to point out, as we mentioned in the previous chapter, that it is impossible to expect a pure culture that has not been shaped by other influences, especially in the area of Central Europe.

The other party we have chosen as an example of the use of the narrative of national identity is the Smer-SD in conjunction with the SNS. Smer-SD (Social Democracy) has long been one of the strongest political parties. In 1999, the party acted as a 'third way' party and only later profiled itself as a left-wing party. A significant turning point in the narrative of the party's political representatives occurred in 2016 and was reinforced by the Covid-19 crisis and subsequently by the war in Ukraine. The narrative of the question of national identity can currently be seen in the support of the leader of the Smer-SD party, Robert Fico, within the Ministry of Culture, which is headed by Šimkovičová (SNS).

> "Prosím, venujte pozornosť veľkomoravskej i cyrilometodskej tradícii, meruôsmym [1848–1849 – transcription of the numeral from the archaism] rokom, významným slovenským dejateľom. Nezabúdajte na také výrazné udalosti a dátumy, ako bol napríklad" 17. júl a Deň prijatia deklarácie o zvrchovanosti SR. 6. novembra 2023. Teraz, 2023, cit. 2024.

> "Please, pay attention to the Great Moravian and Cyrillo-Method traditions, to the 1848–1849 years, to important Slovak controbutors. Do not forget such significant events and dates, such as July 17 and the Day of Acceptance of the Declaration on the Sovereignty of the Slovak Republic". November 6, 2023, Source: Teraz, 2023, cit. 2024.

As in the previous cases, we can identify elements in this statement that represent certain cultural features that should be important to the people of the nation. These include the Cyril and Methodius tradition, which is associated with Christian sentiments. The revolutionary years of 1848–1849, as an important milestone for Slovakia, mainly due to the codification of the literary language and thus the definition of its specificity.

CONCLUSION

It is important to point out that, despite the fact that the SNS and SMER-SD are at opposite ends of the official political party divide, they are united by the idea of Slavic cooperation and the return of a socialist establishment headed by a strong leader. This narrative is also confirmed by SMER-SD representative Ľuboš Blaha, who in 2019 was chosen as the most toxic member of parliament in the context of anti-system monitoring on Slovak Facebook, the Infosecurity.sk portal [Breiner, 2019], and also by the party leader, who actively communicates with the leader of the Fidesz party about common positions oriented towards Russia.

The rhetoric of the current political representatives is appealing and works mainly because a unified language and a universal set of national and state symbols are used, which arouse strong emotions with the need to act immediately, to act in favour of the state, which we consider threatened by an external enemy. Populist promises, simple solutions to complicated problems, strengthening of cultural traditions and Slovak heritage are an important driving force for moving the boundaries of these two parties. The past is directly related to the perception of the present, and it is necessary to know it in order to avoid misusing it. In the 21st century we cannot afford to romanticise and change history at will. Our goal should be a history education that is not influenced by ideology or efforts to promote a political agenda and political manipulation. Instead, it should aim to promote openness, inclusion and tolerance. These values are important in building a modern society that can meet the challenges of a global world. The use of myths, as they are used today, polarises society and marginalises certain groups, with the result that democratic processes are weakened.

Monitoring the use of the concept of national identity and myths should be important for academic research mainly because it can predict attempts to manipulate society and, in the most extreme case, prevent changes in the political regime by serving as a control and educational body against the abuse of power.

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