ANTI-CORRUPTION ATTITUDES IN POST-COMMUNIST SLOVAKIA: "HELLFIRE AND DEVIANCE" OR POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION?

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Abstract

The literature on corruption-related attitudes tends to focus on developing countries, test rational-choice theories, overlook religious influences, and neglect post-Communist but developed nations such as Slovakia. Academically, this article aims to test the validity of the "Hellfire and Deviance" and political-socialization theories of attitudes toward bribery by performing multivariate, Logistic regression analysis of the Slovak subsample of the 2022 World Values Survey. In particular, this study intends to find out whether: 1. an increase in belief in the afterlife drives opposition to bribery and 2. more frequent church attendance reduces support for bribery. This article finds that tolerance of bribery decreases with belief in the afterlife. Religious attendance also reduces pro-bribery views, but only among elderly Slovaks who grew up under Communism. Affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church or another Christian denomination seems to dampen enthusiasm for corruption indirectly by boosting church attendance and belief in the hereafter. Overall, these results strongly support the first theory and weakly confirm the second. The findings suggest that religion holds promise as a way to combat the scourge of political corruption in post-Communist, democratic Slovakia.

Keywords: *Slovakia, Corruption, Public Opinion, Religion, Political Socialization.*

INTRODUCTION

Few will dispute that Slovakia suffers from political corruption, with the murders of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová in 2018 being exhibit A (Šoltés and Vörös, 2015; Urbániková and Haniková, 2022; for an expression of popular disgust at the killings and their perpetrators, see the cinematic work of filmmakers Biermann and Čengel-Solčanská, 2020). Although Slovakia is a "consolidated democracy" according to Freedom House (2023), Transparency International (2022) ranks the country in the

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top third of all European Union member states on its measure of corruption. And although corruption is an important problem in itself, its constantly rising level is one of the indicators of the democratic backsliding that has been observed in Europe and around the world over the last few decades (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Diamond, 2021).

One possibly related development in the effort to stop public turpitude in Slovakia occurred after the unpopular and allegedly unethical Fico administration lost power in 2020 to a coalition of anti-corruption but generally socially conservative, church-linked[2] or religion-friendly parties led by Prime Minister Igor Matovič (Csanyi, 2020; Ondruška, 2022; Zvada, 2022).[3] This present-day situation suggests it may be worthwhile to see if religion could be useful in the fight against corruption as scholars such as Marquette (2012) have suggested previously. After all, one would hope that parishioners would learn in church that it is wrong to give and receive bribes, for example. The political utility of religion might seem all the more appealing since in 2018 Pew Research ranked Slovakia the 12th most religious European country out of a total of 34 nations (Evans and Baronavski, 2018). Because the Slovak Republic is also relatively religiously diverse (Roman Catholics make up 56 percent, non-religious or "unknown" individuals 30 percent, Lutherans 5, Greek Catholics 4, and Calvinists 2: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2021), one should be able to analyse the effects of religious affiliation more easily.

Of course, like all European Union countries, Slovakia is experiencing secularization; since Slovak independence, the percentage of residents who belong to one of the 18 officially recognized religious groups has dropped from 84 percent in 2001 to 69 percent in 2021, and the percentage of non-religious citizens has nearly doubled from 13 to 24 over those same years (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, 2023). At the same time, the transition from the end of Communism to the dominance of western

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[2] Despite the relative recent success of more socially conservative/religion-friendly parties and the inclusion of the Christian Union [KÚ] in the governing coalition in the National Council in 2020, most political groups that have explicitly affiliated with the Roman Catholic church or Christianity have generally performed poorly at the polls. To take the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) as an example, one can see that in 2020 they received only 4.65 percent of the popular vote in the National Council election and none of the seats. The KDH's results were almost identically dismal in 2016 (4.95 percent of vote and no seats). As late as 2012, however, the Christian Democrats had garnered 8.82 percent and 16 legislative representatives, having essentially replicated their success from 2010 (8.52 percent and 15 seats: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2023).

[3] For comparable, corruption-related partisan shifts in Czechia and Slovenia see Klvaňová (2016).

postmodernism has apparently affected the moral values of both Catholic and secular Slovaks. Within the Roman Catholic or Greek Catholic churches, the proportion of representative parishioners who believe bribery is "never defensible" has declined from 59 percent for the Slovak portion of Czechoslovakia in 1990 to 46 percent in independent Slovakia in 1998 through 44 percent in both 2017 and 2022. At the same time, the equivalent fraction of "never-bribery" but non-religious Slovaks began at 47 percent in 1990, dropped slightly to 44 percent in 1998, continued to decline to 35 percent in 2017, and rose modestly by 2022 to 42 percent (Haerpfer, et al., 2023). Thus, though church-going Slovaks seem more sceptical of corruption than secular citizens are, even believing Catholics appear to have lost some of their commitment to a few strict ethical standards over the last three decades of liberal democracy.

What might explain this change in attitudes? The existing literature on the roots of corruption-related public opinion often focusses on developing countries (Simbine, et al., 2011; Lavena, 2013) and employs rational-choice theories such as the principal-agent (Rispel, de Jager and Fonn, 2016) or collective-action models (Marquette, Pavarala and Malik, 2014; Herath, Lindberg and Orjuela, 2019). Relatively few rigorous, quantitative investigations have thoroughly explored the influence of religion on individuals' views of corruption, and post-Communist, highly industrialized societies such as Slovakia are also under-studied (but see Ivlevs and Hinks, 2018). A handful of social scientists has examined corruption attitudes in Slovakia but has not concentrated on the effect of religious variables (Wallace and Haerpfer, 2000; Anderson, 2006; McGee and Tusan, 2008; Pawelke, 2010; Gallina, 2013).

Major exceptions to most of these generalizations include Shadabi (2013), Sommer, Bloom and Arikan (2013), Valdovinos-Hernandez, Szymanski and Grabowska (2019), and Gokcekus, Ekici (2020). Among these publications, Shadabi (2013; but see La Porta, et al., 1997) finds that neither the proportion of Christians or Muslims in a country nor that state's regulation of religion has any significant effect on average levels of perceived corruption in that nation. Valdovinos-Hernandez, Szymanski and Grabowska (2019; see also Treisman, 2000) report that the percentage of Roman Catholics in a given state—but not the proportion of adherents of other religions—correlates positively with average perceptions of corruption in that country. And Gokcekus, Ekici (2020) determine that corruption is seen as flourishing in especially religious societies regardless of the religion dominant in a country. These first three investigations mainly analyze the roots of public

perceptions of whether corruption occurs, not whether it is morally justified or excusable. Sommer, Bloom and Arikan (2013), in contrast, conclude that religion does promote more anti-corruption attitudes in democratic states or pro-democratic individuals but not in authoritarian regimes or people. But regardless of which dependent variable they examine, these studies disagree on whether various forms of religious identity or practice influence corruption-related public opinion.

Academically, this article aims to test the validity of these two major theories of attitudes toward bribery by performing regression analysis of a Slovak public-opinion survey collected in 2022. In particular, this study intends to find out whether: 1. an increase in belief in the afterlife drives opposition to bribery and 2. more frequent church attendance reduces support for bribery. In contrast with much previous work on corruption attitudes, this article focusses primarily on the potential effects of religion variables in a developed but post-Communist country, Slovakia, where actual corruption has been especially corrosive to democracy and human rights. By performing OLS and Logistic regression analysis of the Slovak subsample of the 2022 World Values Survey, this article aims to test two social-scientific explanations of why ordinary respondents excuse or condemn bribery, a common form of corruption around the world. After setting out the theories to be tested and the specific hypotheses to be evaluated, this study describes the data to be examined and the statistical methods to be employed. The article then reports on the findings of the quantitative analysis and concludes by discussing the implications of these results for social-scientific theory and for public policy.

1 THEORIES

This article focusses on the validity of two religion-related theories of attitudes toward corruption: "hellfire and deviance" versus political socialization in churches. The psychologically oriented, "hellfire and deviance" explanation holds that fearing retribution in the afterlife will affect one's willingness to engage in or, presumably, even orally approve of such unethical behavior as political corruption (Hirschi and Stark, 1969; Perrin, 2000). The theory of cognitive dissonance would make a similar prediction (Festinger, 1957). And prominent international religious authorities have clearly condemned bribery and other forms of corruption. According to the Roman Catholic Church, the largest religious group in Slovakia, "among the deformities of the democratic system, political corruption is one of the most

serious because it betrays at one and the same time both moral principles and the norms of social justice" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, paragraph 411). And as far back as 1878, Pope Leo XIII praised earlier Pontiffs for resisting the temptation to "be led by . . . bribes into unworthy compliance" (Leo XIII., 1878, paragraph 7). At least some Catholic laity in Slovakia likewise seem to have adopted Pope Francis' view that "corruption is . . . blasphemy" (quoted in newspaper blog by lay Roman Catholic author Martinický, 2018; see also blog post by Old Catholic priest Kováč, 2017).

According to the hellfire and deviance explanation, then, respondents who believe in heaven and/or hell will be more anti-corruption in deed and word (e.g., in a survey question on the morality of bribery) because they are afraid of being punished in hell or failing to make it into heaven given their actual misdeeds in this life or even their condoning of other people's transgressions (cf. King James Bible, 1769/2008). Slovaks who believe that the afterlife is a myth, on the other hand, should according to this theory be more likely to tolerate bribery and other forms of political corruption because these respondents are not worried about eternal retribution.

A second, more sociologically based explanation looks at the attitudinal, or social-contagion effects of interacting with members of a religious group such as clergy and laity. According to Pearson-Merkowitz, Gimpel (2009, p. 175; see also Wald, Owen and Hill, 1988), who summarize the large American literature on political socialization in congregations,

> *"those who voluntarily assemble for worship services and who observe and listen carefully are likely to receive certain messages about what things they should pay attention to, care about, and act upon—and often these cues are not ignored. . . . This is especially true when clergy address certain issues frequently and when they address issues that are salient to their congregations and to society."*

Starting even before the murders of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová, the leaders of the Slovak Roman Catholic Church have publicly and repeatedly condemned political corruption in the country (Slovak Bishops, 2002, 2017; Luxmore, 2020). In reaction to the horrific murders of the two young Slovaks, the leaders of the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Greek Catholic, Orthodox, Reformed, Jewish, Baptist, and Methodist faith communities in the spring of 2018 penned a strongly worded, open letter to then-Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini in which they "reject[ed] corruption in any form," viewing it as "a sin against God and humanity," and called on "public

representatives and civil society" to "eliminate corruption from Slovak society" (Zvolenský, et al., 2018). And even the very controversial, allegedly extremist Roman Catholic priest Marián Kuffa claims that corrupt Slovak officials "have invalid confessions if they know at the moment of absolution that another bribe awaits them in a few days" (quoted in a newspaper blog by Roman Catholic writer Martinický, 2019).

In the context of contemporary Slovakia, then, the political-socialization explanation suggests that respondents who attend church frequently would, at least ceteris paribus, be less likely to tolerate corrupt practices such as bribery. Overall, Slovaks who belong to some religious community—even if their attendance is infrequent—should receive more direct or indirect anti-corruption messages from their religious leaders and co-religionists[4] and so prove more hostile to political malfeasance. With the fall of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia during the Velvet Revolution, in contrast, atheists and other secular Slovaks are arguably less well-organized than Christians and so less likely consistently to hear pro-transparency cues in their social networks (even assuming that a church-like association for non-believers were equally opposed to political corruption).

2 DATA, METHODS, AND HYPOTHESES

Academically, this article aims to test the validity of these two major theories of attitudes toward bribery by performing regression analysis of a Slovak public-opinion survey collected in 2022. In particular, this study intends to find out whether: 1. an increase in belief in the afterlife drives opposition to bribery and 2. more frequent church attendance reduces support for bribery. Proponents of the hellfire and deviance explanation would hypothesize that respondents who are more likely to believe in heaven, hell, and the afterlife in general should also be less tolerant of bribery. Advocates of the political socialization model, however, would hypothesize that greater integration into a religious community—as measured by religious attendance—will cause believers to condemn bribery.

To evaluate these hypotheses, this article analyses data from the Slovak subsample of the World Values Survey (Haerpfer, et al., 2022), which was conducted from January 20 to February 23 of 2022 using

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[4] According to the Slovak subsample of the 2022 World Values Survey (the dataset analyzed in this article), 85 percent of secular respondents said they never attend religious services, while only 12 percent of Roman Catholics and 16 percent of "other Christians" never went to church.

Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) in the Slovak language. The interviewees consisted of 1,200 residents of Slovakia aged 18-90 chosen by multi-stage, random proportional selection. Data were weighted to make them comparable to official 2021 Slovak census statistics for age, sex, education, ethnicity, urbanicity and region (Kosnáč and Podolinská, 2022a), and bivariate Logit was used to estimate the determinants of respondents' tolerance of bribery (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics of the variables).

After a search of data archives for relevant surveys and items, the best question from a publicly available dataset appeared to be one about bribery from the 2022 WVS.[5] The original item used a 1-10 scale of moral acceptability and reads, "Please tell me about each of the following activities, whether you think that it is always defensible, never defensible, or something in between? . . . Taking a bribe to complete one's work [Prosím, povedzte mi pre každý z nasledujúcich činov, či si myslíte, že môže byť vždy obhájiteľný, nikdy obhájiteľný, alebo niečo medzi tým? . . . Prijať úplatok pri plnení svojej práce]" (Kosnáč and Podolinská, 2022b, p. 15). Unfortunately, this original version of the variable was highly skewed (mean = 2.84; adjusted Fisher–Pearson standardized moment coefficient = 1.097, SE = .071), with 44.5 percent of the valid respondents affirming that bribery is "never defensible [nikdy obhájiteľný]." All efforts to transform the variable mathematically into a more normal, ordinary least-squares-appropriate distribution proved futile. This study therefore opted to convert the ordinal measure into a simple dichotomy of "never defensible" = 0 versus all other categories = 1 and to analyse the data using bivariate Logistic regression.

To operationalize the religious variables, this article used self-reports about whether the respondent believes in life after death, hell and/or heaven (combined into an ordinal measure ranging from believes in none = 1 to believes in all three = 7) and how often she or he attends religious services besides weddings and funerals (ranging from 1 = "never, practically never" to 7 = "more than once a week"). The interviewers also asked about the person's religious affiliation ("Hlásite sa k niektorej náboženstvu alebo náboženskému vyznaniu? Ak áno, ku ktorému?"). Besides the 306 nonreligious respondents (the base category used as comparison and hence not transformed into a dummy variable the way the other religious

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[5] One might desire a more ideal survey that asks Slovak respondents several questions about various forms of corruption, but the 2022 WVS seems to be the only recent, publicly accessible dataset that was conducted in Slovakia and included both a question on the perceived morality of some form of corruption and items on religious practice and belief in the afterlife. Unfortunately, the author lacked the financial resources to fund an entirely new survey on these topics in Slovakia.

groups were), Roman Catholics made up the bulk of the interviewees. The remaining individuals, coded as Other Christian, included 80 Lutherans, 43 Greek Catholics, 16 Calvinists, 1 Eastern Orthodox believer, and 4 "other Protestants" (likely US-style evangelical Protestants). Only 1 respondent identified with an "other religion" and was grouped with the nonreligious interviewees.

Demographic and political items included education level ranging from 1 (no education) to 9 (doctorate), income in deciles, age in years, sex at birth, broad region within Slovakia (Central [Žilina and Banská Bystrica] and Eastern [Prešov and Košice] with the remaining, Western regions the base category), population of hometown in categories from under 2,000 to 100,000 or more, support for the historically dominant but allegedly corrupt (cf. article by Slovak journalist: Širotníková, 2020) political party SMER – sociálna demokracia (DIRECTION: Social Democracy) of former Prime Minister Robert Fico, support for the other existing parties (OĽaNO [Ordinary People and Independent Personalities], Sme rodina [We Are Family], Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie [Christian-Democratic Movement], Hlas [Voice], Sloboda a solidarita [Freedom and Solidarity], Alianca [Alliance], Progresívne Slovensko [Progressive Slovakia], and Republika [Republic]) that had at least 50 valid identifiers in the 2022 dataset (with the base category being supporters of all other, smaller parties), lack of partisan identification, reported political conservatism on a left-to-right scale, and Hungarian ethnicity.

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics*

Variables	Mean or %	Min	Max
Tolerate bribery	54.7%		
Belief in afterlife (BA)	4.1	1	7
Religious attendance (RA)	3.5	1	7
Roman Catholic (RC)	62.5%		
Other Christian (OC)	11.9%		
Education (ED)	4.4	1	9
Income (IN)	5.2	1	10
Age (AG)	48.2	18	90
Female (FM)	51.4%		
Eastern regions (ER)	28.2%		
Central regions (CR)	24.2%		

Urbanicity (UR)	3.4	1	7
Hungarian ethnic (HU)	7.8%		
SMER supporter (SM)	9.9%		
OĽaNO supporter (OL)	5.3%		
Sme rodina supporter (SR)	6.8%		
Kresť-dem supporter (KD)	5.9%		
Hlas supporter (HS)	14.3%		
SASKA supporter (SA)	9.4%		
Alianca supporter (AL)	4.3%		
Progres-SK supporter (PS)	4.4%		
Republika supporter (RP)	4.3%		
Nonpartisan (NP)	24.5%		
Conservatism (CN)	5.7	1	10

Source: Slovak subsample of 2022 World Values Survey

Before proceeding to the regression analysis below, it would be useful to describe the parameters of the dataset (see Table 1). Overall, 54.7 percent of all valid respondents said that accepting a bribe was sometimes defensible. On a scale of 1 to 7, the average level of belief in the afterlife (in general as well as belief in heaven and hell) was 4.1, or a moderate degree of belief. On a similar 1 (never) to 7 (more than once a week) scale of church attendance, the average was also moderate, at 3.5 (once a year or only on special religious holidays). Among valid respondents, 62.5 percent were Roman Catholic, and 11.9 percent belonged to some other Christian denomination. Educational levels ranged from none to doctorate, with a typical interviewee having graduated from high school but not begun university. Income is measured in deciles from 1 to 10, with the mean value obviously being located around the 50th percentile. The youngest respondent was 18 years old, and the oldest respondent was 90, with a mean age of 48.2 years. 51.4 percent of the valid informants were coded as female. 28.2 percent of the interviewees lived in one of the eastern regions (kraje), and 24.2 percent in the central regions. Urbanicity ranged from settlements of under 2,000 to those of more than 100,000, but the average respondent resided in a town of about 7,000 inhabitants. Ethnic Hungarians such as those living along the border with Hungary made up 7.8 percent of the sample. And the plurality of survey participants supported the political party Hlas (14.3 percent), followed by SMER (9.9 percent), SASKA (9.4 percent), Sme Rodina (6.8 percent), Christian Democrats (5.9 percent), OĽaNO (5.3 percent), Progressive Slovakia (4.4

percent), and Alianca or Republika (both 4.3 percent). About a quarter of the sample (24.5 percent) did not express a partisan preference. Finally, the average respondent scored 5.7 (centrist) on a political conservatism scale that ranged from 1 to 10.

3 FINDINGS

The first theory tested is "hellfire and deviance." According to the first column of regression coefficients in Table 2, respondents who believe in heaven, hell, and the afterlife in general as opposed to none of these concepts are indeed especially likely to condemn bribery (b = -.091, p < .001, odds ratio = .913). Since this regressor is an attitudinal variable, one may plausibly argue that it is not causally prior to more concrete independent variables such as religious attendance. These data thus confirm this first explanation.

Table 2: *Logit models of pro-bribery attitudes in Slovakia: bivariate analysis with religion variables*

X	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR
BA	-.091[x]	.023	.913						
RA				-.048	.027	.953			
RC							-.108	.138	.898
OC							-.272	.204	.762
B_0	.560[x]	.113	1.750	.358[+]	.113	1.431	.287*	.116	1.332
N	1,154			1,163			1,183		
R^2	.018			.004			.002		

*Source: Slovak subsample of 2022 World Values Survey. X = independent variable. B = unstandardized Logit coefficient. SE = standard error. OR = odds ratio. B_0 = constant. R^2 = Nagelkerke R^2. * p < .05. [+] p < .01. [x] p < .001.*

As a test of the second, political-socialization theory, this study independently estimated the equation with church attendance in the second regression column of Table 2. Here, the coefficient for this regressor was anti-bribery but just barely failed to reach traditional levels of statistical significance (b -.408, p = .075, odds ratio = .953). Another way to evaluate the socialization hypothesis is to look at religious affiliation by itself. But Slovaks who said they belonged to either the Roman Catholic Church (b = -.108, p > .05, odds ratio = .898) or another Christian denomination (b = -.272, p >

.05, odds ratio = .762) were no more likely than secular respondents to say that bribery was never defensible, at least before controlling for the other religious regressors and controls.[6] This second interpretation thus finds very weak support in the data, suggesting that political socialization alone is not directly influencing corruption-related attitudes. At most, socialization in the congregation might directly affect one's views on the afterlife, which could in turn cause a change in one's opinion on bribery.

Table 3: *Logit model of pro-bribery attitudes in Slovakia: religion variables plus controls*

Variables	B	SE	OR
Belief in afterlife (BA)	-.137^x	.035	.872
Religious attendance (RA)	.041	.045	1.041
Roman Catholic (RC)	.337	.202	1.401
Other Christian (OC)	.163	.263	1.177
Education (ED)	-.112$^+$	.039	.894
Income (IN)	-.005	.042	.995
Age (AG)	-.007	.004	.993
Female (FM)	-.270*	.134	.763
Eastern regions (ER)	-.397*	.166	.672
Central regions (CR)	-.509$^+$	.168	.601
Urbanicity (UR)	-.019	.033	.981
Hungarian ethnic (HU)	.056	.354	1.058
SMER supporter (SM)	-.317	.300	.728
OĽaNO supporter (OL)	-.742*	.336	.476
Sme rodina supporter (SR)	-.182	.327	.834
Kresť-dem supporter (KD)	-.503	.343	.605
Hlas supporter (HS)	-.313	.270	.731
SASKA supporter (SA)	-.666*	.289	.514
Alianca supporter (AL)	-.833	.489	.435
Progres-SK supporter (PS)	-.392	.364	.675
Republika supporter (RP)	-.178	.379	.837
Nonpartisan (NP)	-.292	.256	.747
Conservatism (CN)	.048	.036	1.049

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[6] If one includes all four religious variables in the equation at once, the results for the religion regressors are very close to those reported in Tables 2 and 3.

Constant	1.777^x	.455	5.911
N	1,017		
Nagelkerke R^2	.079		

Source: Slovak subsample of 2022 World Values Survey. B = unstandardized Logit coefficient. SE = standard error. OR = odds ratio. * p < .05. $^+$ p < .01. ^{x} p < .001.

Finally, the regression estimates in Table 3 control for socio-economic, demographic, and political variables that might directly influence bribery views or indirectly alter them by first influencing any causally significant religion variables (e.g., one's region and gender might affect levels of belief in the afterlife, which in turn would help determine one's opinion on bribery). Even after correcting for these non-religious characteristics, the final regression still yields a statistically significant coefficient for belief in an afterlife (b = -.137, p < .001, odds ratio = .872). The variables for religious attendance, Roman Catholic, and Other Christian, in contrast, all fail to produce any statistically significant direct effects. Overall, then, this dataset supports the "hellfire and deviance" theory over the political socialization interpretation.

Yet one major caveat is in order. In Table 3, religious attendance by itself does not achieve statistical significance. If one combines it into a multiplicative, interaction term with age, however, the new interaction variable is negatively signed and statistically significant (b = -.004, p < .05, odds ratio = .996, range = 18 to 602). Bizarrely enough, however, attendance itself becomes statistically significant but positively signed (b = .253, p < .05, odds ratio = 1.287). The effect of religious attendance, in other words, depends on the age of a particular respondent. Simple algebra reveals that the critical age is about 63, meaning having been born around 1959 for respondents in a 2022 survey. Interviewees older than 63 should be less likely to approve of bribery the more often they attend church. Younger Slovaks, on the other hand, should be conversely and perversely more apt to tolerate bribery the more frequently they go to religious services. A 90-year-old, for example, would have a net coefficient for attendance of -.107 (i.e., opposition to bribery increases the more the person attends church), while his or her 18-year-old grandchild would demonstrate a net effect of .181 (i.e., tolerance of corruption would increase with more religious practice). In the Slovak political context, this age difference seems to correspond roughly to whether one mainly grew up and was hence politically and religiously socialized during the totalitarian rule of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) from 1948 to 1989 or after the return to democracy

following the Velvet Revolution. Theoretically, then, these more nuanced results indicate that political socialization via church attendance[7] does help explain some Slovaks' anti-bribery attitudes, but only for today's senior citizens who grew up under Communism, when traditional religious expression was officially disfavored (Doellinger, 2013, pp. 20-25). Slovaks who chose to attend church despite Communist opposition may have developed strong ethical values that remain with them today. Ironically, their children's and grandchildren's generations do not seem to have acquired equally firm moral commitments when growing up in church in free and democratic Slovakia.

Although not the main focus of this article, various background variables did produce statistically significant results. In particular, education appears to boost support for clean government (b = -.112, p < .01, odds ratio = .894), as does being a woman (b = -.270, p < .05, odds ratio = .763). Slovaks living in the central (b = -.509, p < .01, odds ratio = .601) or eastern (b = -.397, p < .05, odds ratio = .672) parts of the country are ceteris paribus more critical of bribery than are those from the urbanized west, including greater Bratislava. This finding contradicts the popular stereotype of Easterners as being more tolerant of organized crime and related public turpitude (for a cinematic example of this stereotype, see Bebjak, 2017). Age, urbanicity, income, ethnicity, and political conservatism had no effect, but identification with the political parties OĽaNO (b = -.742, p < .05, odds ratio = .476) or SASKA (b = -.666, p < .05, odds ratio = .514) was associated with greater hostility to bribery. Indeed, the very powerful (close to .5), anti-bribery odds ratios for both of these party variables indicate that they are the most substantively important regressors in the equation. On the other hand, planning to vote for candidates from SMER, Sme Rodina, the Christian Democratic Movement, Hlas, Alianca, Progresívne Slovensko, or Republika as opposed to the comparison category (intending to vote for someone from the remaining, smaller Slovak parties) did not have any effect on bribery attitudes.

Table 4: *OLS model of belief in afterlife: direct effects*

Variables	B	SE
Religious attendance (RA)	.596[x]	.274

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[7] Parallel interaction terms between age and Roman Catholic and between age and Other Christian did not produce any statistically significant results.

Roman Catholic (RC)	1.328^x	.166
Other Christian (OC)	1.544^x	.217
Education (ED)	-.057	.030
Age (AG)	.001	.003
Female (FM)	.236*	.114
Eastern regions (ER)	-.289*	.140
Central regions (CR)	.128	.145
Urbanicity (UR)	-.049	.028
Hungarian ethnic (HU)	.702 ^{x}	.218
Constant	1.325^x	.274
N	1,162	
R^2	.463	

Source: Slovak subsample of 2022 World Values Survey. B = unstandardized Ordinary Least-Squares coefficient. SE = standard error. * p < .05. $^+$ p < .01. ^{x} p < .001.

Tables 4 and 5 expand the analysis to include models of the direct determinants of the two major, arguably causally prior religious variables, a respondent's belief in the afterlife and one's religious attendance. If one includes from Table 3 all the plausible potential causes of these now-dependent variables (Levin, Taylor and Chatters, 1994; Argue, Johnson and White, 1999; Rachmatullah, Ha and Park, 2019), the regression in Table 4 suggests that attending church, being Roman Catholic or other Christian, being a woman or ethnic Hungarian, and hailing from the western or central parts of Slovakia all boost one's faith in life after death. Education, urbanicity, and age had no significant effect, however.

Table 5: *OLS model of religious attendance: direct effects*

Variables	B	SE
Roman Catholic (RC)	2.723^x	.120
Other Christian (OC)	2.219^x	.178
Education (ED)	.066*	.026
Age (AG)	.022^x	.003
Female (FM)	.325^x	.098
Eastern regions (ER)	.652^x	.120
Central regions (CR)	.096	.126
Urbanicity (UR)	-.067$^+$	.024

Hungarian ethnic (HU)	-.426*	.189
Constant	.119	.238
N	1,181	
R²	.417	

Source: Slovak subsample of 2022 World Values Survey. B = unstandardized Ordinary Least-Squares coefficient. SE = standard error. * p < .05. ⁺ p < .01. ˣ p < .001.

Table 5 likewise indicates that higher religious attendance, which earlier analysis suggested increases anti-bribery views among Slovaks raised during the Communist era, in turn is directly caused by being Roman Catholic or other Christian, being older or a woman, and living in eastern Slovakia or a rural area. Going against modernization theory, education similarly boosts religious practice in the Slovak Republic. In contrast, belonging to the Hungarian minority tends to depress religiosity. Substantively, the large absolute values of the coefficients for religious identification (over 2.0) reveal that one's level of religious practice is principally determined by one's prior religious commitment to one of the established Christian denominations active in the country. If one was born and raised in the Roman Catholic church and continues to identify with this religious group, one is presumably more likely to attend mass at least sporadically and so register a higher level of religiosity than would a life-long atheist.

To summarize the religion-related regression results in Tables 2-5, one may reasonably conclude that belief in the afterlife directly undermines pro-bribery attitudes in the general Slovak population. This attitudinal variable is in turn directly affected by religious attendance, religious identification, and several control regressors. Similarly, frequent church attendance militates against tolerance of bribery via a direct effect—but only for elderly Slovaks who came of age during the Communist dictatorship—and indirectly for all citizens by helping to determine their degree of faith in the hereafter. The behavioral variable church attendance also seems to be affected by the pro-participation norms one encounters in the Roman Catholic or other Christian communities. Lastly, affiliating as a Roman Catholic or other Christian primarily appears to influence corruption views indirectly by partially causing one's degree of belief in the afterlife and one's religious attendance.

CONCLUSION

Overall, data analysis strongly confirms the "hellfire and deviance" theory and partly supports the political-socialization explanation. The findings

about the anti-corruption effects of religion in democratic, developed Slovakia thus echo results by Sommer, Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan (2013) about the interplay between regime type and religion, though the observed interaction between religious attendance and age might diverge slightly from their predictions. This article's conclusions definitely conflict, however, with La Porta et al.'s (1997) claims about the pro-corruption influence of "hierarchical" religions such as Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. This study's results suggest that at least in some political circumstances, religion may be a useful tool for fighting corruption in post-Communist, developed countries, not just authoritarian or semi-democratic states in the developing world.

Within Slovakia itself, this analysis indicates that Roman Catholic leaders should continue to speak out about the political cancer of corruption and that they should encourage parish priests to be more vocal about the problem and to link believers' relevant behaviour in this life with the expected reward structure in the hereafter. Unfortunately, at least one sociological study concluded that ordinary parishioners were unlikely to hear these issues addressed in homilies by their own local ministers (Juran and Ondrasek, 2020). Given the regression results for Other Christian, it appears that non-Roman Catholic religious leaders are also preaching against corruption, but more could undoubtedly be done, even if doing so provokes some temporary conflict in one's congregation (see blog post by Old Catholic priest and political activist: Kováč, 2017).

In the scholarly world, it would be ideal for social scientists to conduct on-the-ground, long-interview- or observation-based field work in other developed countries of Central and Eastern Europe to determine the exact mechanism through which religion affects attitudes, if it does in a particular setting, or how religious individuals may nonetheless rationalize continued corrupt actions, if it does not (see: Marquette, 2011; 2013). Any differences between Communist versus democratically socialized respondents would be of particular theoretical and historical interest for the region. Yet such intensive qualitative research would unfortunately demand much more time and funding than is typically available to one faculty member. Teams of investigators from the various countries or even farther afield could nonetheless coordinate their efforts to ensure that this vital and strategically important region of the world is not overlooked in empirical research on religion.

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THE COOPERATION BETWEEN EU AND NATO IN RESPONSE TO HYBRID THREATS – A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS FROM THE INSTITUTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine by the Russian Federation provided new impetus for the EU and NATO to develop and later also intensify cooperation in hybrid threats. This unique process, that happens between two actors who have different histories, aims or membership structures, is analysed from the institutionalist perspective, which served as a framework to understand the development. The main aim of the article is to assess interinstitutional cooperation between the EU and NATO in the area of hybrid threats: especially in the area of capacity building, strategic communication, crisis management, counterterrorism or WMD use, and civil protection. The author concludes that both the EU and NATO successfully developed cooperation in hybrid threats and created mechanisms that enable similar perceptions of the threats and better coordination of the responses. The article serves merely as an exploratory study dedicated to the development of cooperation between the EU and NATO in this challenging area in the period between 2014 and 2022.

Keywords: *EU, NATO, Cooperation, Hybrid Threats, Ukraine, Institutionalism.*

INTRODUCTION

The cooperation between the EU and NATO was, in some respects, always problematic. The main reason is both functional and structural as both organizations have different institutional genealogy and *raison d'être, which overlap just in several areas mainly related to security.* While European Communities were dominantly aimed at economic cooperation and the creation of a single market (economic integration), NATO from the early beginning and for a very long time presented the main pillar of defence in Western Europe. However, this division of tasks was not consolidated as

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there were always attempts to create a European pillar of defence, which would be independent or complementary to NATO (Hunter, 2002). Moreover, European integration gradually split over to new areas of cooperation. The Maastricht Treaty transformed immature European Political Cooperation into the newly established Common Foreign and Security Policy, which was later strengthened by the Common Security and Defence Policy. The active role of the EU in these areas brought new challenges for the modus vivendi with NATO and opened questions about the security culture of both organisations.

This was a particularly challenging task as the membership varied significantly, with a potential conflict of interests undermining dominantly inter-governmental cooperation based on unanimity. There are EU members which are not members of NATO (Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, Malta), EU candidates to NATO (Finland until April 2023 and Sweden), and NATO members not being EU members (USA, UK, Turkey, Norway, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Canada), while some of them applied for EU membership. As a result, an agreement is sometimes problematic, which is further undermined by the bureaucratic structures of both institutions. However, the degree of cooperation varies from one area to another, having different intensities and different characters. Moreover, both organisations had to face changes in the international system of states and new security trends that are remarkable for blurring the borders between civilian and military threats, changing the nature of warfare, and making new tools available to potential enemies.

The main aim of this article is to assess interinstitutional cooperation between the EU and NATO in hybrid threats. For that reason, there are two main research questions: First, how did cooperation between the EU and NATO regarding hybrid threats evolved? And second, how might this development be interpreted and understood in the context of institutionalist theory? Answering both research questions may contribute to a better understanding of the nature and limits of cooperation between the EU and NATO, which is crucial for the future development of the EU Security and Defence Policy.

The analysis is conducted within the framework of new institutionalism: a new interest in the institutions and their role in European integration with the notion, that institutions matter as they can act independently and influence politics (Puchala, 1999; March and Olsen, 1984). Critics argue that institutionalism is a vague approach with several streams behind the label (Alvesson and Spicer, 2019; Abrutyn and Turner, 2011). Notably, 1) rational

choice institutionalism considers institutions as rational actors helpful for solving problems of states; 2) historical institutionalism highlights historical aspects in play for creating institutions and reflecting the issue of time in a life of institutions or path dependence models; 3) sociological institutions with a very broad understanding of what institution is and focus on the issues such as identity or behaviour (Koelble, 1995). Finally, some authors stress that next to the institution also context matters and develops the idea of "discursive institutionalism" for understating institutional context (Schmidt, 2008). For the purposes of the article, all four streams mentioned are considered complementary, rather than exclusive. All of them might provide an interesting perspective regarding rational choices, time and timing of cooperation, diversity of the institutions, or unique context in which cooperation takes place.

Regarding methods and methodology, the article may be considered an exploratory case study (Yin, 2009), which aims at exploring institutions and assessing relations in the theoretical context. As a result, it is not a completely atheoretical case study, but rather a study having an interpretative character (Lijphart, 1971) by utilising and applying selected aspects of institutionalist theory. Most of the data were gathered from internal documents produced by the EU institutions or NATO, which is having natural limits that rest in the origin of the documents and a limited means of verifying the correctness of the content. In other words, institutions rarely publish negative information critical to their activities, highlighting failures and vulnerabilities.

Every study shall be clearly defined in terms of topic, setting rational limits regarding its scope. The study is focusing on the case of the EU-NATO joint institutional cooperation in hybrid threats, with a special focus on the period between 2014 and 2022. The selection of both years is not random as it marks the Russian annexation of Crimea or violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine in 2014 and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022: two key security events which provided important impetus to the EU-NATO cooperation. It is a natural effect that a significant security event opens the 'window of opportunity' to intensify cooperation (Kingdon, 1984). Hence, it is legitimate to expect that this effect opened a new chapter for interinstitutional cooperation and agenda development in the selected period in hybrid threats.

Regarding the area of "hybrid threats", three other limits are present. First, both the EU and NATO developed over time their own policies regarding hybrid threats. These are not assessed in the article, except for joint undertakings. Second, in the general wisdom, the issues related to

cybersecurity, cybercrime, or cyberspace in general, are considered part of hybrid threats and hybrid warfare. However, this is not the case for the EU, where cybersecurity is merely a separate agenda in which some cooperation occurred between the EU and NATO. Due to the extensive scope of cybersecurity cooperation, this stream is not covered in this article but may be found in different resources (see, for example, Carrapico and Barrinha, 2017; Barrinha, 2018; Boeke, 2018; Staszczyk, 2019). Finally, there are some limits related to institutions. The article employs the prism provided by institutionalism, understanding institutions as independent actors pursuing their own interests. The varying and often divergent role of the EU member states is not assessed in this article, despite offering a very promising topic for another study. Instead, the article focuses mainly on the positions of the European Council, Council of the EU, European Commission, or the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell.

It is not the purpose of this article to define and distinguish between various streams of institutionalism. Instead, all four forms are taken as complementary, which allows them to highlight different aspects of cooperation and interpret cooperation between the EU and NATO in different ways by employing rational choice logically, path dependency and time-related factors, a broader understanding of institutions, or the importance of context for institutions. As a result, the institutionalist perspective is not rigorously applied, but provides a significant source of inspiration for analysis involving institutional interactions within a very specific policy area that fits into the ongoing debate about EU-NATO relations.

The article is divided into three parts. The first part presents a short literature overview with the aim of introducing existing research in the area. The second part is dedicated to the introduction and analysis of the initial steps taken by the EU and NATO cooperation in the area of hybrid threats. The third chapter is assessing mutual cooperation in the selected areas which are dealt with in the individual subchapters, dedicated to capacity building, strategic communication, crisis management and civil preparedness, counterterrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and civil protection. The final chapter assesses most actual development in the context of Covid-19 and the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

1 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

There is plenty of research dedicated to various aspects of the security policies of both the EU and NATO, and cooperation between both actors is

not exception. The mutual relationship was analysed in the historic and strategic context already before the EU developed its security and defence dimension (See for example Evera, 1991; Menon, 1995; Andreson, 1995; Keohane, Nye, and Hoffman, 1997; Schake, 1998; Sperling and Kirchner, 1998 or Kay, 1998). Since the EU officially launched its European Security and Defence Policy in 1999, the number of studies dedicated to joint activities significantly increased and covered various areas. While some authors continued to focus on more general aspects of cooperation in the context of the international environment and global challenges (Hofmann, 2009; Howorth and Keeler, 2003; Smith, 2011; Reichard, 2016; Cornish and Edwards, 2001; Koops, 2020), others were focusing on specific areas of joint cooperation. This is notably the area of EU and NATO enlargement (Kydd, 2001), focus on Western Balkans (Antonenko, 1999; Bechev, 2006), the issue of crisis management (Missiroli, 2002; Muletti, 2023) or relations with selected countries, such as Germany (Hyde-Price, 2000), paradoxes of Sweden and Finland (Forsberg and Vaahtoranta, 2001). However, the dominant focus was naturally on the EU-NATO relations with the USA and Canada (Aldrich, 2004; Sloan, 2005; Mérand, 2006; Filipec, 2017), Turkey (Missiroli, 2002; Güvenç and Özel, 2017) or Russia (Light and White, 2000; Diesen, 2016; Rontoyanni, 2002), where Ukraine played a central role already before the 2014 annexation of Crimea.

In recent years, a debate over joint cooperation between the EU and NATO crystallised over several issues including post-Brexit settlement (Martill and Sus, 2018; Ewers-Peters, 2021; Cladi and Locatelli, 2020; Shea 2020; Svedsen 2019) or modus vivendi between both actors (Howorth, 2019; Duke 2019; Aggestam and Hyde-Price, 2019; Schreer, 2019; Ringsmose and Webber, 2020; Perrin, 2022). Analysis in specific areas is still quite rare, with valuable exceptions (Lété, 2019; Poptchev, 2020; Giuglietti, 2022). In the context of existing research literature, it is the ambition of this article will provide a deeper understanding of EU-NATO cooperation in the area of hybrid threats.

2 INITIAL STEPS AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine led to a reconsideration of EU policies. Due to the divergent interests of the member states and the sometimes also hesitant attitudes of the EU institutions, the changes occurred tentatively (Heath, 2017). Regarding NATO, the most important milestone is the Joint EU-NATO Declaration of 2016 signed in Warsaw between the President of

the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the NATO Secretary General. The Joint declaration identifies in total seven areas of cooperation, including hybrid threats with the aim to: *"boost our ability to counter hybrid threats, including by bolstering resilience, working together on analysis, prevention, and early detection, through timely information sharing and, to the extent possible, intelligence sharing between staffs; and cooperating on strategic communication and response"* (European Council, 2016). This declaration is the first document outlining areas for cooperation described as "strategic priorities" and anticipates mechanism for implementation, allocation of responsible staff, and creation of a mechanism for cooperation. From the institutionalist perspective, it is necessary to mention the context, which stood behind the joint declaration. Unsurprisingly, it was mainly the hybrid character of the Russian aggression against Ukraine (Rusnáková, 2017), which resulted in the illegal annexation of Crimea, providing new momentum for close cooperation between the two actors and opening a new "window of opportunity" (Kingdon, 1984) in the security area to develop mutual relations. However, the beginning was not smooth as, for example, some experts criticized Federica Mogherini for being soft on addressing disinformation and propaganda, or the attitude towards Russia in general (Heath, 2017)

The first progress report (2017) reflecting the implementation of the joint declaration stresses the importance of cooperation and mentions ten proposals related to hybrid threats. The lines mention cooperation on activities of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, better situational awareness to counter hybrid threats more effectively, the establishment of the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell (and its interaction with the newly established NATO Hybrid Analysis Cell). The report mentions that a Joint Assessment of Hybrid Threats was conducted and both actors were working on joint communication in delivering coordinated messages, aimed especially at being united regarding Eastern partners or Western Balkan. Furthermore, both institutions noted that they exchanged information on resilience requirements and supportive measures that can better support individual nations (NATO, 2017). To sum up, the first lines of cooperation were established. From 2017 until 2022 in total seven progress reports were published, summarising cooperation between the EU and NATO around hybrid threats. In this period, cooperation was created and developed within several 'pillars', including:
1. capacity building,
2. strategic communication,

3. crisis management and civil preparedness,
4. counterterrorism (CT),
5. weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and civil protection.

These pillars are having significant policy and institutional dimensions reflecting the existing policies of both actors and their institutional structure. However, cooperation leads also to the creation of new institutions or adaptation of existing ones, to the creation and development of new tools governed by those institutions, and the extension of cooperation to new areas over time. It is necessary to note, that pillars are overlapping. For example, an exercise simulating terrorist use of WMD or a crisis communication during the crisis management of an unexpected event). Furthermore, despite hybrid threats having significant cyber security elements, with EU-NATO cooperation, "cyber threats" and "hybrid threats" have individual policy streams and for this reason, this paper deals only with hybrid threats without a cybersecurity element, partially because of the robustness of the cybersecurity agenda.

From the institutionalist perspective, the most important aspect is inter-institutional cooperation. Regarding the hybrid threats, it is necessary to distinguish between two types (or two levels) of inter-institutional cooperation. At the top level, we have cooperation between the EU and NATO in general, which in practice means cooperation mainly between three institutions at the EU level (European Commission, Council of Ministers, and the European Parliament) together with NATO's institutions, including North Atlantic Council, Military Committee, NATO Secretary General and its Secretariat). However, this level is dealing mainly with political issues and general directions of cooperation, which is in practise strongly determined by the will of member states, and both actors exercise less autonomy. For that reason, it is necessary to distinguish a subordinate level of cooperation which includes specific structures responsible for the technical part of the agenda and its implementation. This level is less political and might be characterized by lower control (or direct involvement of member states) as it is managed and developed mainly by institutions themselves.

Among specialised institutions is the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki or the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell, which is part of the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre. This Hybrid Fusion Cell is closely cooperating with the NATO Hybrid Analysis Cell, which contributes to a shared and more complex situational picture. (NATO, 2017). Later, the institutions become connected also via monthly video teleconferences

and discussing possible trilateral cooperation using open-source materials (European Council, 2018). Because the experience was evaluated positively this communication link was soon extended by the EU version of the NATO Battlefield Information Collection and Exploitation Systems (BICES) (NATO, 2017). It is necessary to note, that it was just at the time when OSINT methods used by volunteers become a powerful tool to fight disinformation and propaganda (Higgins, 2021).

On 2nd October 2017, the European Centre for Excellence of Countering Hybrid Threats was officially opened during the ceremony with the personal attention of EU High Representative Frederica Mogherini and the Secretary General of NATO Mr Jens Stoltenberg, who had the company of Prime Minister of Finland Juha Sipilä and President of Finland Sauli Niinistö. The Centre serves as a network-based international hub of experts and practitioners dealing with the issue of hybrid threats. The Centre is having many functions, including the cultivation of strategic-level dialogue and consultations, the conduct of research related to hybrid threats and methods to counter them, the development of doctrine, conduct of training or connecting communities (Hybrid CoE, 2017). While the establishing memorandum was signed by representatives of 16 countries who are members of the Centre, the membership grow rapidly to 33 countries in 2023, including the USA, UK, France, Germany, and Poland among founding states and some joining later including for example Canada (2018), Turkey and Montenegro (2019), Iceland (2021) and Ireland (January 2023) (Hybrid CoE, 2023). Regarding membership, it is interesting that all the so-called "post-neutral" countries including Austria, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, and Malta are part of the centre.

From an institutionalist perspective, it is interesting that two organizations (based on the initiative of the EU) created a specialised, autonomous institution, developing activities of mutual interests and providing added value for member states, especially in information sharing and capacity building (European Commission, 2016). However, with the establishment of "Hybrid CoE", the activities of NATO and the EU did not end (Hybrid CoE, 2020). On the opposite, instead of "problem delegation" Hybrid CoE represents a qualitatively different platform for issues that might be solved separately to direct inter-institutional cooperation between the EU and NATO. In other words, "Hybrid CoE" is an extension of existing lines of cooperation, which continues.

For example, covering inter-institutional cooperation and capacity building are staff-to-staff contacts between both organizations (EU and NATO), which are mainly on the expert level. There are several examples

of joint cooperation: in September 2017 there was a special workshop aimed at resilience, fostering information exchange, and developing ideas over critical infrastructure protection. However, it is important to note that staff-to-staff contacts go beyond workshops as they have regular character and support NATO Defence Planning Process via developing NATO's baseline requirements for national resilience. To be more specific, EU staff participated in NATO's advisory mission in Romania to foster resilience there (NATO, 2017). Cooperation in this area is beneficial for both organizations as it put a much more complex look at the NATO Defence Planning Process and EU Capacity Development Plan (NATO, 2017). This cooperation further developed in 2018 when a staff-to-staff meeting in May 2018 contributed to the inclusion of resilience and hybrid threats in the respective defence planning process and capacity development (European Council, 2018). Later on, cooperation contributed to the development of the revised EU Capability Development Priorities, agreed upon in June 2018 (European Defense Agency, 2018).

It is evident that an effective response to hybrid threats is a matter of skills and capacities, which is another mutual interest of both organisations, and thus a pillar of cooperation. Capacity building together with strategic communication, crisis management, civil preparedness, the fight against terrorism or the use of WMDs, and civil protection are the most relevant activities for the EU and NATO to cooperate under the umbrella of hybrid threats. For that reason, this agenda is explored in the following section.

3 AGENDA DEVELOPMENT

As the previous part shows, the EU and NATO established inter-institutional cooperation in various fields and developed new communication channels. This would be impossible without adapting capabilities and training them in the relevant areas related to hybrid threats. For that reason, the second part is to assess capacity building measures, the area of crisis communication, crisis management, civil preparedness, counterterrorism, or the use of WMD.

3.1 Capacity Building

Capacity building from the institutionalist perspective might be understood in two ways. First, the capacity building of the organisation is aimed at the development of skills and competencies of its employees,

channels of communication, extension pro programmes, etc. And second, the external dimension of capacity building is provided as the added value of the organization to its members or third parties. Regarding the first understanding of their capacity building, both organisations adapted their internal structures and communication channels to effectively detect and assess hybrid threats in their decision-making. Next to it, both institutions started to cooperate to ensure the same level of data quality. In this regard, staff exchanges were established between two new emerging bodies: EU Hybrid Fusion Cell and NATO Hybrid Analysis Branch. Soon, staff-to-staff exchanges were stable monthly (NATO, 2020). Since the initial stage in 2016, the EU and NATO have conducted Joint Intelligence Assessments on a hybrid topic (NATO, 2020). This assessment was followed by the "Parallel and Coordinated Assessment" and soon this tool is prepared on a relatively frequent basis (several documents per year) to ensure that both organisations are working with the same vision of the landscape, for example, in the area of terrorism, hybrid tactics, and strategies, or geographically in the area of the Southern and South-Eastern neighbourhood (NATO, 2019).

EU Hybrid Fusion Cell and NATO Hybrid Analysis Branch are two bodies, which were determined by their functional logic for enhanced cooperation. The first body was established in 2016 as part of the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre, which is part of the European External Action Service. The task of the Fusion Cell is to analyse external aspects of the hybrid threats, which are having an impact on the EU and its neighbourhood. It might be compared to a "probe", which is providing input into the EU decision-making process in the areas of risk assessment and hybrid threats analysis (European Commission, 2016). Its counterpart – NATO Hybrid Analysis Branch – is a part of the Joint Intelligence and Security Division which helps to improve situational awareness and helps to supply information to the decision-making process of the organisation (Petrescu, 2022). Due to the lack of insight, it is hard to evaluate the effects of cooperation. However, from the theoretical perspective, it leads to a shared understanding of hybrid threats, their scope, and their nature, which is beneficial for both organisations due to shared information background.

Staff-to-staff meetings are vital for the capacity development of both institutions, especially regarding staff-to-staff training, seminars, and workshops to enhance the understanding of the hybrid threats. One of the occasions was a high-level retreat hosted by the Centre of Excellence in March 2018 which resulted in formulated recommendations for EU-NATO cooperation enhancement including 1) early warning and situation

awareness, 2) strategic communication and messaging, 3) crisis response, 4) resilience and 5) cyber-defence and energy security. However, it is necessary to note that in 2018 there was also a scenario-based workshop "Harbour Protection Under Hybrid Threat Conditions". Other workshops in September 2018 were aimed at methodology exchange and women, peace and security. Particular attention was paid to gender aspects in early warning systems and analysis to improve situational awareness and assess the practices of both organizations (European Council, 2018). The harbour protection exercise was repeated in October 2019 and another exercise covered disruptive technologies in hybrid threats (February 2020). The exercise was conducted under the Hybrid Warfare and Future Technologies Project which was jointly organised by the Hybrid CoE, Community of Interest Strategy and Defence and StratByrd Consulting (Hybrid CoE, 2020).

Both institutions, the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell and NATO Hybrid Analytical Branch led an intensive discussion on how to develop and use the capacities of both organisations, especially through exchanging publicly available information. Workshops and seminars are usually open also to experts from the member states. In other words, in addition to the development of the own capacity development, mutual cooperation is aimed also at the development of the capacities of member states, which contribute to a shared understanding of hybrid threats in all relevant areas. Among the most significant is the area of communication.

3.2 Strategic Communication

Strategic communication is from the early beginning a key area for dealing with hybrid threats and also here both key actors have relevant bodies for cooperation. Regarding the EU it is especially "StratCom Task Force East" which is based under the umbrella of the External Action Service and in NATO, it is the Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence located in Riga. EU and NATO strategic communication teams cooperate to deliver coordinated messages. Since 2016 this cooperation has focused on Western Balkan (NATO, 2017). However, later extended to new areas. In 2017, consultations on strategic communications covered Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova, and Georgia (NATO, 2017). Mentioned bodies of EU and NATO are for example working together on a research project dedicated to regional media environment assessment and disinformation tendencies in the region or co-hosted several visitor groups from the region, including young political party leaders, journalists, or government communication

specialists (NATO, 2019). Later on, StratCom Task Force East together with the Centre of Excellence was working on training materials and developed joint simulations on disinformation attacks and appropriate responses to them or prepared awareness-raising activities. In this regard, the Centre of Excellence provided inputs for the "Anatomy of Disinformation" campaign.

Strategic communication continued to cover the most important areas of mutual interest and soon annual report concluded, that both organizations enjoyed frequent engagement between EU and NATO spokespersons, strategic communication counterparts, and the EU Strategic Communication Task Forces together with the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga (European Council, 2018). A considerable part of the effort was dedicated to crisis communication, which is inseparable from crisis management and public communication on security threats.

Regarding communication, disinformation, and propaganda belongs to the key agenda of NATO and the EU. In 2018 the EU adopted the Action Plan against Disinformation (European Commission, 2018), which was in its development phase and subject of consultations. Approximately at the same time, the EU staff was working on the development of NATO's Information Environment Assessment capability, including data analyses and assessment. This was developed in the context of a NATO exercise entitled "Trident Juncture 18", which brought together over 50 thousand soldiers, 250 aircrafts, 65 ships, and 10 thousand vehicles to Norway (Forsvaret, 2021). The Trident Juncture exercise was followed by another exercise in November 2018 and during the EU HEX-ML 18 and NATO PACE 18 exercises (Council of the European Union, 2018), both organisations tried staff-to-staff cooperation regarding strategic communications (NATO, 2019).

The EU Stratcom Task Force East and the NATO Stratcom Centre of Excellence in Riga focused mainly on research on pro-Kremlin narratives, however, the analysis covered also the impact of Russian media channels including Russia Today or Sputnik. Institutions were also developing plans for further cooperation within the Eastern Partnership countries to help them with the training of professionals. As there is much disinformation about NATO within pro-Kremlin narratives, the topic was developed within the East Task Force database of disinformation called "EUvsDisinfo. eu" (NATO, 2019). Out of 14931 recorded disinformation articles in the database, NATO is the target of 1686 cases, which is roughly 11 % (as of January 2023) (EUvsDisinfo, 2023). Currently, both institutions conducted steps to improve ways how to strengthen mutual alerting on disinformation incidents or hostile information activities, including capacities for early

detection, analysis, and exposure to disinformation. Mutual learning in strategic communication is a positive step forward, however, addressing hybrid threats requires complex communication strategies and coordination among actors. The main challenge might be the transfer of information from the EU/NATO level to the member states and then to the citizens. A very valuable might be an analysis of these communication channels, to reveal flaws and propose improvements for a smooth and non-conflicting flow of information.

3.3 Crisis Management and Civil Preparedness

Certainly, one of the most promising areas of cooperation between the EU and NATO is crisis management or crisis response. It is a domain in which especially NATO is having strong experience (Prior, 2017). In order to improve EU resilience to hybrid threats, NATO shared with the EU staff the guidance on the Resilience of National and Cross-Border Energy Networks and its guidance for incidents, including cases of mass casualties (European Council 2018). Moreover, NATO invited EU staff to participate in the NATO Energy Security Roundtable, which took place in December 2017 in Brussels and was focusing on the Eastern European region (NATO Energy Security Center of Excellence, 2017). EU staff provided valuable input on energy issues to the NATO Industrial Resources and Communications Services Group in 2018 (European Council, 2018). Furthermore, NATO and EU resilience experts met in June 2018 to discuss the methodology for mapping activities related to NATO's Resilience Baselines and EU prevention and Preparedness work streams. (European Council, 2018). Focus on energy infrastructure remained on the agenda also in 2019 and 2020 and is belonging to one of the most salient and persistent priorities (Tichý, 2016; Keypour, 2022). The issue of critical energy infrastructure was debated at the EU Consultation Forum for Sustainable Energy in the Defence and Security Sector, and NATO staff provided regular briefings to the European Defence Agency (Energy and Environment Working Group) (NATO, 2021). As demonstrated above, in this area both actors are also having specialized institutions creating networks and partnerships.

In 2019 there were several cross-briefings, including one on EU crisis response mechanisms, NATO Counter Hybrid Support Teams, the European Medical Corps, and capacity development under the Civil protection mechanism's new RescEU proposal (European Commission, 2017). At the same time, the European Emergency Response Coordination Centre,

together with the NATO Euro Atlantic Disaster Response and Coordination Centre, shared their procedures, systems, and focus. The development spread also to European Emergency Response Coordination Centre, which declared its preparedness to host a NATO liaison cell which shall ensure closer cooperation (NATO, 2019). In other words, the EU and NATO are working closely together in information exchange, including approaches to civil protection, which is also spreading to very specific areas. For example, in the report from 2020, it is mentioned that both organizations improved cooperation regarding the alert system, notably between EU Rapid Alert System and NATO Staff. In June 2019 already a third meeting of experts was organized, to present capacities and views on how to deal with disinformation (NATO, 2020) and this cooperation even intensified during the covid-19 pandemic which provided an important "sharp stress test" for existing cooperation and communication channels.

It is necessary to mention that resilience covers many specific areas. For example, on the mutual agenda between both actors, a special issue within resilience and civil preparedness was the issue of 5G networks. Another such specific area was direct investment screening methodologies, debated at the staff meeting (NATO, 2020). It is important to note that regarding direct investment screening methodologies, it is the EU that has a rich experience (Filipec, 2018) and the significance of this area increased with new rounds of sanctions against Russia.

As the artificially created migration crisis on the Polish-Belarus borders demonstrated, hybrid threats might have various characteristics. A positively evaluated might be the EU Integrated Resolve 2022: Parallel and Coordinated Exercise. In 2022, the exercise focused on the comprehensive management of fast-paced transboundary hybrid crisis, in the internal and external dimensions (EEAS 2022). Exercises are necessary to develop skills and test processes; however, the quality of exercises strongly depends on the ability to reflect reality. In fact, crises and their management are not always happening under ideal conditions. For example, when materials and facilities are prepared, personnel are available, electricity is on, communication between units is working well, and everything runs according to the schedule. For that reason, it is positive that both EU and NATO experts have enough practical experience. However, much more can be done in civil preparedness as some states lack policies aimed at citizens to build resilience in the area of hybrid threats.

3.4 Counter Terrorism

Since 1975 European countries are cooperating in the fight against terrorism, first under the so-called TREVI platform. Soon, the EU created a set of measures and tools, which are comparable to complex counterterrorism policy (Bossong, 2012). Cooperation with NATO on terrorism is another perspective area, which was identified in 2018 as a promising space for cooperation in the field of hybrid threats. In the same year, NATO staff visited the Europol Headquarters (January 2018). Staff discussed CBRN terrorism risk and the issue of Improvised Explosive Devices. NATO was invited to participate in Europol meetings on explosive precursors (European Council, 2018). Joint cooperation was developed positively in 2018 in three ways: First, staff level contacts were strengthened between NATO, EU and the European Counter Terrorism Centre operating under Europol; second, cross-participation in respective EU and NATO working groups was enhanced and third, staff of both organisations participated in events related to counter-terrorism, including global Counter-terrorism Forum, events organised by the African Union or the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

Regarding the work of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, staff established regular contacts for strategic communication. A special event was organised between the EU's Working Party on Terrorism and NATO's Political Committee to discuss strengthening resilience against terrorism. An initiative was organised under the Romanian presidency of the EU which replicated the format launched in 2018 when the presidency of the EU was held by Bulgaria and the vent was again repeated in 2019 under the Finnish presidency, focusing mainly on countering Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and later the focus was shifted on battlefield evidence (NATO, 2020) and terrorist misuse of technologies (2021). Slovenian presidency focused on gender issues of terrorism (NATO, 2022)

The agenda of UAS was developed also in 2021 when the staff of both organisations worked on joint projects, including participation in the NATO Counter Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-UAS) working group and the virtual counter-UAS workshop which was organised by the European Commission in March 2021. Staff worked also on the NATO Drone Single Local Air Picture project, and exchanges between European Security and Defence College and NATO were established (NATO, 2022).

ISIS played an important role in the EU-NATO agenda on hybrid threats, especially in the area of communication. The European External Action Service (or its StratCom Task Force South) cooperated with NATO Public

Diplomacy Division to combat ISIS activities online. The staff participated in the Global Coalition against Daesh Communication Working Group and provided updates to its Communications Cell. The EU institutions (Commission and Parliament) were informed by NATO officials about the development, and EEAS was invited to brief NATO staff about its work (NATO, 2020). Invitations to NATO projects continued also in late 2021 and 2022 when EU staff observed Martial Vision Technical Exploitation Seminar and Battlefield Evidence Training organised by the NATO Stability Policing Centre of Excellence in June 2022, which was prepared for partners in the Middle East and North Africa (NATO, 2022).

Cooperation between the EU and NATO in terrorism is limited by the fact, that counter-terrorism policies are mainly created and implemented at the level of member states. NATO is primarily a military organisation, which is having its relevance in providing expertise in tactics, special forces, weapons, or equipment and covering aspects of communication. Due to developed cooperation in home and justice affairs, the EU is slightly closer to the states. Here, Europol might serve well as a natural hub for information exchange and transfer of expertise and that is why strengthening this institution might be a vital interest for EU, NATO and member states.

3.5 WMD Use and Civil Protection

Weapons of mass destruction is an area in which both organizations have significant achievements, but slightly different attitudes related to the different power of both actors (EU as soft power promoting non-proliferation and disarmament). Under the umbrella of newly established cooperation, there was a special workshop organized on EU-NATO cooperation in the area of civil protection, was organized in February 2019. The approaches of both organisations were tested in the hybrid threat scenario in a tabletop exercise with a special focus on medical preparedness (NATO, 2019). This exercise followed a successful EU MODEX medical exercise in Romania, which took place in October 2018. In Romania, EU staff cooperated with NATO Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre. The area of medical preparedness is certainly a promising one for bringing together civilian (dominantly EU) and military (dominantly NATO) expertise. EU experts were invited to the NATO Chief of Military Medical Services Committee and NATO and the staff is engaged in structured cross-briefings and information exchange to evaluate potential synergies between organisations and their approaches,

especially regarding stockpiling medical countermeasures and medical evacuation (NATO, 2019).

In May 2019 a special expert-level workshop on preparedness and crisis response was held, mainly dedicated to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and nuclear resilience. Just a few months before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the scenario simulated a biological attack against a state, which is a member of both the EU and NATO. The workshop helped to identify policies, plans, and procedures to enhance Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Preparedness, including the response mechanism (NATO, 2019).

A special workshop was organized in July 2019 entitled "Resilience and cross-sectoral cooperation in Responding to CBRN Threats with the hybrid element" and later in January 2020 another workshop on "Building Capacities, Strengthening Resilience: EU and NATO Partnerships for Addressing CBRN Risk and Threats" took place (NATO, 2020). In the area, biannual staff talks were established to debate the most salient CBRN issues, and EU staff was invited to brief NATO Committee on Proliferation on activities and complementary approaches (NATO, 2020). With the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020 the CBRN training was changed in the context of Covid-19.

The CBRN area shows clear limits which are like the fight against terrorism and rests in both actors. However, it is evident, that non-proliferation plays an important role and is a shared interest of both actors. Despite the fact that the EU has extensive regulation of dual-use goods and materials to enhance its export controls, proliferation networks are more sophisticated than ever before. For that reason, deeper cooperation with "watchdog" organisations, including the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), or The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) might be further developed at the multilateral level.

4 COVID-19 AND RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

The outbreak of pandemics had a significant impact on the EU and NATO members. The phenomenon had a multidimensional character with implications for strategic communication and fights against disinformation, crisis management, medical emergency, etc. Many areas mentioned above were touched on, and naturally existing structures were used to deal with the impact of pandemics. From a certain perspective, the outbreak of pandemics

represented a 'shape stress test" of existing cooperation and communication channels and a unique opportunity to verify the effectiveness of cooperation which is impossible to simulate.[2]

With an increasing amount of disinformation about covid-19, the cooperation between EU and NATO staff intensified. Both institutions shared an information environment assessment and had weekly calls with international partners, including the G7 rapid response mechanism. NATO shared with the EU its NATO COVID-19 Strategic Communication Framework, the Covid-19 Integrated Communications Plan, and the selection of proactive communication products, prepared weekly basis (NATO, 2020). On the other hand, the EU (resp. its EEAS) was invited to brief the NATO Crisis Management Task Force on the disinformation impact of COVID-19 and attended the NATO StratCom Working Group.

The outbreak of the pandemic highlighted the importance of low-probability-high-impact events, having implications for supply and the utility of the recently established rescue mechanism. After the outbreak of pandemics, the EU and NATO had biweekly coordinated meetings of medical advisors together with military staff, which provided military expertise, especially in the context of the MEDEVAC project (NATO, 2020). And biweekly virtual meetings were established between NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) and the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) of the EU to ensure mutual situational awareness and prevent duplication.

The EEAS and NATO commissioned a study proposal from the NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence on disinformation in democracies aimed at strengthening cognitive and societal resilience against disinformation. The EEAS East StratCom together with StratCom Coe (NATO) prepared a training on disinformation attacks. In order to enhance resilience, the Commission provided information to NATO's Civil Emergency Planning Committee (CEPC) about the Eu response to Covid-19 and NATO shared with the EEAS and the Commission its baseline requirements for Resilience in November 2020. Covid-19 provided excellent inspiration for training, including the pandemic wargame 'Resilient Response 20" organized by the Multinational Medical Coordination Centre/European Medical Command (MMCC/EMC and hybrid CoE. Next to this exercise, there was a field exercise in North Macedonia in September 2021 aimed at consequence management (NATO, 2021).

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[2] The key problem is that simulations are usually planned, time limited and conducted under ideal conditions without multiplication of the negative effects.

As of January 2022, following the visitation of the NATO Secretary General to the College of Commissioners in December 2020, both EU and NATO started so-called "Structured Dialogue on Resilience", hopefully bringing more synergy in the EU and NATO activities regarding resilience. This is an important issue, especially in the context of the Strategic Compass for Security of the EU, the upcoming EU Critical Entities Resilience Directive, and other tools of the EU and NATO, including Baseline Requirements for National Resilience (NATO, 2021).

The resilience agenda got again new momentum after the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which led to an intensive briefing between the EU and NATO (especially the NATO Civil Emergency Planning Committee and the Politico-Military group of the EU) (NATO, 2022). Also, cooperation in the area of CBRN defence was intensified by the civil implications of the Russian aggression. At the November 2021 Annual Conference, the NATO Joint CBRN Defence Centre of Excellence explored various aspects of possible interactions between the NATO and the EU. Soon, a special workshop on CBRN consequence management followed.

As the war provides a vital topic and conditions for disinformation and propaganda, EU and NATO staff intensified interaction on Strategic Communication and come up with proposals for broader cooperation. Staff cooperated in information exchange about the information environment on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and ensured that they work with relevant information. Situational awareness of hostile activities also included the EU Rapid Alert System. Both staff participated in tracking Chinese communication activities, which were aimed at providing support to Russia.

In this difficult environment caused by war, the NATO-led "Information Environment Assessment Tiger Team" promoted close cooperation and coordination, including capacity development, and both organizations participated in the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism. Both organisations participated in the project "Disinformation in Democracies: improving Societal Resilience to Disinformation", which was aimed at case studies from seven countries (NATO, 2022). Regarding communication, the EU and NATO organs (StratCom CoE and European CoE for Countering Hybrid Threats) exchanged knowledge on tactics identification, techniques, and procedures of hostile actors within the information sphere. Moreover, the EU and NATO continued the coordination of public communication, including mutual amplification of digital content, common messaging, and public diplomacy (NATO, 2022).

The Russian aggression against Ukraine with the increasing internationalisation of the conflict and adverse effects represents another

complex and large-scale challenge for cooperation between the EU and NATO. The event in the scope is comparable with the pandemic, but potentially unprecedented consequences in the case of escalation. Most probably, the Russo-Ukrainian war will belong to the most important conflicts in the 21st century, influencing its character in terms of a fight between democratic and non-democratic forces. As pointed out by Timothy Snyder in his essay written for Foreign Affairs, the future of Europe is being (again) decided on the eastern battlefields (Snyder, 2022). Both, defeating Russia in Ukraine or its victory there, will have significant consequences for the security of Europe and the nature of hybrid threats. For that reason, cooperation between the EU and NATO in this area is vital for the security of Europe. However, it is mainly up to the states how much they will enjoy access to the bodies, tools, and expertise both actors develop in cooperation.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this article was to assess cooperation between the EU and NATO in hybrid threats. For this reason, two research questions were formulated. First, how did cooperation between the EU and NATO regarding hybrid threats evolved?

Regarding the cooperation between the EU and NATO in the field of hybrid threats, the laic public may have an impression attributed to Oscar Wilde that "bureaucracy is expanding to meet the needs of expanding bureaucracy" (Quotes.pub, 2023). Indeed, the EU and NATO expanded their cooperation into several areas linked to hybrid threats, which since 2014 experienced a boost caused by external factors, mainly the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2022 Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. However, in this case, cooperation is based merely on the extension of links and adaptation of existing structures for the benefit of both organisations and their member states. Cooperation is vital for connecting the civilian background of the EU with the military perspectives of NATO: the two elements, which are key for addressing hybridity. Moreover, it is evident that the EU and NATO developed mechanisms that allow similar perceptions of the threats (e. g., legislative inputs, joint threat assessment, staff consultations, and exchanges) and coordinated responses (mastered in joint exercises). Still, it is up to the member states how much they will enjoy access to the bodies, tools, and expertise both actors developed in cooperation to strengthen and optimize their own national capacities.

The second research question was focusing on how this development might be interpreted and understood in the context of institutionalist theory. The character and extent of activities proven, that institutions matter, and when necessary, they adapt existing structures, extend links or create new bodies in the areas evaluated as beneficial for cooperation. From many perspectives, it is a rational choice leading to innovation within organisations and adaptation to a new environment, and with it comes enhanced justification of institutional existence. This model of course follows existing institutional background and is built on existing experience. In this regard, "patch dependency" is creating certain limits. From the perspective of historical institutionalism, it is not surprising that both organisations enhanced their activities after the deteriorating situation in Ukraine in 2014 and again after the outbreak of global pandemics in 2020, and (most probably) again during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. External events shaped the window of opportunity to create and adapt the activities of both organisations which might be relevantly analysed in the context of discursive institutionalism.

From the macro-level perspective, organizations created a very dense network of specialised institutions (in the broader sense) or specialized bodies, with varying autonomy and levels of formality, varying memberships, tasks, and aims. Even for researchers and insiders, it is sometimes hard to see the full picture of "who does what" which raises questions about the effectiveness of information flows, information assessment, and processes when it comes to the benefit of member states. The positive is that various points of contact and points of convergence exist in the international milieu and it is up to the administration of member states and decision-making authorities how to optimize the flow of information and benefits of participation in both structures and the dense institutional environment between.

This study has its intrinsic limits as it stands mainly on the official EU and NATO documents and published information which, in line with institutionalist theory, presents positive information about cooperation and achievements. On the other side, the failures and not developed potential of cooperation are hidden, and their uncovering will probably require an insider perspective, which might be developed in a policy paper with some proposals for further strengthening. For sure, fast developing security environment will provide many incentives for doing it.

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POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT PARTIES AND THE RHETORIC OF EMOTIONS: THE SLOVAK CASE STUDY

Anton Gazarek[1] and Branislav Uhrecký[2]

Abstract
This article analyses the emotional rhetoric of the populist radical right parties in Slovakia - the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the People's Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) - in their 2016 and 2020 election manifestos. Emotional rhetoric, or pathos, consists of emotional appeals, and this article looks specifically at four discrete appeals to emotions: retrospective anger and enthusiasm; and prospective fear and hope, and connects these emotional appeals with topics according to their relevance. This research utilises qualitative content analysis drawing categories from the field of political psychology. Unexpectedly, it is found that positive emotional appeals are generally more common than negative ones in the election manifestos of the populist radical right. The second finding is that populist radical right parties with government experience apply a very different strategy in their emotional rhetoric. The more extreme ĽSNS, without government experience, relies more on the negative emotional appeal of anger, and SNS, with extensive government experience, relies on the positive emotional appeals of hope and enthusiasm. Furthermore, these cases confirm the hypothesis that a populist radical right party that uses more appeals to anger has greater success in general elections.

Keywords: *Emotional appeals, Emotional rhetoric, Pathos, Cognitive appraisal theory, The populist radical right, The far-right, Slovakia.*

INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on the appeals to emotions made by radical right political parties and by classifying the kinds of appeals used, it examines whether there are variations in the sorts of appeals used by individual parties. As a case study, the objects of research are populist radical right parties

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in Slovakia, namely Kotlebists - People's Party - Our Slovakia (Kotlebovci - Ľudová strana - Naše Slovensko, ĽSNS) and the Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana, SNS) (see: Kevický, 2022), and we investigate how these parties used appeals to emotions in their election manifestos for the 2016 and 2020 Slovak parliamentary elections.

SNS is a mainstream nationalist party that has been in parliament and government regularly since the fall of Communism and had ministers in the first government of independent Slovakia (1992 – 1994). However, SNS only formally became a part of the government coalition in October 1993 after the largest governing parties, Movement for Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko - HZDS), split and lost a number of its parliamentary deputies (Puskásová, 2009). SNS was also a government party from 1994 - 1998, 2006 – 2010 and 2016 - 2020. However, the party retained very radical positions on some topics (especially on the Roma minority and immigration). From its creation in 1990, it was very hostile to the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. The situation gradually changed with the new SNS Leader, Andrej Danko, in 2012 to the point where he was in a coalition government with the Hungarian minority party, Bridge (Most-Híd) from 2016 to 2020.

The second party examined in this research, ĽSNS, first stood in parliamentary elections in 2010 and is also strongly nationalist, with the Roma minority and immigrants currently its primary targets. However, the populist radical right ĽSNS is more extreme than SNS. This means that ĽSNS challenges the current democratic system and would like to see alterations to it. Some other experts have labelled the party as a far-right (Smolecová and Šárovec, 2021) or ultra-nationalist and extremist party (Kukovič and Just, 2022). In the past, the ĽSNS party used to proclaim itself as a non-political actor (Žúborová and Borarosová, 2017), in line with the party´s populist self-identification with the 'pure people' against the 'corrupt elite'. If we look at the Slovak populist radical right in terms of its transnational party membership in the European Parliament (EP), ĽSNS has been non-aligned to any European political party since winning seats in the 2019 EP elections. SNS belonged to the Eurosceptic Europe of Freedom and Democracy group when it had EP seats from 2009-2014, so SNS is known on the European stage as well as being a well-established party actor in Slovakia.

Appeals to emotions are of high research importance as an important tool in political communication. The intention of the emotional appeal is to evoke a certain emotion in the audience, i.e. *pathos* in Aristotelian terms. The topic of appeals to emotions has mainly been researched by political psychologists

and political scientists. Some quantitative studies on emotional appeals are based on big data (see: e.g. Widmann, 2021; Valentim and Widmann, 2023), and they ascribe emotional appeals based on the meaning of a single word (e.g. the word *threat* or *danger* refers to an appeal to fear), not the whole sentence. This can be slightly misleading, as the same word can bear a different emotional appeal depending on the context in which the word is placed. Other researchers of emotional appeals have conducted experiments (e.g. Nerb and Spada, 2001; Brader, 2006; Valentino et al., 2011; Weber, 2012; Song, 2016) bringing valuable identification of emotional appeals but also of their effects on political behaviour. Yet another branch of research on appeals to emotions (e.g. Ridout and Searles, 2011; Searles and Ridout, 2017) is based on a qualitative design that does not allow for analysis of a wide population of data, nor the study of human behaviour, but may offer researchers a deeper understanding of the emotional rhetoric utilised in political discourse and then contextual understanding of emotional appeals.

The primary aim of this research is to clarify the nature of emotional rhetoric employed by populist radical right parties. Additionally, it presents an insightful approach to identifying emotional appeals within political discourse introduced to the Central and Eastern Europe context, specifically Slovakia.

Our research employs a qualitative design with some quantitative data processing with the aims to a) identify what emotional rhetoric is used in election campaigns and b) whether some difference between the parties of the common radical right sphere (within the Slovak political spectrum) could be observed. The analysis focused on a total of four election manifestos released by the SNS and ĽSNS parties for the Slovak parliamentary elections held in 2016 and 2020. Two independent coders coded manifestos. Every sentence in the manifestoes stands for a coding unit and each coding unit was assigned to one of five categories: 1) no emotional appeal, 2) appeal to enthusiasm, 3) appeal to hope, 4) appeal to anger, and 5) appeal to fear. When identifying the dominant appeal in the sentence. The coders, a PhD student of political science and a PhD Student of applied psychology, were instructed to consider context, i.e. the preceding and following sentences in the manifestos. Validity of the results was ensured by measuring such use of multiple coders and calculating inter-coder agreement.

When analysing the data, the hypotheses took into account that the literature on the populist radical right suggests that these parties should rely more on negative rather than positive emotional rhetoric (e.g. Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, Widmann, 2021, Valentim and Widmann, 2023).

We also had expectations, based on the functional theory, that incumbent parties should be more positive in their rhetoric than their challenging counterparts. Finally, based on cognitive appraisal theory (e.g. Brader, 2006; Valentino et al., 2011; Searles and Ridout, 2017), we hypothesise that parties with more anger appeals should have greater success in elections.

This article begins by exploring the literature on the populist radical right in Slovakia, with specific emphasis on the categorisation of the SNS and ĽSNS parties, pertaining to the role of emotional appeals in the discourse of these parties. Followed by a methodological section which introduces three hypotheses. Finally, the study advances to an analytical phase, culminating in the presentation of results. The article concludes with a comprehensive review of the findings.

1 THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT IN SLOVAKIA

There are several ways of classifying ĽSNS and SNS. They could be designated as far right (Smolecová and Šárovec, 2021), radical right or even extreme right and in the case of ĽSNS also the national populist (Kukovič and Just, eds., 2022). This article embraces Mudde's (2007) term 'populist radical right'. Mudde defines it by specifying three core features: nativism, authoritarianism and populism. Nativism means that the territory of the state should be inhabited only by the members of the nation, the 'native group', and non-natives are considered to be a danger to society; authoritarianism refers to a 'strictly ordered society', where any misconduct against the authority is severely punished; and populism depicts the ruling class as rotten in comparison to the 'pure people' (Mudde, 2007, pp. 22-23). Populists frame their rhetoric as if they were outside the political establishment (Mudde, 2007; Ernst, Engesser and Esser, 2017; Widmann, 2021). Both analysed parties bear traits of nativism (opposing immigration and the Roma minority), and populism, and display some authoritarian elements. Mudde (2007, p. 307) himself classifies SNS Party as a populist radical right party. ĽSNS proves all the three core features of a populist radical right party. However, there is a difference between the two parties since SNS could be viewed as a 'mainstream' nationalist party (Mesežnikov and Gyárfášová, 2016), well-established in Slovakia's democratic system. SNS, as mentioned above, was a member of several Slovak governments between 1993 and 2020, whereas ĽSNS is an inherently anti-system party (Filipec, 2017). Moreover, in 2019 it faced a threat of dissolution by the Supreme Court of Slovak Republic because Facebook posts of its members wished to

alter the current democratic political system. Other Slovak parties generally did not consider it a credible coalition partner (Garaj, Bardovič, and Mihálik, 2021). Nonetheless, both parties exploit the same topics of nationalism and nativism, immigration, minority issues, and populism. They support the role of a strong state and the 'firm hand' of the government, which are traits of authoritarianism. Therefore, they are categorised as belonging to the same family of the populist radical right.

1.1 The Role of Emotional Appeals in Populist Radical Right Rhetoric

The literature on the far right recognises that the strategy of European populist radical right parties is based on fear. Fear is an essential tool by which the far right homogenises the in-group and polarises its relationship towards the out-group (Mudde, 2007, p. 109). Fear helps to create a societal bond, giving individuals the feeling of belonging to a community that will protect them against outside threats, and the politics of fear is a well-known concept in terrorist and anti-terrorist campaigns (Mudde, 2007). As Mudde (2007) explains, 'The perfect breeding ground for populist radical right parties is one in which there are widespread insecurities and resentment' (p. 297). Insecurity is a form of fear which stems from the perception of threat or danger, whereas resentment, or indignation at being treated unfairly, is a form of anger. Kazharski (2019, p. 6) notes that ĽSNS' rhetoric contributes to the creation of an 'atmosphere of fear, mistrust and a general sense of degeneration of the system'.

Another important negative emotion in the literature on the far right is anger (Bustikova, 2019), and resentment against minority groups in particular fuels support for far-right parties. Resentment is a feeling of some loss connected to a desire to take revenge for harm caused so it is an intense form of anger that stimulates revenge. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, p. 47) also stress the role of anger in the success of populist movements: '...the key strength of a populist social movement relies on its capacity to interpret a widespread feeling of anger with the establishment and convincingly propose that the solution lies in the sovereign people'. According to this definition, anger is an integral part of populist rhetoric directly aimed at elites: populist rhetoric positions the 'pure' people against a corrupt elite.

1.2 Appeals to Discrete Emotions

The model of discrete emotions allows for discerning between individual emotions. The valence model merely distinguishes between positive and negative dimensions of emotions, without a concern for specific discrete emotions, such as fear and anger - these represent the negative valence, whereas hope and enthusiasm represent the positive valence. This research adds yet another original and very important aspect to the valence, specifically the retrospective and prospective direction of emotional appeals. Therefore, the campaigns are analysed from the angle of cognitive appraisal theory. Based on its theoretical background (see, e.g., Marcus et al., 2000; Weber, 2012; Valentino et al., 2011, Brader, 2006; Ridout and Searles, 2011; Steenbergen and Ellis, 2006; Brader and Marcus 2013, Troost et al., 2013), this article identifies four main emotions that are considered to have a crucial impact on voting behaviour: hope and fear are prospective emotions, and enthusiasm and anger are retrospective emotions. Hope and fear share uncertainty about what will happen - fear with negative and hope with positive expectations - but both emotions are appraisals of the future (Robinson, 2008, pp. 155-159). Enthusiasm and anger are reactions to something that is already happening or happened in the past.

Hope has a forward-looking (prospective) orientation and is a very important political emotion as voters wish for their elected representatives to represent their goals, interests and values. Hope is wishing for a better future (Brader and Marcus, 2013, p. 175), and is connected to a specific object in the future (Just et al., 2007, p. 235-236). The expectation of a positive outcome creates hope. In the words of a professor of medicine, Groopman (2004, p. 19), hope involves the so-called 'affective forecasting', that is, 'the comforting, energizing, elevating feeling that you experience when you project in your mind a positive future. This requires the brain to generate a different affective, or feeling, state than the one you are currently in.' Moreover, it is a compensatory emotion to fear (Just et al., 2007, p. 236), so in order to mitigate fear, the speakers should elicit hope in their audience.

There is relatively little research on the effect that the discrete emotion of hope has on voting behaviour. The valence (positive/negative) model (e.g., Brader, 2005) does not distinguish between hope and enthusiasm: it places them both under the category of enthusiasm and does not specifically look at the separate effects of these discrete emotions. In political psychology, enthusiasm comprises a spectrum of positive emotions such as happiness, hope and pride (Zajonc, 1998; Brader, 2005; Marcus et al, 2000; Valentino

et al., 2011, Brader and Marcus, 2013), as well as optimism (Weber, 2012, p. 417), elevation, and gratitude (Haidt, 2003). This article understands the emotions of gratitude, elevation, joy and pleasure to be part of the broader concept of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is considered an important positive emotion in political psychology (e.g. Marcus et. al, 2000; Brader, 2006; Ridout and Searles 2011). It can lead voters to depend more on their prior beliefs. It increases commitment, strengthens involvement, and has a positive effect on motivation (Brader, 2005, p. 390). The result is that enthusiasm strengthens the conviction that what one is doing is right and that one should continue to follow a set path and keep existing loyalties. It stimulates political involvement and reinforces prior attitudes when making decisions (Marcus et al., 2000, Valentino et al. 2011, Brader and Marcus, 2013) and sparks greater interest in the campaign (Brader, 2005).

Hope should be differentiated from enthusiasm as a separate discrete emotion due to a difference between the events that elicit these emotions, according to the certainty that they will happen: retrospective events have already happened or are happening, while prospective events might or might not happen. Since negative emotions cause different voting behaviour depending on whether they are retrospective (anger) or prospective (fear), we believe that the prospective hope deserves the same academic attention as the retrospective enthusiasm and its effects on political behaviour should be specified.

Looking at negative emotions, fear is associated with a general (imagined) threat to someone's well-being (Kemper, 2004; Lazarus, 1991; Steenbergen and Ellis, 2006). The common unifying theme around which fear is centred is the perception of threat or danger (e.g., Marcus et. al, 2000; Brader, 2006, Steenbergen and Ellis, 2006). Put simply, 'Fear is a reaction to the threat' (Brader, 2005, p. 390). It is a reaction to dangers of unknown origin, like unexpected noises or objects; or it can be a reaction to something that previous experience suggests is associated with danger (Brader and Marcus, 2013, p. 177). Fear, or anxiety, is generally understood as a reaction to the risk or threat of imminent harm (Song, 2016), to new uncertain circumstances outside one's control, or to a threat to one's well-being or way of life and values (Steenbergen and Ellis, 2006, p. 112). It is a reaction to danger, and it is an appraisal of the future (Robinson, 2008) and is thus a prospective emotion.

According to cognitive appraisal theory, frightened individuals may shrink from 'costly political action' (Valentino et al., 2011, p. 2), such as taking part in a demonstration or petition, while fear also leads to an openness to

new information and therefore decreases the reliance on heuristics (see, Brader, 2006; Redlawsk et al. 2010; Brader and Marcus, 2013; Song 2016). Moreover, fear of other candidates increases the willingness of people to support their preferred candidate financially (Miller et al., 2017). Fear rhetoric is a good strategy for the incumbent, ruling party because in many instances the government needs to regulate the behaviour of the masses so that they are inclined towards inaction rather than action.

However, anger may be a stronger emotion in political campaigns. Anger is usually triggered by perceived injustice, insults, unfair treatment, or betrayal affecting the self or other members of the in-group (Haidt, 2003, pp. 854–856; Song, 2016). From a political perspective, Steenbergen and Ellis (2006, p. 110) find that anger (aversion) is elicited by affronts to core beliefs and values, or when voters believe they are being harmed on purpose, or that another person could have done something to mitigate the negative effects of an event but failed to do so (Steenbergen and Ellis, 2006, p. 113). Nerb and Spada (2001) conducted an experiment in which they portrayed a fictional scenario of an ecological catastrophe where a tanker spilt oil into the ocean. The less control there was over the accident (for example, if it was caused by bad weather conditions), the less angry people were; the more control they had over the accident (for example, if the damage was caused by neglect of safety procedures), the greater the anger of participants in the experiment.

Belonging to the in-group is also important for creating emotions. A group member personalises the events that harm or favour an in-group (Troost et al., 2013, p. 192). Anger can function as a motivator for voters to be more active and play a more participatory societal role (MacKuen et. al. 2010) and can boost participation, but it may also weaken the analytical approach and cause an over-reliance on heuristics, a person might not search for new information (Valentino et al., 2009) and selectively avoid some information, relying more on instincts (Song, 2016).

2 METHODS

This research analyses four election manifestos presented by SNS and ĽSNS for the 2016 and 2020 Slovak parliamentary elections. These manifestos were divided into 1734 coding units, that is, sentences or phrases consisting of a subject and a predicate. Two independent coders coded manifestos: one was a female doctoral research student of Political Science, and the other was a male doctoral research student of Applied Psychology. Each coding unit

was assigned five categories: no emotional appeal, appeal to enthusiasm, appeal to hope, appeal to anger, and appeal to fear. Coders were instructed to consider the context (the preceding and following sentences) to choose the appeal that seems dominant in the sentence. The coding unit in this case is a *theme,* a phrase with its own meaning, so if a sentence includes several sub-sentences, this article considers each sub-sentence as a single coding unit. The list of themes or topics with short descriptions can be found in Table 1 below. Assigning no topic to a data unit was also a possibility. Coders assigned identical topics to the coding unit in 51.4% of total cases (κ = .44). Points of disagreement were also discussed, and a consensus was reached.

Table 1: *List of topics*

	Topic	Description
1	Social Security	Social benefits - help to pensioners, families, people in need and the poor.
2	Health / Health care	Healthcare issues, the health of the population.
3	Economy	Agriculture, industry, taxes, wages, banking sector.
4	Education	The educational system, schools and universities.
5	Immigration	Illegal immigration, immigration quotas.
6	Roma	Roma minority.
7	LGBTI/ Feminism / Gender Equality	LGBTI rights, feminism and gender equality-equality of women and men (equal conditions at work and pay), matriarchy (as opposition to patriarchy).
8	Patriarchy	Traditional roles - the main role within the family and society is attributed to men, a woman's value is derived from a man and from the role of a mother.
9	Conservatism	Christianity, Christian values, and traditional values are usually anchored in religion.
10	Liberalism	New (imported) values, open and equal society, opposition to traditional values.
11	Populism	Discontent with political elites: pure people vs. corrupt politicians/ oligarchs/financial groups.
12	Militarism	Guns, army and its importance.

13	Nationalism / Nativism	Protection and conservation of national purity of Slovakia, Slovakia to Slovaks.
14	EU	European Union, Eurozone, Euro currency.
15	USA / NATO	United States of America, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.
16	The West	Combination of the EU, USA and NATO.
17	Russia	Russian Federation, the East.

To illustrate the coding process, here is an excerpt from the ĽSNS 2020 manifesto:

'We are the only ones with the courage to protect Slovakia (appeal: enthusiasm, topic: nationalism/nativism), so that it is the same for our children as it was for us (appeal: hope, topic: nationalism/nativism)... The People's Party Our Slovakia and its partners are the only political power (appeal: enthusiasm, topic: nationalism) which can stop dangerous liberals in their aspiration to destroy Slovakia (appeal: fear, topic: nationalism/nativism) the same way that they destroyed the countries of Western Europe (appeal: anger, topic: the West).'

2.1 Data Analysis

When the coding was completed, we checked the validity of our results by taking measures such as calculating inter-coder agreement. Inter-rater agreement was calculated to assess the reliability of our coding scheme. The coders agreed on the appeal category in 77.2% of the data units. However, because the percentage rate of agreement does not take the possibility of random agreement into account, we also calculated Cohen's kappa index, which showed a satisfactory level of agreement, over 0.6 (κ = .65). The contingency table of codes assigned by the coders can be seen in Appendix 1. Points of disagreement were discussed among the authors and coders, and a consensus was reached for each of them. In addition to emotional appeals, coders also assigned topics to data units so that we could also evaluate the context in which emotional appeals are used by ĽSNS and SNS. The topics were pre-constituted, having been identified by the authors as the main topics of the manifestos when they broke the text down into single coding units and prepared the coding sheets.

Quantitative analysis was performed via IBM SPSS 20 and Jamovi. Apart from frequencies and percentages, we also calculated the Chi-

square test and Z-score for two population proportions to determine the statistical significance of differences in the frequency of appeals between manifestos. The Chi-squared test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference when comparing multiple values, while the Z-score for two population proportions was used when comparing specific pairs of values (i.e., ratios of appeals in manifestos). Because tests of statistical significance only determine the generalisability of the finding, we also calculated pertaining effect sizes (Cramer's V and Cohen's h), which determine the strength of the difference when comparing values. Cohen's h was calculated additionally via a calculator on the Statistics Kingdom website (StatsKingdom, n.d.)

2.2 Hypotheses

During election periods, emotional discourse is ubiquitous, and emotions of fear and anger in particular are at the forefront when scholars and journalists refer to the 'nation's mood' (Valentino et al., 2011, p. 156). The success of populist radical right parties lies in their extensive use of negative emotional rhetoric (Widmann, 2021), which leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: Negative appeals, such as appeals to fear and anger, are the prevalent emotional appeals in the rhetoric of populist radical right parties.

The functional theory of political communication, on the other hand, holds that the rhetoric of that the rhetoric of incumbent parties is usually more positive than that of challenging parties, and that election campaigns function as an informal cost-benefit analysis for voters, where they consider 'costs (attacks and defence) and benefits (acclaims)' (Benoit, 2017, p. 197). Incumbents remind the voters of their accomplishments, whereas challengers point to their shortcomings. Both sides typically deal with the performance of the incumbent party more than with the record of the challenger, but they do so from a different perspective: the incumbents acclaim and challengers attack (Dudek and Partacz, 2009). Both types of parties would also defend if under attack (Benoit, 2017). The functional theory discerns merely the emotional valence of the rhetoric, with positive being the benefit (acclaim), and negative being the cost (attack and defence). We, therefore, present the second hypothesis:

H2: Incumbent populist radical right parties use more positive than negative emotions than their opposition counterparts.

The cognitive appraisal theory assumes that anger and enthusiasm are mobilising emotions. Anger would appear to be a good emotional strategy for both incumbent and non-incumbent parties, as both need to secure participation in elections, and the avoidance of new information might discourage the voter from seeking more information about political matters so that their prior beliefs and voting affinity would not be challenged. Later research indicates that there is a strong link between anger and the success of populist right-wing parties (Rico, Guinjoan and Anduiza, 2017; Salmela and von Scheve, 2018), so the third and ultimate hypothesis is:

H3: A populist radical right party with more anger appeals enjoys greater success in elections.

3 RESULTS

As can be seen in Figure 1, the appeals to hope were the most prevalent in three of four manifestos. However, the frequency of the remaining appeals seems to be more varied. We had to use the Chi-Square test to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the manifestos. The Chi-square test confirmed that the differences in the frequency of appeals between the four manifestos are statistically significant (the results of Chi-squared tests are presented in Table 2). We have confirmed that the manifestos are not identical in their proportion of emotional appeals. We also looked at the differences between specific appeals and the analysis showed there were significant for each of them: none of the appeals was used in the same proportion by ĽSNS and SNS in 2016 and 2020.

Figure 1*: The percentual proportions of appeals in particular manifestos*
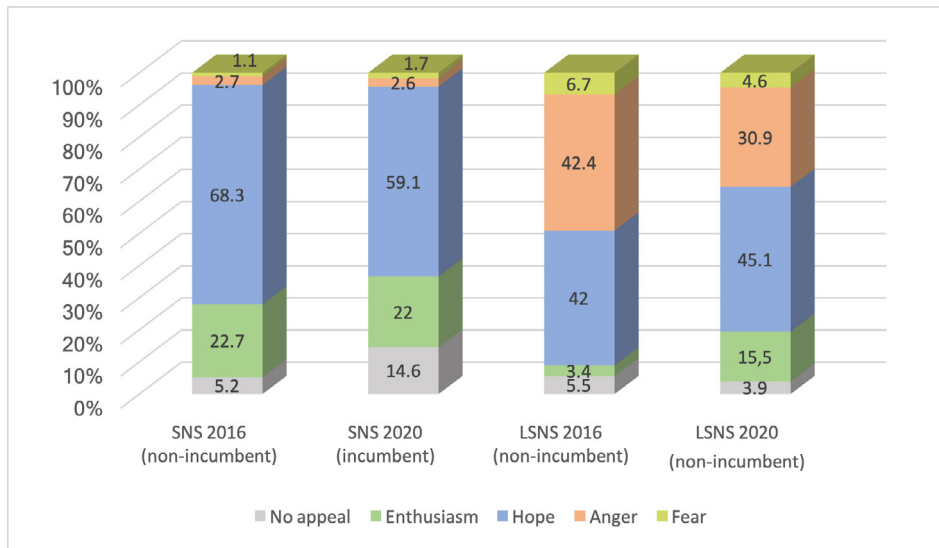
Source: Created by the authors

The first hypothesis (H1) was that 'Negative appeals, such as appeals to fear and anger, are the prevalent emotional appeals in the rhetoric of populist radical right parties.' This research showed that this only applies to ĽSNS's 2016 manifesto, where negative appeals were identified in 49.1% of coding units, compared to 45.4% for positive appeals. In the other manifestos, there was a prevalence of positive emotional appeals, hope, and enthusiasm (see Figure 1). Although our research shows that negative appeals prevailed in only one case, we would stress that the occurrence of negative emotional appeals, especially the appeal to anger, is significantly more salient for the more extreme ĽSNS than for the more mainstream SNS. The most prevalent appeals are positive ones, namely the appeal to hope. In only one case – the 2016 ĽSNS manifesto – is the negative appeal of anger stronger, though not to a great extent (anger 42.4%, hope 42%).

Table 2: *Chi-square tests of all appeals across all four manifestos[3]*

appeal	df	χ^2	p	V
anger		.298	< .001	.415
fear		21.9	< .001	.112
hope	3	74.7	< .001	.208
enthusiasm		49.2	< .001	.168
no appeal		49.1	< .001	.168
all appeals	12	385	< .001	.272

Source: Created by the authors

SNS had fewer appeals to hope in 2020 than in 2016: appeals to hope were present in 68.3% of their manifesto in 2016, compared to 59.1% in 2020. The difference was statistically significant, but it is on the margin between a small and a negligible effect (Z = 2.793, p = .005, h = .19). SNS, in general, appealed more to positive and less to negative emotions whereas in the case of ĽSNS, appeals to anger were used very frequently. They were present in 42.9% of the 2016 ĽSNS manifesto, while in 2020, it was 30.9%. As we can see, there is a decrease in appeals to anger that is small but statistically significant (Z = 3.197, p = .001, h = .24). Along with the decrease in appeals to anger, there was also an increase in appeals to enthusiasm in ĽSNS (Z = 4.890, p < .000, h = .44). Although negative emotions are very important for the rhetoric of the populist radical right, positive emotions, primarily hope, prevail in the rhetoric of the populist radical right parties. The in-party comparisons are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: *Z-tests of two-population proportions for in-party comparisons[4]*

appeal	SNS 2016 vs. SNS 2020			ĽSNS 2016 vs. ĽSNS 2020		
	Z	p	h	Z	p	h
anger	0.081	.935	.00	3.197	.001	.24
fear	.675	.500	.00	1.29	.196	.10

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[3] Note: *In the case of individual appeals, their frequency was compared to the frequency of all other appeal categories.*

[4] Note: *For Hedges' h, the interpretation is following – over 0.2 for small difference, over 0.5 for medium difference, and over 0.8 for large difference.*

hope	2.793	.005	.19	.805	.421	.06
enthusiasm	.234	.815	.02	4.89	< .001	.44
no appeal	4.625	< .001	.32	.993	.321	.07

Source: Created by the authors

Our data also refutes the second hypothesis: 'Incumbent populist radical right parties use more positive than negative emotions in comparison with their opposition counterparts'. In the case of the four manifestos we analysed, incumbency does not play a vital role in the use of positive and negative appeals to emotions. In the case of SNS, there was a change in incumbency, since the party was in government in 2020 but not in 2016, yet the total ratio between the positive and negative valence changed only slightly and without statistical significance. As we can see in Figure 1, in 2020, when the party had been in government, 94.8% of appeals were positive, compared to 95.6% in 2016. Our results do show, however, that there was a significant change in the overall use of emotional appeals, both positive and negative, between the incumbency and non-incumbency period. For SNS there was a small increase in sentences containing no appeal, from 5.2% in 2016 to 14.6% in 2020 (Z = 4.625, p < .001, h = .32). In the case of ĽSNS, which was never an incumbent party, the difference in the proportion of sentences without emotional appeal between 2016 and 2020 was not significant. Based on this case we argue that the incumbent party uses fewer emotional appeals when compared to the campaigns of parties not in government.

Our research confirms the third hypothesis, 'A populist radical right party with more anger appeals has greater success in elections'. The significance of this may be limited, as there are of course many other factors affecting the election result, but we present an overview of the electoral gains of the two parties in three Slovak parliamentary elections in Figure 2. The figure shows the 2012 election, where both parties were non-incumbent, as well as the 2016 and 2020 elections that were the focus of our research since the success of a party can be measured through comparison to its results in previous elections.

Figure 2: *Percentage of the vote gained by SNS and ĽSNS in the Slovak parliamentary elections*
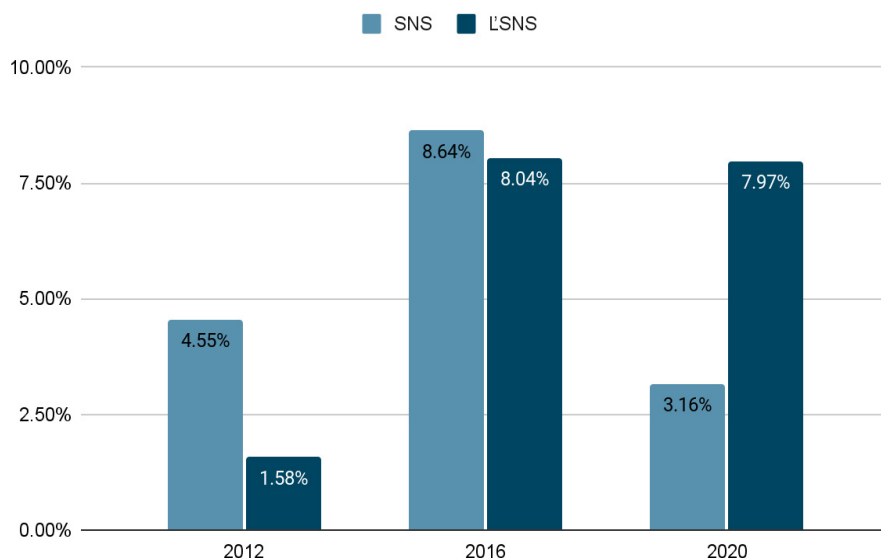
Based on these results, ĽSNS is a party which managed to grow from a marginal party with 1.58% of the vote in 2012 – less than the 5% necessary to gain seats in the Slovak parliament - to a medium-sized party with 8.04% of the vote and 14 of the 150 seats in the Parliament in 2016. ĽSNS was highly dependent on anger appeals in 2016, even more than in 2020. The difference between the two parties in the use of anger appeals is far more significant, with ĽSNS appealing to anger more frequently in both years (42.4% in 2016: $Z = 13.257$, $p < .000$, $h = 1.09$; and 30.9% in 2020: $Z = 11.298$, $p < .000$, $h = .85$). In the rhetoric of SNS, on the other hand, the appeals of anger (2.7% in 2016, 2.6% in 2020) and fear (1.1% in 2016, 1.7% in 2020) were not utilised that much. There were no significant increases or decreases in these appeals.

As we can see in Table 4, the two parties became less different in the use of emotional appeals before the 2020 elections. In 2020, ĽSNS still appealed more to fear and less to enthusiasm with statistical significance, but the actual size of these differences did not even reach the margin of a small effect.

Table 4: *Z-tests of two-population proportions for between-party comparisons*

appeal	SNS 2016 vs. ĽSNS 2016			SNS 2020 vs. ĽSNS 2020		
	Z	p	h	Z	p	h
anger	13.257	< .001	1.09	11.298	< .001	.85
fear	4.01	< .001	.31	2.52	.012	.17
hope	6.63	< .001	.53	4.46	< .001	.282
enthusiasm	6.57	< .001	.62	2.67	.008	.17
no appeal	.137	.891	.01	6.19	< .001	.39

We did not compare the manifestos of the parties from 2012 as ĽSNS was only a marginal player at that time, but in the elections of 2016 and 2020, our results do suggest a pattern: the more anger appeals the populist radical right party uses, the better the election result.

3.1 Qualitative Text Examples: Appeals Assigned to Topics

We also looked at the topics to which the appeals are linked in the manifestos analysed (see Table 1). Analysis revealed that appeals to hope were quite prevalent across the manifestos, and as can be seen in Table 3, in the 2016 SNS manifesto appeals to hope were mostly linked to the economy (n = 85, 32.3%)[5], but also to nationalism/nativism (n = 45, 17.1%), social security (n = 36, 13.7%) and education (n = 30, 11.4%). Appeals to enthusiasm were the second most prevalent in the 2016 SNS manifesto and approximately half of them were linked to nationalism/nativism (n = 44, 50.6%), followed by the economy (n = 12, 13.8%). Appeals to fear and anger were scarce in the 2016 SNS manifesto. Half of the appeals to anger (n = 6, 50%) fall under the topic of populism (i.e. hatred against elites), while others were dispersed under other topics.

The association between the appeal to hope and the economy, which was strong in the 2016 SNS manifesto, was even stronger in 2020 (n = 85, 39.9%), after the party had been in government, and the following topics were also more prominent compared to 2016: healthcare (n = 27, 12.7%) and environment (n = 27, 12.7%). Appeals to enthusiasm were mainly linked to

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[5] 'n' represents the number of data units and the percentage figure represents the proportion of the specific appeals that was assigned to the stated topic. All percentages except those below 10% are reported in the text.

the economy (n = 23, 31.9%) and education (n = 17, 23.6%), while negative appeals, anger and fear, were too few to make any meaningful inferences about their link to specific topics. As we can see, the focus of appeals to enthusiasm shifted from national pride toward presenting the achievements of the party during its time in government, and a greater emphasis was put on health/healthcare and the environment in appeals to hope.

Anger, which was the most prevalent appeal in the 2016 ĽSNS manifesto, was mostly associated with the Roma minority (n = 21, 21%), followed by populism (n = 18, 18%) and the West (n = 16, 16%). In 2020, the Roma minority and corrupt elites (populism) were also the target of ĽSNS's appeals to anger. However, instead of a geopolitical entity (the West), ĽSNS aimed its anger at an ideological opponent, liberalism (n = 18, 12.1%). In the 2016 manifesto, hope was mainly associated with nationalism/nativism (n = 20, 20.4%), welfare/social security (n = 14, 14.3%) and the economy (n = 13, 13.3%). However, as ĽSNS became more legitimised by its presence in the Parliament, appeals to hope were much less concentrated on national sentiment in 2020, and were mainly associated with the economy (n = 79, 31.1%), followed by social security (n = 41, 16.1%) and healthcare (n = 27, 10.6%). Appeals to fear, though lesser in number, were mostly linked to the West (n = 4, 25%) and populism (n = 3, 18.8%). Appeals to enthusiasm were too few to infer any meaningful findings about its association with specific topics in 2016, but as ĽSNS became more visible and had greater political power, appeals to enthusiasm increased, and in the 2020 manifesto they have been primarily associated with the following topics: social security (n = 11, 22.9%), conservatism (n = 7, 14.6%), populism (n = 6, 12.5%) and the economy (n = 5, 10.4%). Appeals to enthusiasm under the topic of social security mostly expressed the party's concern for, and effort to help, ordinary people, pensioners, young families etc.

Table 5: *Examples of Appeals in the Analysed Political Manifestos*

Appeals	Example sentences
	SNS 2016
Enthusiasm	The strong state and proud citizens are the foundation for Slovakia's success!
Hope	We will limit the influence of international monopolies and oligarchs on the socioeconomic development of Slovakia.

Anger	The old continent is facing an organised process of dismantling traditional civilization based on nation-state**,** (*as well as efforts toward cultural, political, and ethnic destruction of ancestral European nations. - fear*)
Fear	Our country is still young and vulnerable.
SNS 2020	
Enthusiasm	We are continuing our successful work in building a strong country.
Hope	We will support Slovak food producers through food subsidy mechanisms.
Anger	We're against any form of discrimination, including so-called positive discrimination against the Slovak majority in mixed territories. The law must be applied to each individual equally.
Fear	We will not allow temporary or permanent military facilities of the United States to be positioned on the air bases Sliač and Kuchyňa, or any other military objects of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic.
ĽSNS 2016	
Enthusiasm	God has given us the most beautiful country in the world.
Hope	*(Once and for all, we will stop feeding antisocial parasites from our taxes. (anger) Whoever does not want to work, should not eat! - anger)***.** From the money that will be saved, we will support young people with enough for them to start a family.
Anger	While many decent families live in terrible conditions, robbers from our government are enjoying unimaginable luxury and parasites are given everything free of charge.
Fear	We will not let our women be harassed by aggressive immigrants, such as German women in Cologne.
LSNS 2020	
Enthusiasm	('*I got to know Marián Kotleba* [the mayor of Rimavská Sobota] *when he was the governor of the Banská Bystrica district. - no appeal)* … Now I've got to know him more personally and I've found he is no extremist. We've achieved a lot of good things together – we've built and repaired roads, helped pensioners and young people too.'
Hope	We believe that the path to prosperity leads through sensible spending and not endless tax increases.
Anger	Even prisoners are taken much better care than pensioners by our state.

Fear	Andrej Kiska and Peter Pellegrini do not just have the support of LGBT people in common, but also the desire to rule at any cost!				

Table 6*: Five Topics Most Frequently Associated with Appeals in Analysed Political Manifestos*

Appeals	1st topic	2nd topic	3rd topic	4th topic	5th topic
SNS 2016					
Enthu-siasm	Nationalism / nativism (50.6%)	Economics (13.8%)	Health / Healthcare (9.2%)	Social security (8.0%)	Conservativism (6.9%)
Hope	Economics (32.3%)	Nationalism / Nativism (17.1%)	Social security (13.7%)	Education (11.4%)	Health / Healthcare (5.7%)
Anger	Populism (50.0%)	Nationalism / Nativism (16.7%)	Health / Healthcare (8.3%)	Conservativism (8.3%)	The West (8.3%)
Fear	Conservativism (25.0%)	Populism (25.0%)	Nationalism / Nativism (25.0%)	No topic (25.0%)	
SNS 2020					
Enthu-siasm	Economics (31.9%)	Education (23.6%)	Militarism (9.7%)	Nationalism / Nativism (9.7%)	Social security (8.3%)
Hope	Economics (39.9%)	Health / Healthcare (12.7%)	Environment (12.7%)	Social security (9.4%)	Education (9.4%)
Anger	Roma minority (30.0%)	Economics (30.0%)	Health / Healthcare (10.0%)	Populism (10.0%)	The West (10.0%)
Fear	Liberalism (50.0%)	No topic (50.0%)			
LSNS 2016					
Enthu-siasm	Nationalism / nativism (33.3%)	Economics (16.7%)	Conservativism (16.7%)	Populism (16.7%)	Environment (16.7%)
Hope	Nationalism / nativism (20.4%)	Social security (14.3%)	Economics (13.3%)	Populism (11.2%)	Militarism (9.2%)
Anger	Roma minority (21.0%)	Populism (18.0%)	The West (16.0%)	Social security (9.0%)	Economics (9.0%)
Fear	The West (25.0%)	Populism (18.8%)	Conservativism (12.5%)	Roma minority (6.3%)	Liberalism (6.3%)
LSNS 2020					
Enthu-siasm	Social security (22.9%)	Conservativism (14.6%)	Populism (12.5%)	Economics (10.4%)	Nationalism / nativism (8.3%)

Hope	Economics (31.1%)	Social security (16.1%)	Health / Healthcare (10.6%)	Populism (9.4%)	Nationalism / nativism (6.7%)
Anger	Populism (25.5%)	Roma minority (18.8%)	Liberalism (12.1%)	The West (8.1%)	Health / Healthcare (8.1%)
Fear	Liberalism (25.0%)	Populism (20.8%)	The West (13.7%)	Social security (12.5%)	Economics (8.3%)

Source: Created by the authors

CONCLUSION

Despite our initial expectations, our findings show that populist radical right parties mostly rely on positive rather than negative appeals to emotions. There is a prevalence of positive emotional appeals in three of four manifestos and negative appeals prevail only in the case of the 2016 ĽSNS manifesto (negative 49.1%, positive 45.4%) where anger is the strongest, but only slightly (anger 44.4%, hope 42%). Negative emotional appeals are significantly more prominent in the manifestos of the more extreme ĽSNS than in the SNS manifestos. Populists are interested in portraying the current status quo as negative (Widmann, 2021), so this suggests that SNS is less populist than ĽSNS. The SNS party is also likely to be more positive in its rhetoric because it has previously been in government. The SNS rhetoric is mostly positive, the strongest being the appeal to hope. Mouffe (2005, p. 56) suggests that the success of far-right parties lies in their ability to provide people 'with some form of hope', and this is in line with our findings, where hope is an essential element in the rhetoric of the populist radical right in all the cases analysed, as shown in Figure 1. The dominant negative appeal in the rhetoric of the populist radical right parties we have examined is anger, and not fear as some literature on the far right suggests (e.g., Kazharski, 2019). This finding is in line with the argument of Rico, Guinjoan and Anduiza (2017) argument that populism is linked to anger and not fear.

The incumbency of the party does not play a vital role in the proportion of negative and positive emotional rhetoric used by the populist radical right, but it appears rather to depend on whether the party has any government experience. In the case of SNS, there was a change in incumbency in the period examined in this article, but the total ratio of positive and negative appeals did not significantly change (see Figure 1: SNS incumbency 2020: positive 94.8% / non-incumbency 2016: positive 95.9%). What incumbency did affect was the overall proportion of both positive and negative appeals to emotions: based on the findings it appears that the incumbent party

uses fewer emotional appeals compared to campaigns conducted when not in government. SNS had a significant increase in sentences containing no appeal ($Z = 4.625$, $p < .000$, $h = .32$) from its non-incumbent campaign in 2016 (5.2%) compared to its incumbent campaign in 2020 (14.6%). In the case of ĽSNS, which was never an incumbent party, the difference in the proportion of sentences without emotional appeal between 2016 and 2020 was not significant.

The article also hypothesised that a populist radical right party with more anger appeals has greater success in elections. ĽSNS was highly reliant on anger appeals in 2016, even more so than in 2020. The difference between ĽSNS and SNS in the use of appeals to anger is far more significant, with ĽSNS appealing to anger more frequently in both years (42.4% in 2016; and 30.9% in 2020). The rhetoric of SNS appeals to anger (2.7% in 2016, 2.6% in 2020) and fear (1.1% in 2016, 1.7% in 2020) were little utilised and there were no significant increases or decreases in these appeals.

ĽSNS is a party which managed to grow from a marginal party with 1.58% of the vote in 2012 to a medium-sized party in 2016 with 8.04% of the votes cast (209,779 votes), which brought 14 of the 150 seats in the Parliament. SNS made its comeback to the Parliament in 2016 with 8.64% of the votes cast, whereas in the previous elections failed to reach the 5% threshold for gaining parliamentary seats by less than half a per cent of the vote (they received 4.55% of the vote), but their growth was not so rapid as that of ĽSNS (see Figure 2). Comparing the results of individual political parties between 2012 and 2016, SNS (Slovak National Party) saw an increase from 4.55% in 2012 to 8.64% in 2016, which represents a gain of 4.09%. ĽSNS increased from 1.58% in 2012 to 8.04% in 2016, resulting in an electoral gain of 6.46%. This is significantly higher than the 4.09% improvement seen by SNS in this period. Therefore, we perceive that the success of ĽSNS is greater because its increase compared to the previous period was larger in comparison to SNS.

Moreover, in 2020 SNS suffered defeat again as they only received 3.15% of the vote, whereas ĽSNS at that point increased their total number of votes to 229,660, even though their percentage of the votes cast was lower (7.97%) because of the higher turnout, and it became the fourth strongest party in the Slovak parliament. This shows that ĽSNS's strategy of using negative appeals and appeals to anger was more successful than SNS's campaign strategies. Therefore, the article´s results confirm the third hypothesis that a populist radical right party with more anger appeals has greater success in elections.

This research takes into account that there are other reasons for a party's electoral success than the extent to which it employs emotion in its rhetoric. For example, SNS's decline in popularity in 2020 could be attributed to corruption scandals and the fact that they were part of an unpopular government, under which Slovakia experienced the murder of a journalist for the first time in its modern history. Nonetheless, populist radical right parties strive to win over similar ideologically oriented voters, and the use of fewer emotional appeals to anger than their competitor could be one of the factors leading to SNS's votes declining substantially.

With regards to the final appeal examined, the appeal to enthusiasm, the authors of this article see the difference in the use of appeals to enthusiasm between the two parties, SNS with government experience and ĽSNS without any government experience. There is not a significant change in the use of appeals to enthusiasm in the rhetoric of the incumbent SNS (2020) and the non-incumbent SNS (2016) since appeals to enthusiasm were quite frequent in both SNS manifestos (22.7% in 2016 and 22% in 2020). For ĽSNS there was an increase in appeals to enthusiasm from 3.4% to 15.5%, although there was not a change in incumbency, so the reasons for the increase in enthusiasm appeals in 2020 are not clear-cut. One suspects, however, that a populist radical right party with government experience uses considerably more enthusiasm appeals than a party without any government experience.

The findings of this article could be tested by future research in two areas. Firstly, the methods employed for analysing the emotional appeals in election programmes could be employed more widely on radical right parties in other democracies, and on a broader range of political parties. Secondly, it would be useful to conduct similar research based on different data, such as Facebook, which are communication channels that are nowadays more widely used for the promotion of far-right parties (Garaj, 2018). Such material may be more prone to the use of emotional rhetoric by political parties, but it is ephemeral in nature. The authors of this article, therefore, opted on this occasion for election manifestos, since they are the most authoritative statements of a party's positions.

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Appendix 1: *Contingency table of inter-coder agreement*

		Coder 1					
		Anger	Fear	Enthusiasm	Hope	No appeal	Total
Coder 2	Anger	**235**	4	6	19	0	264
	Fear	42	**16**	2	38	1	99
	Enthusiasm	34	1	**228**	76	2	341
	Hope	34	2	9	**795**	7	847
	No appeal	21	1	24	71	**66**	183
	Total	366	24	269	999	76	1734

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Following the outbreak of a global pandemic caused by a virus SARS-CoV-2 also known as Covid-19, a great attention has been devoted to academic literature, primarily in the fields of hard sciences such as medicine or biology. Nevertheless, due to a global spread of the virus into everyday life, interfering not only with health issues but also with psychological, emotional and well-being issues, it has also attracted attention of other scientists. On the other hand, the global pandemic caused radical change in governance and challenged democratic values and standards. Governments all over the world adopted measures that restricted the freedom of movement and assembly, and the inevitable state of emergency took place. To put this briefly, we have witnessed multitude of approaches to prevent the spread of virus across the globe during such unprecedented situation.

From a political science point of view, it is essential to provide insights into governance measures, political communication of authorities in managing the state of emergency related to Covid-19 pandemic. This edited book, review of which is offered here, is one of the most robust contributions for the academia as that addresses exactly the issues of political communication, Covid-19, governance, rhetoric and times of crisis, which may also function as not only a title, but also keywords and headlines.

I have inquired and received an inspection copy of this publication based on my personal interest in this title in March 2022. It was precisely due to putting together a rather comprehensive literature review on political communication in times of crisis and hence, an edited volume focusing on this particular issue has emerged.

The book itself has four editors, and forty-four authors have contributed to its contents. The geographical composition of the authors covers almost all continents and is thus a viable option when seeking comprehensive and geographically robust case studies devoted to political communication and Covid-19 pandemic management with governance impacts. As the editors state in their Foreword, the book does not provide information about health issues related to pandemic, but on a contrary, it focuses on communication

of the authorities, media, and public discourse related to Covid-19 measures. While the editors claim that the selection of case studies is imperfect, there are twenty-seven national case studies dominantly from European states, supplemented by chapters devoted to WHO and EU as supra-national actors in pandemic management, communication and governance. Considering the case studies involved it is revealed that the case study of Slovakia stays omitted, however the pandemic caused a failure and dissolution of the Slovak government, as indicated by the title of the book itself: political communication, Covid-19, governance and rhetoric in times of crisis. It would be an ideal comparative case study to the rest of the V4 contributions.

Each chapter is devoted to a rather similar structure; essentially, they provide insights into a general political context followed by the reactions and measures taken to diminish the effects of a pandemic on society relevant to political communication of the leaders. The chapters contain both positive and negative examples of such communication and its impacts. However, the content only reflects the first wave of the epidemic after the global outbreak in 2020, and again without mentioning the management and communication of the crisis in Slovakia, which was a positive pioneer in the first wave. It would be an impossible mission to review and compare the contents of all chapters and case studies in this book. Rather than that, I will focus more on particular issues as implied after review. Foremost, the editors provide a rather solid introductory chapter, albeit not exhaustive, related to the scope of the publication. Literature review on crisis communication using the three main concepts of political crisis communication and political psychology needs to be appreciated as well structured. Nevertheless, one essential part should have been elaborated a bit more, specifically the hybrid media information campaigns. Today, it has become more than ever a standard that social networks play a huge role in information spread. It is no wonder that conspiracy theories, hoaxes and disinformation campaigns are well funded and established in the information space. Thus, when discussing the hybrid media and crisis management, a closer look at such aspect appears crucial compared to older, yet relevant communication strategies. On the other hand, in spite of coherence, the particular chapters have detailed some arguments over the role of social media. It is also surprising that authors have not quoted nor used any of Joseph S. Nye´s ideas or arguments in this chapter related to political leadership and crisis communication.

The first chapter captures the position and role of WHO as an international organisation, which practically ought to be a watchdog and overseer of universal healthcare. The authors concluded its inability to set

effective measures and consistency in managing the pandemic, including the fake news and disinformation campaigns that traumatized the societies. In a similar manner, mentioning the other supra-national organization, the EU, author declares its actions as insufficient, incompetent and lacking proper leadership. The subtitle of the chapter (The story of a tragic hero and the 27 dwarfs) suggests that the EU failed miserably in the management of the pandemic and crisis communication. Nevertheless, it was not due to EU leadership but mostly because of the inability of a collective action by member states, the media influence, and inconsistency of the EU project across many member states. As the author states: *'The EU, thus, failed to exploit the pandemic to overcome its legitimation crisis'* (p. 85). Therefore, the failing nature of supra-national organization lies in its (dis)ability to provide for unified crisis management.

However, some positive cases have been found in Turkey, partly South Africa and Ghana, Iceland, Nordic countries, Japan when compared to other EU Member States (such as France, Spain, Central European countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, and many other countries) and the United Kingdom (where pandemic communication and management issues were addressed, resulting from inadequate leadership and crisis management plans). To make it clear, the authors did not assess the positive management of the pandemic, such as low mortality rates and economic and social consequences. Quite the opposite, the research topic dealt predominantly how the elites and leadership navigated the nations and societies throughout the unprecedented situation via communication styles, information campaigns, and providing uniform measures that require solid managerial and communicative skills in order to tackle the crisis. The surveys assessing the citizens´ opinions about the crisis management and trust towards the country leadership during pandemic supplement most of the case studies.

Bearing in mind the date of publication (2021) and the data the authors had before publication, this book captures only the first wave of pandemic. Despite that fact, it gives a rather clear picture from twenty-nine case studies about the nature of communication of the leaders, local and national media and the ability of collective action on the international level towards managing the pandemic from a political communication perspective. It would be influential if we could have compared these cases from the first wave until the year 2022 simply because there have been multiple changes in leadership after elections or other challenges that some states faced. Similarly, the second and third waves of the pandemic

brought significantly different measures not only in crisis management, but also in the communication styles of leaders in particular states. Therefore, the results of the research could have been varied on a large scale. I am consistent with one of the main arguments of the publication: *'The first wave of COVID-19 was a global test of political leadership and a time when it was crucial for clear, consistent, and empathetic political communication'* (p. 332). Nevertheless, these case studies demonstrate the patterns of successful stories and failed communication narratives, which would have been even more concise if published a year later. As the authors had rather randomly selected case studies might not be concise and truly comparative, therefore applying a set of indicators to coherently map the political communication, measures would be suggested alongside with the tools for crisis management that could have had more scientific nature and statistical datasets for future academic application. Citing the major conclusions leads me to legitimacy issues of state leaders and, more importantly, the international organizations, which should possess even higher degree of trust in case of national or local discrepancies. The authors conclude: *'The major failure the crisis exposes is the absence of global or even regional leadership. The WHO failed to recognise the threat and promote early measures to reduce the spread of the virus. The EU failed to bring member states together and develop a co-ordinated approach. Hence national leaders, some beset by internal instability, were left to manage the crisis as best they could'* (p. 349). Given the results of the second and third wave of epidemics (implied in political communication, media information, and the great influence of social networks), a great space for further research in this very important area has been already opened as it rises a fundamental questions on the legitimacy of international organizations, the need for stability, the fight against conspiracies and the populist era, as we witness in the current global (not exclusively pandemic) crisis.

Based on the robustness of the case studies and the selection of countries, I conclude that I find the publication useful for lecturing in the field of political communication, political leadership and managerial studies despite already mentioned limitations that are more of a natural than intentional reasons.

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