

# SEARCHING FOR AN ENEMY. POPULISM AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE<sup>1</sup>

*Radoslav Štefancík<sup>2</sup>*

## ABSTRACT

*The Populism has become characteristic of many competitive party systems, including the Slovak one. One of its distinctive features is the searching for an enemy. This text will explain how Slovak populists use communication strategies in the context of political discourse on the war in Ukraine. Through a critical discourse analysis, three sub-discourses are identified, all of which share a common characteristic: they take place against the backdrop of war. Within the analysis of these sub-discourses, some forms of communication characteristic of populists are unmasked. In addition to creating an image of the enemy, producing fear and apprehension is an effective means of mobilizing the electorate. Slovak populists also employ conspiracy theories, which reveal dichotomous thinking in the form of 'us vs. them' or 'us vs. the other.' Given the nature of the discourse, we can also identify terms from the military vocabulary in the language of the populists. Populists utilize these to emphasize a dichotomous perception of reality, thereby reinforcing the contrast between the categories of "us" and "the other."*

**Keywords:** populism, war, Ukraine, discourse, Slovakia, energy security, fear, enemy, politics

## INTRODUCTION

Populism has become a significant aspect of contemporary competitive democracies, and its research is currently extremely popular in political science (Smolík, 2017; Spišiaková, Keresty, 2024). There are several reasons for research on populism, among them Donald Trump's first victory in the US presidential election. After his victory, more than one person asked themselves how it was possible that a man with no political experience, with no apparent good manners, insulting various groups of people with such vulgar vocabulary could defeat his political opponent. Was it just his often vulgar and extremely polarizing vocabulary or his charisma? However, his style of politics and political communication has led to debates about

---

<sup>1</sup> This manuscript was written within the framework of the project VEGA 1/0075/24 Political Discourse in Slovakia in the Context of the War in Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Applied Languages, University of Economics Bratislava, Slovakia, Email: radoslav.stefancik@euba.sk, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6042-2668>.

whether he threatens the fundamental principles of American democracy (Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Feinstein, 2024).

Populism is a topic of significant interest in the social sciences, particularly due to Donald Trump's rhetoric and the growing support for radical populist parties in Western and Central Europe (Mocková, Spišiaková, 2025). Populism has been a prominent feature in Slovak politics since 1989 (Štefančík, Stradiotová, 2020). Politicians appeal to the will of the people, polarize society, and use various communication strategies familiar to party contests in Western democracies.

The research object of this article is populism, which is connected to the war in Ukraine. The Russian invasion of Ukraine occurred after the COVID-19 pandemic when Slovak society was highly polarized (Ambrozy, 2023). The war in Ukraine is having a similar effect in Slovakia, dividing the population into two camps: pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian voters (Štefančík, Stradiotová, 2024). This text assumes that populists exploit society's polarization and, consequently, will also utilize a topic such as the war in Ukraine.

The Slovak discourse on the war in Ukraine has been characterized by a lack of consensus since the full-scale invasion began in February 2022. In Slovakia, several political parties have expressed a critical attitude towards Western Europe, the US, NATO, and the European Union, while presenting a welcoming attitude towards Russia and its authoritarian regime. The attack on Kyiv was initially a shock for these pro-Russian parties as well, but they quickly found new ways to continue to communicate their positive attitude towards Russia. On the one hand, they consider the military attack by the Russian army in Ukraine to be a violation of international law; on the other, they refuse to assist Ukraine militarily. They base their argument on a straightforward narrative: "We want peace and refuse to send arms to Ukraine." Some government politicians even present the opinion that the Ukrainian side provoked the Russian invasion.

In this text, attention will be paid to Slovak political parties. This article aims to investigate how representatives of Slovak parties formulated their positions in the context of the war in Ukraine, the presidential election campaign, the gas crisis, and the anti-government protests. Each event

examined was related to the circumstances surrounding the war in Ukraine, either directly as the gas crisis or indirectly as the presidential campaign and anti-government protests. The text seeks to answer how populist positions are formulated based on a dichotomous perception of reality within which the enemy of the people is sought. As a rule, the group of the enemy of the people consists of politicians who portray nobody as a threat to the current needs (Kmeť, 2021). However, this text will show how Slovak populists construct the image of the enemy of Ukrainian politicians.

## **1 METHODS**

I will reach the outlined goals through an analysis of political discourse that examines the use of language "beyond the sentence level, as well as other forms of meaning-making such as visuals and sounds, seeing them as irreducible elements in the (re)production of society via semiosis" (Wodak, 2015, p. 1). According to Wodak (2008), discourse analysis „provides a general framework to problem-oriented social research, it also helps academics to uncover patterns in the language to understand its functions in the broader social and political context, as well as patterns of social reality (Wodak, 2008).

Defining discourse is highly complex because, in the social sciences, numerous definitions can be found, and research on discourse is conducted by linguists, philosophers, political scientists, and sociologists (Dulebová, 2012; Cingerová, Motyková, 2017). Slovak linguists Ol'ga Orgoňová and Alena Bohunická (2013, p. 50) define discourse analysis as "a broad field of research focused on the action of a person socialized in a certain culturally and politically defined community through a complex of verbal and non-verbal activities, including the production and reception of communications." (Rheindorf 2017, p. 18) defines discourse as "the totality of all meaning-making events (also called discourse events) that are substantively related to a particular topic." It is in this way that I will approach discourse in this text. However, I will not be interested in just one topic; I will also shift my interest to sub-topics (discourses) that appear within one "umbrella topic." What they all have in common is that they are interconnected by a standard "umbrella topic." Although the individual

texts exist separately, they are intertextually interconnected. Thus, they do not have to build on each other because they refer to different situations. However, they are still within the same theme: the war in Ukraine.

The research corpus comprised statements made by Slovak politicians from the direct military invasion in February 2022 until the beginning of 2025. The statements were published in various media types, ranging from traditional media, such as television and daily newspapers, to online media and social networks. The list of literature used is preceded by those corpus sources where the text fragments used in this article can be found. Many statements of Smer-SD party representatives can be found in the archive on the web portal. For this reason, a link to the website of this political party is included in the list.

The statements analyzed were selected based on several criteria. The first criterion was thematic focus – only statements that explicitly or implicitly reflected the topic of the war in Ukraine in the context of the three political events mentioned above (the presidential elections, the gas crisis, and the protests against Robert Fico's fourth government) were included. The second criterion was media and political relevance – statements made in the public sphere (in parliament, traditional media, social networks, or during campaigns) between 2022 and 2025 by authors who are members of relevant political parties with the potential to shape public opinion were considered. The sample was created by combining targeted research with the subsequent selection of statements based on the above criteria. After preliminary analysis, the originally broader set of statements was narrowed down to those that most clearly represented the given discursive strategies.

The analysis focuses on the governing parties – SMER–SD, Hlas–SD, and the Slovak National Party. These parties were selected due to their prominent position in the Slovak party system and their frequent and consistent focus on the war in Ukraine within the security agenda. At the same time, these are political parties that are characterized as populist (Stojarová, 2018; Bundziková, Jansta, 2024; Filipec, Mestankova 2024; Dulebová, Štefančík, Cingerová 2024) or use elements of populist discourse (nationalist elements, us vs. them, dramatization, appeal to emotions, fearmongering, securitization, hyperbole, conspiracy theories,

disinformation and hoaxes), which makes it possible to observe linguistic expressions of the construction of "the people" and "the enemy" typical of this type of political communication.

Individual statements by Slovak politicians from the above-mentioned political parties were analyzed in the context of the war in Ukraine. The conflict, which has been going on for more than three years, was chosen as the main event that subsequently influenced the nature of Slovak political discourse on various other topics. When analyzing political discourse, I reflect that it is important to consider the context in which politicians present their views, which in this case is the war in Ukraine. The unprovoked invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine provoked an intense reaction from Slovak society and a broader political debate on issues of security, national sovereignty, and geopolitical orientation. Unlike some countries, where the majority of society unequivocally condemned Russia as a war aggressor, this event divided Slovak society. Populists have used this event to formulate positions on internal and external threats, with the war serving as a reference framework for constructing an image of the enemy. Selected statements by Slovak politicians illustrate how the war became a pivotal tool for mobilizing voters, polarizing society, and shaping political discourse during a period of escalating social tension.

I selected the three events analyzed in the context of the war in Ukraine based on their common feature: all three represent significant moments of political tension in Slovakia. They have significantly influenced political discourse and created conditions for the discursive framing of reality by Slovak opinion leaders. In the context of the war in Ukraine, these events have special significance. The gas crisis is one of the concrete consequences of the war for the Slovak Republic in the area of energy security. In this situation, some Slovak politicians raised questions about the country's dependence on the Russian Federation for imports of certain commodities. Politicians also discussed issues of sovereignty, the protection of national interests, and the European Union's inability to guarantee the Slovak Republic secure and affordable energy access. The presidential election was

the top political event in Slovak politics in 2024.<sup>3</sup> Election campaigns are considered the peak period of political communication, when politicians mobilize their supporters and attempt to push key issues for their party into the public discourse. Election campaigns are precisely the period when political and social polarization are at their peak (Brettschneider, 2013). Also, in Slovakia, campaigns are a factor that deepens social polarization. Moreover, the topic of the war in Ukraine was so important in the final debates that it could not be ignored. Finally, anti-government protests and their interpretation by politicians from the ruling coalition provided ample space for the spread of various conspiracy theories, which are typical of populist communication (Ižák, 2023).

## **2 APPROACHES TO POPULISM RESEARCH**

There are three primary perspectives on populism in the literature. According to the first view, populism is a thin ideology based on simple, dichotomous thinking, characterized by "us versus them" thinking. Thus, the basis for the emergence of populism is the antagonism between two subjects (Stanley, 2008). This concept is encountered in the Dutch political scientist Case Mudde (2004), who defines populism as „an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people“ (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). The people, or a nation, play a central role in populist thinking (Bohunická, 2023). The people's voice is presented by populists as the only and true form of democratic government, even though it may be at odds with the professional judgments of experts, such as scientists, researchers, and academics. Life experience, or so-called common sense, is often considered a more reliable guide to action than knowledge published in scientific journals, where individual articles undergo a peer-review process. The collective will of "the people" is

---

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the presidential election, European Parliament elections were also held in 2024. Since these elections do not have such a significant impact on the polarization of society, I will not devote much attention to the campaign ahead of the European elections.

considered the only morally unquestionable governance (Norris, Inglehart, 2019). According to populists, the people are a homogeneous, indivisible entity (Rydgren, 2017), which is generally perceived as being threatened by the category of 'the other'. Populists do not regard these groups as legitimate parts of the 'real' people and generally adopt a negative, even hostile, attitude towards them (Reinemann et al., 2016). The people stand in opposition to the ruling, 'corrupt' elite. Reinemann et al. (2016) even point out that all known definitions contain a precise reference to the people and their will or refer to the people using terms with national (e.g., Slovakia, Slovaks), ethnic, regional, or religious (e.g., Christians) overtones. Belonging to a nationality, ethnicity, region, or religion is then used as a criterion for the inclusion or exclusion of persons from the category of the people. As populism is a thin-centered ideology, it can be combined with other ideologies such as communism, socialism, or nationalism (Mudde, 2004).

From the second perspective, populism is defined as a political style. In this dimension, the presence of a central charismatic personality is essential, from which the popularity of the whole party is derived. In this context, the populist leader is willing to disrupt the established rules and adopt a new political approach (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Often, these politicians refer to themselves as not being politicians. A charismatic personality is essential, particularly in the Slovak party system, where political parties are poorly institutionalized, and party organizations often operate in the shadow of party leaders. The charismatic personality gains and exercises power by maintaining direct, unmediated contact with a group of initially unorganized supporters. We encounter the view that the populist appeals mainly to people who feel excluded or marginalized from political life, who feel frustration at not being able to influence their lives in a desirable direction, at not having control over social change, which in turn is reflected not in polite silence but in coarse language and political populism (Sámelová, 2019). The populist promises these people he will save them from crises, threats, and enemies. The leader makes a plea for help in his heroic efforts to rebuild the nation, to combat privileged groups and their special interests, and to reform "corrupt institutions" (Weyland, 2001, p. 14). Personalized leadership is a natural consequence of a reaction

against the politics-as-usual that populist voters reject, as are ossified institutional structures, including bureaucratic organizational levels (Cannovan, 1999). Party formations with a populist leader at the helm are subject to authoritarian leadership; the chairman often decides key issues without the participation of the rest of the party leadership or the party base. In this context, Norris and Inglehart (2019, p. 6) speak of authoritarian populism, i.e. „combination of authoritarian values disguised by populist rhetoric which we regard as potentially the most dangerous threat to liberal democracy.

From a third perspective, we look at populism as a communication style. Within this perspective, we examine what expressive devices populists use to emphasize a dichotomous view of reality in the sense of "us vs. the other" or "us vs. the stranger." In this context, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) note that populists use four types of political communication. The first kind is empty populism, in which references to the people and the will of the people are the first but only defining feature. The second category, known as exclusionary populism, is characterized by the exclusion of specific groups. References to the people, combined with attacks on elites, are referred to as anti-elitist populism by Jagers and Walgrave (2007). Finally, they use the term full populism to combine all three previous elements of populism (see also Reinemann et al., 2016; de Vreese et al., 2018).

The dichotomous view of reality is based on a communication strategy according to which "the others" or "the strangers" act in the position of enemies towards "the people". The enemies of the people can be internal or external. What is important is the assumption that, according to populists, they threaten the people's interests. Populists evoke the emotion of fear, articulate various real or fictional threats, and present scapegoats whom they accuse of threatening the domestic society (Wodak, 2016). These groups are blamed for various misfortunes and accidents that befall the people. For this reason, they are assigned to different categories of enemies that require harsh treatment, if not exclusion or removal from the nation's territory (Jagers, Walgrave, 2007). By articulating narratives about the threat of the category 'us', populist politicians justify adopting radical measures to restore social order (Ekström, Patrona, Thornborrow, 2022).

Two emotions are particularly prominent in populist communication: anger and fear (Nguyen, Salmela, von Scheve, 2022, p. 151). Populists draw attention to the potential dangers and harms that could occur if individuals or the entire society (nation) fail to adopt the recommendations in the message. They induce fear by regularly constructing threats, especially those related to polarizing political issues such as immigration, economic problems, security, foreign policy, or cultural issues (Demirkol, 2022; Dulebová, Štefančík, Cingerová, 2024). They employ verbal lexemes with strong negative connotations to achieve this (Demčíšák, Fraščíková, 2021). Some authors (Nguyen, Salmela, von Scheve, 2022) note that this communication strategy does not foster trust and national pride; rather, it exacerbates group anxiety. The threat is embodied in a specific enemy, regardless of whether the enemy is real or fictional.

### **3 FROM HELP TO HATE. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

Analyzing the individual messages of Slovak politicians on the war in Ukraine, we can conclude that the decisive moment for the nature of the discourse was the parliamentary elections. Before the elections, the then-ruling coalition of liberal and conservative parties expressed unequivocal support for Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees. During this period, Slovakia donated to Ukraine, including the S300 air defense system and 13 MIG-29 fighter jets (NKÚ, 2024).

While the ruling parties unequivocally supported Ukraine, the opposition parties opposed this military aid until the 2023 elections. Some factors influenced the attitudes of the different political parties on this issue. The first important factor was the traditionally pro-Russian and negative attitude towards Western transatlantic structures held by some political parties, which could already be identified before the 2022 military invasion. For example, political leaders from parties such as Smer-SD, Republika, and the People's Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) were highly critical of concluding a defense treaty between Slovakia and the US. Slovak populists presented this document as a 'betrayal' or 'treason,' evoking fear with various expressions that carry negative connotations, hyperbole, and dramatization of the situation.

- „They are dragging us into a war against Russia and endangering national security. Slovakia opposes this treason“ (L. Blaha, FB, 10. 4. 2022).

Already, during Vladimír Mečiar's government, we could see that specific terms from the military vocabulary could act as a deterrent for the Slovak voter if used to create a narrative that Slovakia might be drawn into a military conflict.<sup>4</sup> Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it was possible to identify the use of terms such as "nuclear weapons," "foreign troops," and "World War III" in the political discourse. They appeared in both contexts: first, during the signing of the defense treaty between Slovakia and the USA immediately after the Russian invasion, and second, during discussions about the shipment of military material from Slovak military warehouses to Ukraine. The narrative of Slovakia's involvement in the war with Russia was used particularly intensively during the presidential election campaign in March and April 2024. The presidential candidate convinced the public that he was on peace while his opponent was supposed to be on the side of war. Moreover, despite Ivan Korčok's constant denial, Peter Pellegrini was presented as the bringer of peace. His "peace" stance was based on the argument that he fundamentally opposes sending military aid to Ukraine. This is because military aid is intended to prolong the military conflict, whereas ending military aid would likely lead to the resolution of the conflict.

- „I want to be a president of the people, not of elites, media, NGOs or foreign countries. I want to be a president of peace who proudly and sovereignly

---

<sup>4</sup> In the so-called defeated referendum on NATO accession, the government of the time, in addition to the question of Slovakia's accession to NATO, added two other questions, namely on the deployment of nuclear weapons and military of other states on Slovak territory. These two questions were formulated deliberately so as to discourage people from answering the first question in the affirmative. The question about nuclear weapons and foreign military bases was intended to create a negative attitude towards the possibility of Slovakia joining NATO. In this context, it should be stressed that Slovakia did not have an invitation to join the North Atlantic Alliance at that time because of the authoritarian style of Vladimír Mečiar's government.

*defends Slovak national interests. Not a president who will drag Slovakia into war for a pat on the back in Brussels or Washington“ (Pellegrini, P. 2024).*

In the cited statement, Peter Pellegrini combines several communication strategies typical of populist leaders. He appeals to the people; he wants to be the president of the people. On the contrary, he defines himself in opposition to unspecified elites, the media, NGOs, and foreign countries. The first three groups have been traditional enemies in the imagination of Slovak populists for many years. Like Peter Pellegrini, Vladimír Mečiar and Robert Fico have also defined themselves against the media and NGOs in the past. Defining themselves against the elites is a traditional communication tactic employed by Slovak extremists. After all, the narrative that some imaginary foreign country should have different interests than Slovakia has existed since the debate on the division of Czechoslovakia. However, Peter Pellegrini defines himself as being against Brussels, a synonym for the European Union, and against the United States of America. He manipulatively gives the impression that the EU and the USA are interested in dragging Slovakia into a war and that their interests differ from those of Slovakia. Although Slovakia is a Member State of the European Union, it has its own nominees in all European Union institutions, and the Prime Minister represents Slovakia at European Council meetings. The end of the cited passage is important. Peter Pellegrini disagrees with the policy of the European Union and the US in supporting Ukraine, which the Russians have invaded. He suggests that Ukraine should not receive military support because it will only prolong the war. On the contrary, peace will be achieved by stopping military aid to Ukraine. In his message, he does not elaborate on what would happen afterward if Ukraine were to stop defending itself. He does not talk about Ukraine's surrender, the consequences for Ukrainian democracy, or the consequences that Ukraine's surrender and the presence of Russian troops would have on the security of the Slovak people.

In the cited text fragment, Peter Pellegrini uses the strategy of naming enemies who could harm Slovakia's national and state interests. In the last part of the speech, he also evokes fear and apprehension. Fear of war. This is not an isolated statement in the case of Peter Pellegrini's election

campaign. His main election statements included, among others, the following:

- „Slovakia will not send any soldiers to Ukraine“ (Pellegrini, P. 2024).

Peter Pellegrini presented himself as a president of "peace and tranquility," giving the impression that his opponent held the opposite view, as he supported military aid to Ukraine. In the context of this logic, two facts need to be highlighted. Ivan Korčok, as an anti-candidate of Peter Pellegrini, did not claim that Slovakia should send troops to Ukraine. Equally important is a fact based on Slovak legislation. The President does not have the power to send troops to war. So, the promise that he would not send Slovak troops to Ukraine was false and manipulative.

Peter Pellegrini drowned out all other topics about the war in Ukraine. This topic became dominant, putting Ivan Korčok in the position of defending himself. Korčok was on the defensive during the election debates before the second round of elections. As a rule, he had to repeat what he had been saying up to that point, namely that he was not in favor of Slovakia sending troops to Ukraine, despite supporting the mission of military aid to Ukraine. Pellegrini succeeded in the campaign in convincing a decisive part of the electorate that he would be a president of peace and that he would never agree to send Slovak troops to Ukraine. That peace in Ukraine would be achieved when Ukrainians no longer receive military aid from other states.

The political discourse in the context of the war in Ukraine has been mainly negative following the announcement by the Ukrainian side that it will stop the transit of Russian gas to the European Union through its territory from the beginning of 2025. One of the countries affected by this decision was Slovakia. Ukraine justified this decision on the grounds of security measures, as the Russian side was financing the war in Ukraine from the proceeds of gas sales. However, the Slovak Prime Minister was highly critical of this decision. He used the desire to resolve this problem as a reason for a visit by Vladimir Putin in December 2024. In this regard, we identify fundamentally hostile rhetoric on the part of the representatives

towards Ukraine and its President. Standard communication strategies typical of radical populists are also evident, including dramatization and the use of military vocabulary.

- „*Volodymyr Zelenskyy wants to declare war on Slovakia... with nuclear bombs flying over our heads. You buy a new mask or more iodine with your money... Robert Fico answered this door-to-door salesman very precisely – never!*“ (Blaha, L., 2024, Smer-SD).

- "*Zelenskyy is our enemy. Zelenskyy caused the problems we have. I don't like him because he is harming Slovakia*" (Fico, F. 2025, TA3 2025).

In the second cited statement, the Slovak Prime Minister directly names the Ukrainian President and attributes to him the attribute of an enemy (of the nation, of Slovakia, of the inhabitants of Slovakia). Such a communication strategy aims to create moral polarization in the sense of "us" (good Slovaks) versus "him" (bad Ukrainian Zelenskyy, enemy of Slovakia). Prime Minister Fico claims there is a direct causal link between the Ukrainian president and the threat to Slovakia's energy security. Such simplification of complex issues is characteristic of populist communication, which is based on reducing complex issues to simple answers, where an important role is played by finding a scapegoat to blame for existing problems, in this case, not only for a possible shortage of gas supplies but also for the Slovak government's inability to solve existing problems. Robert Fico uses the term national interest, which he defines selectively. This statement legitimizes a departure from solidarity with Ukraine, explaining that he is seeking to protect "our" – i.e., Slovak – interests.

The chairman of the Slovak National Party, Andrej Danko, also made extremely negative comments about the Ukrainian president:

- "*Zelenskyy is just an actor, a madman and a dangerous man. He became president because hundreds of millions of dollars were poured into him. He was on the list of people who cheated on their taxes, but the West doesn't mind as long as he serves them*" (Danko, A. 2024).

This text fragment is based on the personal discrediting of the Ukrainian president through evaluative expressions such as "mere actor," "madman," and "dangerous man." These expressions intend to question Zelenskyy's abilities and legitimacy as president. Dank's speech is based on stereotypes about "incompetent elites". It disparages the profession of actor as unworthy of public office, even though international politics is full of positive examples of actors playing an important role in the development of international relations. The statement about the "hundreds of millions of dollars" that allegedly enabled Zelenskyy to gain power plays on a conspiracy narrative about the hidden background of political power. This formulation creates the impression of manipulation, that the Ukrainian president is merely a puppet, not an autonomous actor. The discourse thus suggests that real power lies in the hands of invisible Western forces. Framing Zelenskyy as a politician who is a tax evader is a form of moral condemnation. In conjunction with the phrase "the West does not mind if he serves them," a binary opposition arises between the categories of "us" and "them" or between the morally superior "us" (Slovakia, Slovaks, or the nation) and the evil West. This communication strategy is typical of populists. This text fragment simplifies a complex geopolitical context — the war in Ukraine — into a straightforward narrative of fraud, corruption, and betrayal. It aligns with the structure of populist rhetoric, which is characterized by simplification, moralizing, and the search for scapegoats and enemies.

The final, third theme of political discourse in the context of the war in Ukraine was linked to anti-government protests. One of the primary stimuli for using the right to assemble was the personal visit of Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico to the Kremlin in December 2024. The meeting with President Putin sparked resentment among a segment of the public, particularly voters from opposition parties. People protested not only against the Prime Minister's visit to the Kremlin, but also against statements made by government officials that they could imagine a discussion about Slovakia's withdrawal from the European Union. The Prime Minister saw the Ukrainian party behind the protests and the opposition legions from

Georgia. President Zelenskyy was portrayed as an enemy of Slovakia, who allegedly supported the 'anti-government' protests.

- „Zelenskyy publicly supports the Maidan in Slovakia, Ukrainian television interviews Ukrainian citizens at protests against the Slovak government, Right Sector flags fly in the squares of Slovakia“ (Gašpar, T. 2024, Facebook).

Robert Fico met with the Russian president before Christmas 2024, but refused to travel to Kiev. However, some opposition politicians have traveled to the Ukrainian capital. The latter met with President Zelenskyy, who, in turn, was criticized by government politicians. In the context of the visit of opposition MPs to Kyiv, the same narrative that emerged before the presidential elections resurfaced: the opposition parties want to drag Slovakia into the war and send Slovak soldiers to defend Ukraine.

- „Šimečka will not hesitate to send Slovak soldiers to die on the front“ (Gašpar, T., 2024, Facebook).

Both statements by the Vice-Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Tibor Gašpar employ intensely polarizing language, serving to construct an image of the enemy. They aim to provoke mistrust, fear, and anger towards specific actors. The statement about the Ukrainian president suggests that Ukraine is interfering in Slovakia's internal political situation, which is unacceptable in the international order. Tibor Gašpar thus combines several discourses – foreign policy, national security, and a certain ignorance of Ukrainian political realities among the majority of the Slovak public. The term "Maidan" is used by Slovak populists in a negative sense. In this way, populists construct an image of an "external enemy" that destabilizes the domestic environment. He employs rhetorical techniques such as generalization, evoking a sense of threat, and linking individual statements without providing a chain of evidence, thereby creating a suggestive and manipulative effect.

The second statement by the Vice-Chairman of the National Council, on the other hand, is based on the concept of an "internal enemy." He names a

specific politician whom he portrays as a heartless person who is willing to sacrifice Slovak citizens. The use of the highly emotive expression "send to die" creates a dramatic vision of the sacrifice of innocent Slovak soldiers, usually young men, while casting the politician in the role of the active executor of an evil and harmful decision. Both of the quoted statements are examples of power-motivated discourse that, rather than relying on factual argumentation, focus on the emotional experience of the audience. From a discourse-analytical point of view, these are tools of polarization that significantly contribute to the creation of antagonisms in society, which suits populist politicians when mobilizing voters.

The connection between the war in Ukraine and the events in Slovakia was also communicated through arguments consistent with conspiracy theories that the Slovak protests were organized by Georgian nationalist groups controlled by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense. The organizers of the protests from the civic association Peace to Ukraine were allegedly linked to the opposition party Progressive Slovakia.

*- "Behind the organization of the rallies in Slovakia, whether anyone wants to believe it or not, we have all the necessary information, are Georgian national legions. The Georgian National Legions is a military organization that is part of the Ukrainian army... The legions are officially controlled by the military intelligence of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense" (Fico, R., 2025).*

Robert Fico explicitly blames a foreign military force based in Ukraine for organizing anti-government protests, creating an image of an enemy that threatens national sovereignty. This is a standard element of populist discourse – the idea of "external manipulation" that undermines the "will of the people" and the internal order of the state. Although these are supposed to be Georgian legions, he automatically associates them with Ukraine, thereby reinforcing the image of Ukraine as an enemy. Ukraine thus appears as an actor interested in damaging Slovak politics. The use of the phrase "whether anyone wants to believe it or not" activates a conspiracy framework. This assumes that there is a hidden truth that is being concealed by the "liberal" and, therefore, anti-government media. The phrase "we have

all the necessary information" conveys the impression of a well-informed representative of the state who has identified the culprit and is seeking ways to mitigate the threat. With this strategy, the politician positions himself as the protector of the nation against a hidden threat. The prime minister's communication about the organizers of anti-government protests serves to strengthen the speaker's authority—the fight against dangerous foreign entities—and reinforces the image of a leader who understands the context, knows more than the average citizen, has "evidence" at his disposal, and thus legitimizes a more forceful stance towards the opposition or protest organizers. In addition to provoking fear of danger, the securitization of protests is thus used to gain legitimacy for measures to suppress civil opposition.

#### **4 DISCUSSION**

In the literature, we often encounter the opinion that populists emphasize the dichotomous division of society into "us" and "the others," a theme also evident in the examples from Slovak political discourse above. The latter strategy is more effective when based on evoking emotions such as anger and fear. We can observe in the above examples how politicians try to make themselves more dramatic. Indeed, research shows that messages designed to induce fear in recipients are more effective than those without fear-inducing elements. Populists induce fear by constructing threats, especially those related to polarizing political issues. In the case of the war in Ukraine, one might assume that this topic would not be polarizing. However, believing that war does not appeal to people is a mistake. On the contrary, both sides of the conflict employ various forms of propaganda, which also impact people outside Ukraine's borders. Moreover, there is a long tradition in Slovakia of the idea that Russia is a state that is supposed to protect Slovakia from the decadent West. This tradition has existed here since the mid-19th century and remains present today. This is despite the fact that Russia was not the country that brought freedom to Slovakia. On the contrary, the communist coup in 1948, organized with the support of Moscow, as well as the military invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, are precisely the events that should be the preconditions for the attitude

towards Russia in Slovakia to be negative rather than positive. However, using the example of the discourse on the war in Ukraine, we can identify the views that Russia is doing the right thing in Ukraine and that it is only defending itself against an expanding and corrupt Western world.

One way to dramatize the situation and emphasize the threat motif is to incorporate words from military vocabulary (Mocková, Spišiaková, 2025). These terms evoke a sense of war and threat, whether from an external or internal enemy. Expressions from the military vocabulary appear in political discourse on two levels. The first consists of value-neutral expressions used in the context of a natural defense policy debate. Discussing defense, the military, weapons, or war is perfectly natural. Military vocabulary was frequently used in political discourse during the period under review, not only in the context of the defense treaty between Slovakia and the United States. In particular, it was used in the context of everyday discourse after the Russian aggression in Ukraine, which finally took place on 24 February 2022, became more intensively discussed. However, the question of why politicians use these terms is important to answer. Are they using them to inform or, conversely, to manipulate people into making threats. Indeed, military terminology can be used figuratively as synonyms, figurative names, metaphors, or similes (Seresová, 2024). Politicians are interested in using war metaphors to dramatize the situation. Additionally, Pörksen (2000) emphasizes that war metaphors are appropriate when a black-and-white logic of reasoning is employed, as this type of metaphor highlights the existence of polar positions. This strategy was used in all three examples analyzed. Before the presidential election, the president presented himself as a peacemaker; in contrast, his opponent gave the impression that he was a candidate of war. The war versus peace dichotomy has a clear objective to manipulate, aligning with the communication strategies commonly used by populist leaders.

The dichotomous thinking of Slovak populists could also be identified in the discussion of the so-called "anti-government" coup. It is evident from the quoted statements that Slovak populists are looking for an enemy outside the borders of Slovakia. The strategy of seeking the enemy strengthens cohesion within one's group of voters or sympathizers. The

populists find the enemy of the Slovak people in the Ukrainian President, in the Georgian legions, or Ukrainian refugees. The Ukrainian President has been labeled an 'enemy of Slovakia.' That is to say, not an enemy of the government of Robert Fico, an enemy of the Smer-SD party, but an enemy of the entire state. In this case, the Prime Minister is using the linguistic figure of speech *pars pro toto*, i.e., referring to a part as a whole. If Zelenskyy criticizes Prime Minister Fico, that does not mean he is critical of the entire country. However, populists often use this synecdoche to give the impression that everyone is at risk (Reisigl, 2011).

The constant search for an enemy beyond the country's borders is often done in the context of conspiracy theories. In the past, we have heard the theory from some Slovak politicians that activities directed against Fico's government or Slovakia are orchestrated by the American financier George Soros (Ižák, 2023; Tökölyová, Orosz, 2024). This theory is not new; it is widespread in various post-communist countries. Indeed, Soros supports the policy of strengthening liberal democracies and open societies, which the populists oppose. Soros is even used as an 'umbrella enemy' (Plenta, 2020), which is supposed to have links to various organizations or institutions essential for an open society. In addition to opposition politicians, this group includes free media, academics, researchers, and NGOs. The coining of the term "conspiracy theories" is attributed to Karl Popper, the figure associated with the concept of an "open society." Popper (1992) states that conspiracy theories represent "a typical consequence of the secularization of religious superstition." With the help of conspiracy theories, people who believe in conspiracies explain all negative social phenomena. The conspiracies of the gods, typical of the ancient past, have now been replaced by 'powerful people or groups.'

According to Michael Barkun (2003), conspiracy theories can be identified based on three basic assumptions: first, conspiracy theories believe that nothing happens by chance and that everything has been planned. Conspiracies assume a world based on intentionality from which chance and coincidence have been removed. Something happens because someone wanted it to. Anti-government mass protests are organized along these lines. According to the populists, they are supported by external

enemies of the people. Secondly, appearances are deceptive. The conspirators want to lie to obscure their identity or activities. If conspirators appear innocent, that does not mean they are harmless. I would add to this thought. Conspiracy theories are often employed to confuse voters when politicians are struggling to deliver results. They may want to divert attention if they cannot handle things in public, need to hide something, or refuse to be transparent. Moreover, a mysterious, albeit revealed, enemy is a good way to focus on other, less substantive political circumstances. Finally, conspirators assume that everything is connected, that there are relationships between events, and that even though these relationships are often hidden from public view, they exist nonetheless. For example, this is how the populists believe that the visits of Georgian opposition representatives to Slovakia were linked. After the assassination attempt on Robert Fico in May 2024, some Russian media outlets spread a conspiracy theory that Ukraine was behind the attack (Gilbert, Meaker, 2024).

According to Ruth Wodak (2107), conspiracies are integral to the discursive construction of fear, an emotion that Robert Fico has worked with for several years. Conspiracy theories also fuel hatred towards certain social groups; they are often used to stigmatize specific individuals, groups, institutions, or organizations, holding them accountable for certain evils, which aligns perfectly with the friend-enemy logic. In populist communication strategies, the latter or strangers act as scapegoats to be blamed for negative phenomena in society. Populists blame these groups for the misfortunes and accidents that befall the people. For this reason, they are categorized as enemies to be dealt with harshly, if not simply excluded or eliminated from the nation's territory (Jagers, Walgrave, 2007). This is precisely the strategy that Robert Fico communicated about the enemies of the people in the context of the mass demonstrations against his government's policies. Fico wanted to expel these people or ban them from entering Slovak territory. The power of the conspiracy is reinforced by the limited information provided by the authorities' security forces, the low level of transparency in the investigation, and the rapid shift of attention to completely different topics.

## CONCLUSION

The text stressed that populist political parties appeal to the will of the people, claim to speak on behalf of the people (Oswald, Schäfer, Broda, 2022), use more expressive language, repeat it constantly, present reality in black and white, generally prefer negative emotions to a realistic view of the situation, and can build their arguments on conspiracy theories. Critical reasoning is not decisive in this case; emotion is important. Populists create a narrative based on a conflict in which elites are perceived as having deceived the people, including economic elites, the media, intellectuals, and government politicians (Jagers, Walgrave, 2007; Diehl, 2016).

The examples depicted form part of the Slovak political discourse on the war in Ukraine. The text first illustrated the initial situation immediately after the invasion, when the Slovak government assisted Ukraine in various ways. Following the change of government in 2023, the approach to military assistance underwent significant changes. Inaccurate decisions, direct military aid to the state has stopped, and in rhetoric, Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees are slowly becoming the enemy of the nation. There are more reasons. One of them can be found in the traditionally pro-Russian attitude of Slovak populist parties. This approach is not new and appears regularly in Slovakia. The second, much more important reason is the long-term communication strategy based on the search for the enemy. The current Slovak populists present Ukraine and, in part, Ukrainian refugees as enemies of the Slovak people. The populists blame Ukraine for the complications in gas policy, as well as in the area of security.

The Slovak political elite mobilizes voters through the emotionally tinged discourse on the war in Ukraine. Indeed, messages that provoke fear and anxiety are easier for the current political elite to communicate than, for example, the inevitable consolidation of public finances. For this reason, it can be assumed that the war in Ukraine will be a fixed part of the Slovak political discourse.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that both politicians, Peter Pellegrini and Robert Fico, have also made positive statements about

Ukraine. However, these positive ones are less well communicated than the negative ones.

In analyzing the discourse on the war, interconnections between the various sub-discourses that occur within a single overarching discourse were identified. Thus, one event gives rise to multiple discourses; these discourses do not relate to each other, although they are all connected to the war in Ukraine. This discourse can influence social action, such as the behavior of politicians, with a consequent impact on electoral behavior. Politicians attempt to shape the nature of the discourse because they recognize its potential to influence social reality. Thus, discourse is not just a mere aggregate of texts, speech acts, and utterances. It is a phenomenon with a significant impact on human reasoning and behavior.

### **CORPUS RESOURCES**

Danko, Andrej. Zelenskyj je nebezpečný šialenec. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xNIOAAsINI&ab\\_channel=Andrej Danko](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xNIOAAsINI&ab_channel=AndrejDanko) [Accessed 10/5/2025].

Gášpar, Tibor. Profil on Facebook. Available at: [https://www.facebook.com/tiborgaspar.sk/?locale=sk\\_SK](https://www.facebook.com/tiborgaspar.sk/?locale=sk_SK) [Accessed 15/2/2025].

Fico, R. (2025). Premiér Fico: Plyn z Azerbajdžanu je len krycí manéver. Náš nepriateľ je Zelenskyj, nemám ho rád, lebo škodí Slovensku. In: TA3, 28. 1. 2025. Available at: <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/977825/premier-fico-plyn-z-azerbajdzanu-je-len-kryci-manever-nas-nepriatel-je-zelenskyj-nemam-ho-rad-lebo-skodi-slovensku/> [Accessed 10/5/2025].

Fico, R. (2025). Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky. Available at: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/739422-fico-opat-hovori-o-majdane-za-protestmi-vidi-gruzinske-narodne-legie-aj-opozicne-strany-ps-a-demokratov/> [Accessed 10/5/2025].

Pellegrini, Peter. Profil on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/pellegrini.peter> [Accessed 15/2/2025].

Strana Smer-SD. Homepage. Archive. Available at: <https://www.strana-smer.sk/archive> [Accessed 15/2/2025].

## REFERENCES

- Ambrozy, M. (2023). The Covid-19 Pandemic in the Light of Populism. In: *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*. Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 70–79. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ejis-2023-0007>.
- Barkun, M. (2003). *A Culture of Conspiracy Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Bohunická, A. (2023). Autenticita v politickej rétorike ľudu. In: *Jazykovedný časopis*. Vol. 74, No. 2, pp. 521–536. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jazcas-2024-0008>.
- Brettschneider, F. (2013). Wahlkampf: Funktionen, Instrumente und Wirkungen. In: *Der Bürger im Staat*. Vol. 63, No. 3, pp. 190–198.
- Bundzíkóvá, V., Jansta, D. (2024). Slovakia's 2023 Elections: Framing of Foreign Policy Preferences by Populists. In: *Politologický časopis - Czech Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 2, pp. 188–217. <https://doi.org/10.5817/PC2024-2-188>
- Canovan, M. (1999). Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy. In: *Political Studies*. Vol. 47, No. 1, pp. 2–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00184>.
- Cingerová, N., Motyková, K. (2017). *Úvod do diskurznej analýzy*. Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave.
- De Vreese, C. H., Esser, F., Aalberg, T., Reinemann, C., Stanyer, J. (2018). Populism as an Expression of Political Communication Content and Style: A New Perspective. In: *International Journal of Press/Politics*. Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 423–438. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218790035>.
- Demčíšák, J., Fraščíková, Z. (2021). Manipulačné stratégie v pravicovo-populistických videokampaniach. In: Demčíšák, J., Fraščíková, Z. (eds).

- Aspekty a stratégie pravicového populizmu. Komparatívny a multidisciplinárny pohľad.* Trnava: UCM, pp. 96–118.
- Demirkol, A. (2022). An Empirical Analysis of Securitization Discourse in the European Union. In: *Migration Letters*. Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 273–286. <https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v19i3.1832>.
- Diehl, P. (2016). Einfach, emotional, dramatisch. In: *Die Politische Meinung*. Vol. 61, No. July/August, pp. 78–83.
- Dulebová, I. (2012). Politický diskurz ako objekt lingvistického výskumu. In: *Jazyk a kultúra*. No. 9.
- Dulebová, I., Štefančík, R., Cingerová, N. (2024). *Language and Security: The Language of Securitization in Contemporary Slovak Public Discourse*. Berlin et al.: Peter Lang.
- Ekström, M, Patrona, M. Thornborrow, J. (2022). News media and the politics of fear: Normalization and contrastive discourses in the reporting on terrorist attacks in Sweden and the UK. In: *Discourse & Society*. Vol. 33, No. 6, pp. 758–772. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265221095409>.
- Feinstein, Y. (2024). The tempest within: the origins and outcomes of intense national emotions in times of national division. In: *Theory and Society*. Vol. 53, No. 4, pp. 729–763. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-024-09553-8>.
- Filipec, O., Mestankova, P. (2024). "WE ARE NOT PRO-RUSSIAN, BUT..." Comparing Communication of Czech ANO Movement and Slovak SMER-SD Regarding the Russian Aggression Against Ukraine. In: *Revista Unisci*. Vol. 66, pp. 81–107. <https://dx.doi.org/10.31439/UNISCI-212>.
- Gilbert, D., Meaker, M. (2024). Russian Disinfo Campaign Blames Ukraine for Shooting of Slovakia's Prime Minister. In: *Wired*, 16. 5. 2024. Available at: <https://www.wired.com/story/russia-blaming-ukraine-slovakia-prime-minister-robert-fico-shooting/> [Accessed 10/5/2025].

- Ižák, Š. (2023). Conspiracy Theories about Covid-19 Vaccines on a Slovak Politician's Facebook Accounts. In: *Czech Journal of Political Science / Politologický časopis*. No. 1, pp. 43–61. <https://doi.org/10.5817/PC2023-1-43>.
- Jagers, J., Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. In: *European Journal of Political Research*. Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 319–345. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00690.x>.
- Kmeť, N. (2021). „Iné“ nemusí znamenať nepriateľské. In: *Politické vedy*. Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 113–134. <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2021.24.1>. 113-134.
- Mocková, N., Spišiaková, M. (2025). La guerra en Ucrania en el lenguaje político en los medios de comunicación españoles: análisis de discurso de prensa escrita. In: *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*. Vol. 30, No. 1, e358151. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.358151>.
- NKÚ (2024). Slovensko od vypuknutia konfliktu aktívne pomáhalo Ukrajine darovaním majetku vojenskej povahy. Available at: [https://www.nku.gov.sk/-/slovensko-od-vypuknutia-konfliktu-aktivne-pomahalo-ukrajine-darovanim-majetku-vojenskej-povahy?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.nku.gov.sk/-/slovensko-od-vypuknutia-konfliktu-aktivne-pomahalo-ukrajine-darovanim-majetku-vojenskej-povahy?utm_source=chatgpt.com) [Accessed 10/5/2025].
- Mudde, C. (2004). The populist Zeitgeist. In: *Government and Opposition*. Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 541–563. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>.
- Nguyen, C. G., Salmela M., Scheve, C. (2022). From Specific Worries to Generalized Anger: The Emotional Dynamics of Right-Wing Political Populism. In: Oswald, M. (ed.). *The Palgrave Handbook of Populism*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 145–160.
- Norris, P., Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural Backlash. Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: University Press.

- Oswald, M., Schäfer, M., Broda, E. (2022). The New Age of Populism: Reapproaching a Diffuse Concept. In: Oswald, M. (ed.). *The Palgrave Handbook of Populism*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 3–29.
- Orgoňová, O., Bohunická, A. (2013). Medzi štylistikou a diskurzívou analýzou. In: *Jazykovedný časopis*. Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 49–65. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jazcas-2013-0002>.
- Plenta, P. (2020). Conspiracy theories as a political instrument: utilization of anti-Soros narratives in Central Europe. In: *Contemporary Politics*. Vol. 26, No. 5, pp. 512–530. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2020.1781332>.
- Popper, K. R. (1992). *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. London: Routledge.
- Pörksen, B. (2000). *Die Konstruktion von Feinbildern. Zum Sprachgebrauch von neonazistischen Medien*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Reinemann, C., Aalberg, T., Esser, F., Strömbäck, J., de Vreese, C. H. (2016). Populist Political Communication. Toward a Model of Its Causes, Forms, and Effects. In: Aalberg, T. et al. (eds.). *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. New York, London: Routledge, pp. 12–25.
- Reisigl, M. (2011). Sprache als Strategie des Populismus und Nationalismus. In: *Südtiroler Kulturinstitut*. <[https://kulturinstitut.org/fileadmin/-Sprachstelle/pdf\\_Publikationen/Nachlese/Sprache\\_und\\_Gesellschaft/Sprache\\_des\\_Populismus\\_und\\_Nationalismus.pdf](https://kulturinstitut.org/fileadmin/-Sprachstelle/pdf_Publikationen/Nachlese/Sprache_und_Gesellschaft/Sprache_des_Populismus_und_Nationalismus.pdf)> [Accessed 15/2/2025].
- Rheindorf, M. (2017). Diskursanalyse in der Linguistik: Der Diskurshistorische Ansatz. In: Wilk, F. (ed.). *Sprache und Identität. Tagungsband der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie*. Neunkirchen: Neunkirchener Verlag, pp. 17–62.
- Rydgren, J. (2017). Radical right-wing parties in Europe. In: *Journal of Language and Politics*. Vol., 16, No. 4, pp. 485–496. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17024.ryd>.

- Sámelová, A. (2019). Online Self conspiracy as a Challenge of Online-Mediated Communication for Social Change. In: *Communication Today*. Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 5–15.
- Seresová, K. (2024). Metafory v slovenskom politickom diskurze. In: Štefančík, R. (ed.). *Jazyk a politika. Na pomedzí lingvistiky a politológie IX*. Bratislava: Ekonóm, pp. 321–332.
- Smolík, J. (2017): Populismus je... In: Štefančík, R. (ed.): *Jazyk a politika. Na pomedzí lingvistiky a politológie*. Bratislava: Ekonóm, pp. 101–116.
- Spišiaková, M., Keresty, J. (2024). K problematike populistického diskurzu. In: Štefančík, R. (ed.). *Jazyk a politika. Na pomedzí lingvistiky a politológie IX*. Bratislava: Ekonóm, pp. 371–395.
- Stanley, B. (2008). The thin ideology of populism. In: *Journal of Political Ideologies*. Vol. 13, No. 1., pp. 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310701822289>.
- Stojarová, V. (2018). Populist, Radical and Extremist Political Parties in Visegrad countries vis à vis the migration crisis. In the name of the people and the nation in Central Europe. In: *Open Political Science*. Vol. 1, pp. 32–45. <https://doi.org/10.1515/openps-2018-0001>
- Štefančík, R., Stradiotová, E. (2020). Cleavage-theory from the perspective of political linguistics. In: *European Journal of Transformation Studies*. Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 178–197.
- Štefančík, R., Stradiotová, E. (2024). Slovakia. In: Štefančík, R. (ed.). *War and Language. Russian Invasion of Ukraine in National Political Discourses*. Sale: Transnational Press London, pp. 59–82.
- Tannenbaum, M., Hepler, J., Zimmerman, R. S., Saul, L., Jacobs, S., Wilson, K., Albarracin, D. (2015). Appealing to Fear: A Meta-Analysis of Fear Appeal Effectiveness and Theories. In: *Psychological Bulletin*. Vol. 141, No. 6, pp. 1178–1204. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039729>.

- Tökölyová, T., Orosz, P. (2024). The Anti-System in the System: The Far Right in Slovakia. In: *Slovak Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 24, No. 1., pp. 31–54.
- Weyland, K. (2001). Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics. In: *Comparative Politics*. Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422412>.
- Wodak, R. (2008). Introduction: Discourse studies – important concepts and terms. In: Wodak, R., Krzyzanowski, M. (eds). *Qualitative discourse analysis in the Social Sciences*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1–29.
- Wodak, R. (2015). Critical Discourse Analysis. Discourse-Historical Approach. In: Tracy, K. (ed.). *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*. John Wiley & Sons, pp. 1–14.
- Wodak, R. (2016). *Politik mit der Angst. Zur Wirkung rechtspopulistischer Diskurse*. Wien, Hamburg: Edition Konturen.