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## Comparison of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding of Slovakia and Slovenia

### Introduction

Although there are currently more than two hundred officially recognized states in the world, there is probably no less confused pair of states than the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Slovenia. In addition to the slightly different name, the very similar appearance of the national flag, the coat of arms formed by a shield with a mountain consisting of three peaks (located almost in the same places of the national flags) and the small geographical distance naturally help to confuse countries, especially in the non-European world. The Slovenian Parliament responded to the easy interchangeability of identity in 2003 by organizing a competition for Slovenian citizens to design new state symbols. These were to represent Slovenia, especially after joining the EU in the following year, when Slovakia became part of the same European community. In the end, however, this did not happen, which is not surprising given the sensitivity of public opinion to national symbols. In addition, there were some more curious

moments, especially in the environment of sports and diplomacy. State similarity became a training topic for professional diplomats and politicians working in international communities in 2017 in London. The popular portal, Youtube, also explains the topic to lay people<sup>1</sup>.

The change in historical and visual identity is a priori difficult to implement, but the international community cannot be expected to grasp the differences between the two countries permanently and consistently (unification of the two countries does not even need to be considered). It is then clear that a practical solution is building clear and memorable national branding – of course not only primarily in the political sphere but especially in international trade, culture and sports.

For the above reasons, the article, after explaining the basic concepts, focuses on the presentation of the environment of public diplomacy and follows up on the survey of the identity of Slovakia and Slovenia as presented in the same selected periodicals in the same time period. Based on the summarization of key information and data on public diplomacy of both countries, the article contains the results of the comparison.

The main scientific questions of the article are: 1. What was the development of diplomacy of both countries, which arose within the disintegration of the original federal states? 2. What media image about both countries was created by building national branding? 3. How many articles and what type were published in selected opinion-forming foreign media?

Given the chosen similar issues, the authors will try to confirm the hypotheses that: 1. The formation of Slovak and Slovenian diplomacy was similar due to the related geographical and time frame. 2. Within the media image of both countries, international awareness arose, especially through the media from the German language environment. 3. The articles published in the monitored opinion-forming media focused mainly on politics and economics, less on culture or sports.

The authors will try to confirm or exclude hypotheses through comparison, historical description, quantification and content analysis of articles in opinion-forming media. The authors selected a total of seven newspaper titles from the English and German-speaking areas. It was the most famous and most read newspaper at the time. The authors concur that it is through them that it is possible to “restore” the image of the newly created states.

The authors return to the topic of national branding in Slovakia for more than ten years, when Ondrej Gažovič last addressed the same topic in a documentary.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhflsG23wvM>

Public Diplomacy of the SR in 2011 – Search for the country brand in Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2011. In the preparation phase of the presented article, the authors did not find among the professional literature or scientific articles sources that should have the ambition to compare foreign policy or the building of national branding in Slovakia and Slovenia.

### Definition of basic concepts of public diplomacy and nation branding

To better understand the concept of public diplomacy we can turn to the author Jana Peterková, who is one of the few experts dealing specifically with public diplomacy and nation branding in the environment of Czech and Slovak political science: "Although public diplomacy is not a recent terminological innovation, it is often possible to encounter some inconsistency or outright confusion in the use of this term. There are a number of definitions that often differ only in trifles and are similar in many respects. In the literature, it is possible to come across three basic meanings of this term, which have been used on the international scene in the past"<sup>2</sup>. These include: 1. the definition of public diplomacy as the opposite of secret diplomacy, which was practiced by states until 1914; 2. understanding public diplomacy as public affairs in which the domestic population is informed about the foreign policy activities of the government; and 3. public diplomacy can be understood as a tool for promoting the specific objectives of the state's foreign policy strategy. A fundamental change in the formation of diplomacy in the 20th century was also reported by other experts: "With this evolution, new protagonists appeared in the international system. Now, diplomacy is diverse, plural: diplomatic activities concern not only States, and, inside each State, not only the official diplomatic specialists. Practices and objectives that can be qualified as diplomatic are now installed within multinational organizations, businesses, Parliaments, etc. The singular diplomacy was the diplomacy of 'the possible', in a time scale quite long, at least calibrated in decades. This diplomacy was built by an articulation between information, negotiation, representation, coordination, and anticipation without rash reaction or comment, just for professionals who were trying to overcome impressions, feelings, and prejudices"<sup>3</sup>.

In the book *Public Diplomacy*, the same author defines the nature of public diplomacy and mentions the foreign policy practices of states such as propaganda,

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<sup>2</sup> J. Peterková, *Veřejná diplomacie*, Aleš Čeněk, Plzeň 2008.

<sup>3</sup> G. Rouet, J. Ušiak, *From Singular and Regalian Diplomacy to Plural Diplomacy*, "Politické vedy", 2019, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 8–11.

building cultural and scientific relations and the so-called nation branding. The term, which primarily has its origin and application in marketing, is understood in the field of foreign policy as “the creation of a brand or the creation of an image that we encounter in the commercial sphere. In relation to the state, it is focused on the presentation of the position and reputation of the state abroad. This is one of the reasons why we so often encounter the building of a state brand in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs”<sup>4</sup>.

Yet there are clear differences between public diplomacy and nation branding – they are not identical terms. However, they have several conceptual intersections. Public diplomacy and nation branding are activities aimed at the foreign public. The activities of both have a long-term time frame; they are prepared as strategies. On the contrary, the differences between them are found in their objectives. Nation branding is focused on the creation of identity and its presentation, while public diplomacy aims to support and emphasize smoothly functioning international relations.

Eytan Gilboa, the director of the Center for International Communication at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, sees public diplomacy in a different historical context, associating its existence with the second half of the 20th century and the Cold War era: “Public diplomacy is a new field of practice and scholarship. It attracted attention in the previous century when diplomacy fell under the scrutiny of the media and public opinion. It became a more substantial area during the Cold War, dominated by campaigns to garner support for the delicate balance of nuclear weapons and the ideological battle for the hearts and minds of people around the world”<sup>5</sup>.

At the end of the last century, public diplomacy in the American professional environment was discussed in the following context: “To understand, inform, and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions and their counterparts abroad. To accomplish this, we explain and advocate U.S. policies in terms that are credible and meaningful in foreign cultures; provide information about the U.S., its people, values, and institutions; build lasting relationships and mutual understanding through the exchange of people and ideas; and advise U.S. decision-makers on foreign attitudes and their implications for U.S. policies”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Peterková, *Veřejná diplomacie*, Aleš Čeněk, Plzeň 2008.

<sup>5</sup> E. Gilboa, *Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy*, “The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science”, Vol. 616, No. 1, pp. 55–77.

<sup>6</sup> P.H. Smitj, *Public Diplomacy*, <https://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/general/public-diplomacy> [accessed: December 2021].

A more contemporary and perhaps more concise definition of public diplomacy, which – similarly to Peterková – notes the vague content of the term is presented by Bruce Gregory (2008) in the article *Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field*: “Public diplomacy is a political instrument with analytical boundaries and distinguishing characteristics, but is it an academic field? It is used by states, associations of states, and nonstate actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence opinions and actions to advance interests and values”<sup>7</sup>. In the previous decade, the same author saw a space for the development of the study of public diplomacy in the light of globalization and technological development.

Nation branding is a concept that began to be explored at the end of the 20th century and can be considered a more recent phenomenon in international relations compared to public diplomacy. Its research was recapitulated in 2019 by Andy W. Hao, Justin Paul, Sangeeta Trott, Chiquan Guo and Heng-Hui Wu in the article *Two decades of research on nation branding: a review and future research agenda* in the journal *Emerald Insight*. During this period, several case studies were created, which examined the creation of nation branding in selected countries. Their diversity can be seen in the following review for 2020: *A Quantitative Analysis of Olympic Performance as a Factor of National Branding* (Keaton Aubin 2020), *Branding Romania in the Age of Disruption. Technology as a Soft Power Instrument* (Cheregi 2020), *Domesticating Competitive Common Sense: Nation Branding Discourses, Policy-makers and Promotional Consultants in Korea* (Schwak 2020), *Crafting Soft Power in Thailand* (Wasin 2019). Some had a slightly more curious subject of interest: Borat – image destroyer or nation branding inspirer for the ‘Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan.

Nadia Keneva described nation branding in a more historical context: “Nation-states have historically used various forms of persuasion to advance their political, economic, and cultural agendas. Indeed, one could argue that the American field of mass communication research has its roots in the study of propaganda and its imputed effects”<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, however, the same author drew attention to the different meaning of national branding and propaganda: “Nation branding, however, is not a mere synonym for propaganda, nor are its proposed applications limited to influencing public opinion through advertising or public relations. Despite nation branding’s growing popularity, there is much

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<sup>7</sup> B. Gregory, *Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field*, “The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science”, 2008, Vol. 616, No. 1, pp. 274–290.

<sup>8</sup> N. Kaneva, *Nation Branding: Toward an Agenda for Critical Research*, “International Journal of Communication”, 2011, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 117–141.

disagreement about its meaning and scope”<sup>9</sup>. From a terminological point of view, the same concept is also referred to in professional discussion as country branding.

From a terminological point of view, however, we dare to argue that the two concepts – public diplomacy and nation branding – are to some extent interdependent. It is precisely the countries whose foreign policy is under the control of the public that have created their own nation branding strategy. Conversely, nation branding is largely absent in countries whose foreign policy does not have the character of public diplomacy.

The importance of nation branding was, of course, even greater in case of the emerging nations. György Szondi addressed this issue in the article *The role and challenges of country branding in transition countries: The Central and Eastern European experience*. As he aptly noted, nation branding was a sensitive place, especially for the Baltic countries: “The aim of negative branding is to discredit countries or regimes, to create ‘negative images’ of other countries or governments (the distinction is important here between country and government), or to create crisis situations. In this case images are important as reality may well be different and image management is the core activity. Fortunately, the number of examples in Central Europe is rather limited. Negative campaigns are not rare in Russia as Moscow has attempted several times to discredit the Baltic States and to put them in a bad light about the role they have played in the Russian-EU relationship. Russia has been reluctant to acknowledge the independence of Baltic States and heavily criticized their accession to NATO and the EU. Russia also refused to apologize to the Baltic States for annexing them to the Soviet Union and for the communist repressions. It has got very negative (in some cases even hostile) images in Eastern European countries and has so far failed to address its negative reputation in its former sphere of influence”<sup>10</sup>. This example captures the almost existential importance of nation branding within creating an international political identity that countries should not underestimate.

Since the Slovak Republic experienced its founding period of diplomacy in 1993, it is relevant that theoretical reflection also concerns the nation branding of the countries undergoing some change: “This problem is particularly acute for the so-called transforming states. These are states that have recently undergone or are still undergoing a radical change in their own system, both socially, economically and politically. This change also entails the need to subsequently

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> G. Szondi, *The role and challenges of country branding in transition countries: The Central and Eastern European experience*, “Place Branding and Public Diplomacy”, 2007, Vol. 3, pp. 8–20.

change the perception of other partners. The point is to make it clear that we are different, and to gain the recognition of others in this different form. There is also a strong connection between the domestic political situation, between how it is perceived abroad and how it subsequently affects the identity of such a state. Nation branding thus becomes a tool whose task is to present a new or confirm the existing identity of a certain state, its idea of how it wishes to be perceived primarily by those groups of states to which it wants to belong”<sup>11</sup>.

The foreign policy identity of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was given a “label” of post-communism in the 1990s, while the region was in fact full of unique and complicated transformation processes, which are and will be the subject of many social science analyzes. Although this post-communist designation did not increase the sense of national or civilizational pride of Central and Eastern Europeans, in principle we can limit its end by joining NATO and the European Union. We do not claim that NATO and EU membership would blur the distinction between the original and new member states, but given the culmination of transformation processes, the term “post-communist” loses its meaning. The civilizational boom of first commerce, then digitization, and finally the merging of the two phenomena in the form of social networks, essentially brought the state new tools for foreign policy making and also for nation branding.

For the sake of completeness, it is also necessary to mention the observation of Professor Batora, who defined the character of the so-called newly founded diplomacy: “Newly founded states are socialized into this set of norms and rules by setting up their diplomatic services and foreign ministries which fit the established standards of inter-state diplomacy in anisomorphic manner. The EEAS as a newly founded diplomatic service is subject to these meiomorphic pressures of the diplomatic field as other newly founded diplomatic services, but due to its interstitial nature spanning various organizational fields, it is a carrier of ambiguity and it infuses the diplomatic field with heterogeneity which may generate a process of innovation in the diplomatic field. In what follows”<sup>12</sup>.

### Public diplomacy of the Slovak Republic

The end of the 1980s in the area of Central and Eastern Europe was in a revolutionary spirit. Gradual political liberalization and economic collapse of the

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<sup>11</sup> J. Peterková, *Veřejná diplomacie*, Aleš Čeněk, Plzeň 2008.

<sup>12</sup> J. Batora, *The “Mitrailleuse Effect”: The EEAS as an Interstitial Organization and the Dynamics of Innovation in Diplomacy*, “Journal of Common Market Studies”, 2013, Vol. 51 (4), pp. 598–613

so-called Eastern Bloc have brought the democratization of political life, but also new independent states. From the Baltics through Central Europe to the Balkans, several new states emerged during the 1990s. Among other things, they had to create their new foreign ministries and their own embassies abroad – the entire professional diplomatic infrastructure – from the ground up.

After the establishment of the Slovak Republic on January 1, 1993, as one of the successor states of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, some structures of the federal ministry existing in the capital of Czechoslovakia, Prague, had to start being built in Bratislava. In the months immediately preceding the creation of the successor states of the defunct Central European Federation, the foreign service was divided. This was done in several areas:

1. political and legal aspects of the international recognition of both successor states;
2. the issue of succession in relation to international organizations;
3. human resources issues;
4. division of property of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic abroad;
5. delimitation of the activities of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Trade into two entities and transfer of employees to the system of national diplomacy;
6. division of the whole complex of communication systems as a necessary part of a functioning foreign service.

However, the Slovak Republic only just entered the era of its democratic statehood. This naturally had to be reflected in the nature of its diplomacy. As a democratic state, the diplomacy of the Slovak Republic was to have the character of public diplomacy. Its development over the last three decades will certainly be the subject of several journalistic and professional analyzes in two years (in 2023), while their conclusions will depend on individual authorial approaches. From our point of view, its development can be divided into three basic stages, which, however, do not necessarily represent such separate periods as the domestic Slovak public is trying to do. For the needs of the presented professional contribution, we perceive three basic developmental stages within the short history of Slovak diplomacy: 1st period 1993–1998, 2nd period 1998–2006 and 3rd period 2006–2020.

The first stage in the history of Slovak diplomacy began with the establishment of the Slovak Republic on January 1, 1993. The country was generally recognized by the international community. It was formally headed by Prime Minister, Vladimír Mečiar, while the president was elected by the parliament (National Council of the Slovak Republic) only on February 15, 1993. The entry of an independent Slovakia into international politics was not unambiguous in itself – not even in comparison with the immediate neighbors from the group of



Visegrad Four states – the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary<sup>13</sup>. In the initial period of independent diplomacy, Slovakia first had to “define its belonging to a particular civilization”. The original concept of the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic created at the end of 1992 (prepared by a young analyst Svetoslav Bombík) spoke not only of joining the European Communities, but also of the orientation towards NATO membership<sup>14</sup>. However, as there was some restraint towards NATO in the HZDS leadership, the future Minister of Foreign Affairs, Milan Kňažko, had “fundamental difficulties” within the HZDS leadership with this concept. In his book “KŇAŽKO/DEMEŠ/KŇAŽKO. Formovanie slovenskej diplomacie v rokoch 1990 až 1993”, diplomat Miroslav Mojžita described the difficulties as follows: “There was a debate at the HZDS political body on whether it was already decided that we should move towards NATO or whether our specific starting point as a state between West and East should be neutrality. There was still a not very clearly articulated theory of the bridge, a certain idea of the alleged exceptional geopolitical position of Slovakia”<sup>15</sup>. The opinion was maintained that “there is no need to put on a new yoke as soon as we got rid of the old one”<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, the direction of Slovakia was not clear enough at first, and certain moments of its unclear foreign policy direction can be encountered in later periods<sup>17</sup>. Vladimír Mečiar’s political style and its compatibility with democratic rules of politics have been causing awkward moments at least since 1991, but the years of his third government in the period 1994–1998 became the most problematic. We should mention he first Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Milan Kňažko, who was one of the first supporters of Vladimír Mečiar and founding members of his political party HZDS. With a slight exaggeration, it can be argued that the rise of political star, Vladimír Mečiar, would not have been possible without the support of his Foreign Minister Milan Kňažko. However, as soon as in 1993 he broke up with Vladimír Mečiar politically and later founded a new political party, the Democratic Union of Slovakia (DÚ), which belonged to the main opposition political forces in the period 1994–1998. Given the transformation processes and turbulent domestic policy, Slovakia’s diplo-

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<sup>13</sup> J. Ušiak, *Slovakia’s perspective on NATO*, “Communist and Post-Communist Studies”, 2018, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 125–137.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> M. Mojžita, *KŇAŽKO/DEMEŠ/KŇAŽKO Formovanie slovenskej diplomacie v rokoch 1990 až 1993*, VEDA, Bratislava 2004.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> O. Gyárfašová, M. Bútorá, Z. Bútorová, *Imidž Slovenska z pohľadu zahraničia. Vnímanie Slovenska očami zahraničných expertov. Pohľad na Slovensko vo vybraných zahraničných médiách*, [https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/12365/Studia\\_imidz\\_Gyarfasova\\_Butora\\_Butorova.pdf/a09de88a-d3f3-41da-a59e-aedbdff46bea](https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/12365/Studia_imidz_Gyarfasova_Butora_Butorova.pdf/a09de88a-d3f3-41da-a59e-aedbdff46bea) [accessed: January 1, 2021].

macy in the initial period of 1993–1998 can be described as a country seeking its international anchorage. It was a period when none of the Slovak politicians openly sought an orientation towards the Russian Federation, the populist part of the political representation spoke of neutrality and, given the results of the 1992 and 1994 parliamentary elections, a smaller part of political elites wanted to integrate Slovakia into the Western Euro-Atlantic area.

### Nation branding of the Slovak Republic

Slovakia became aware of the need to develop activities aimed at its presentation abroad shortly after its establishment. In 1995, the Slovak Information Agency (SIA) was established at the Government Office of the Slovak Republic as a contributory organization. The agency operated for three years, while its operation was associated with the non-transparent use of the budget, which was then SKK 100 million, which at that time amounted to USD 3.2 million. “The functionality of the Slovak Information Agency thus began to deteriorate in proportion to the signals of disinterest from the Government Office of the SR by promoting the personal interests of individual high-ranking persons, as confirmed by a recent economic audit from the Government Office. It revealed significant financial machinations directed at the highest representatives of the SIA”<sup>18</sup>. The paradox of the SIA’s story is that its primary task was to improve Slovakia’s image abroad – which, however, it marred through its own activities.

Since 2002, the Development Program of the External Integration Communication Strategy (EIKS) has been operating, with a budget of SKK 40 million (USD 1.4 million). However, its first activities really focused on building Slovakia’s image abroad were realized only between 2004 and 2007. “In Brussels, Paris, Berlin and Vienna, it organized a series of events called Slovakia – Europe on a small scale, which were part of the project of presenting Slovakia in 2004–2007 gradually in all capitals of the countries of the former EU-15. The project involves prominent politicians, economists and entrepreneurs together with leading figures in cultural life in Slovakia”<sup>19</sup>. The paradox of the situation lies in the timing of events, as due to the fact that Slovakia has become a member of the EU on

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<sup>18</sup> D. Matejšíková, *Slovenská informačná agentúra zlyhala nielen ako politická objednávka tretej Mečiarovej vlády*, <https://www.sme.sk/c/2156967/slovenska-informacna-agentura-zlyhala-nielen-ako-politicka-objednavka-tretej-meciarovej-vlady.html> [accessed: January 2, 2021].

<sup>19</sup> O. Gyárfášová, M. Bútora, Z. Bútorová, *Imidž Slovenska z pohľadu zahraničia. Vnímanie Slovenska očami zahraničných expertov. Pohľad na Slovensko vo vybraných zahraničných médiách*, [https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/12365/Studia\\_imidz\\_Gyarfasova\\_Butora\\_Butorova.pdf/a09de88a-d3f3-41da-a59e-aedbdff46bea](https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/12365/Studia_imidz_Gyarfasova_Butora_Butorova.pdf/a09de88a-d3f3-41da-a59e-aedbdff46bea) [accessed: January 25, 2021].

May 1, 2004, in terms of the creation of nation branding the events should have been situated before 2004.

In the following year, the Slovak Tourism Agency, which belongs to the Ministry of Economy of the SR, created a logo that the country was to use in foreign promotional activities – it was using a visualization of a butterfly. However, it was only a logo, and the initiative did not represent a comprehensive approach to the creation of Slovakia's national branding abroad.

The Slovak diplomacy department really began to deal with the idea of nation branding only in the following decade. The initial documents that began to deal with it more systematically were: Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the presentation of selected subjects of the Slovak Republic, survey of the perception of the Slovak Republic abroad (2009), Slovakia – a country with potential, Idea concept of presentation of Slovakia (2011), Slovakia – a country with potential (2011), Image of Slovakia through the eyes of foreign experts (2012), Branding of the country: experiences of Norway, Sweden and Finland (2012), Branding of Slovakia – from idea concept to messages and communication (2013), Branding SR: visual rendering of communication messages, Proposal of measures in creating brands Slovakia and Branding SR: rendering of an idea concept into image signals, creation of image creative solutions and their testing (2014). Several of the above documents were made available to the authors of this article and the authors of the article were referred by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR to the creators of working materials and studies who work professionally outside the state sphere. At the institutional level, a Council for a Unified Presentation of the SR Abroad was established by a resolution of the Government of the SR in 2009. It was chaired by the Prime Minister (Chairman), the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Deputy Chairman) and the Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic (Deputy Chairman). However, presentation tasks within the executive were later really performed by the Council of the Government of the SR for Export and Investment Support. Meanwhile, an initiative for the creation of nation branding was created during the government of Iveta Radičová: “Efforts to improve the image of Slovakia and build such a ‘system of innovation policy that would attract foreign companies to locate their research and development centers’ continued after the 2010 elections. Minister of Economy Juraj Miškov invited Charles Wessner, Program Director of the US National Academy of Sciences, to Slovakia, who stated that Slovakia still lags far behind the EU average in terms of innovation, despite having a good human potential and education system”<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> O. Gyárfášová, M. Bútorá, Z. Bútorová, *Imidž Slovenska z pohľadu zahraničia. Vnímanie Slovenska očami zahraničných expertov. Pohľad na Slovensko vo vybraných zahraničných médiách*,

The material *Slovakia a Country with Potential – the Idea Concept of Slovakia’s Presentation in 2011* identified four basic attributes of the visualization of Slovakia – originality, diversity, vitality and ingenuity. The material was created by a team of people who focused on foreign policy, social sciences and the humanities. Its creators were first inspired by examples of nation branding of more experienced countries and, taking into account the domestic situation represented mainly by sociological data, identified the basic starting points. The material, which is a bit unusually written in an artistic style, defined itself in the introduction as an innovative concept that wants to avoid common national myths, tries to deepen the intellectual reflection of the collective identity of Slovaks, while its intellectualism might be creating some new myths to certain extent. The material on the introductory pages says that it does not want to build its philosophy on common ways of thinking: “So our presented study is not based on common stereotypes. To make it clear what we reject, we are going to name the most common Slovak stereotypes and myths. The image of Slovaks about themselves is notoriously dominated by diligence, hospitality, friendliness and sincerity, which allegedly best describe the typical Slovak nature. Among the negative qualities – which, by the way, Slovaks admit only to a minimal extent – is often mentioned weak national pride, envy and excessive alcohol consumption”<sup>21</sup>. At the same time, however, as soon as the first attribute is identified in the material, it states about the peculiarity of Slovaks: “learned heads at home and abroad, as well as folk wisdom, have already ascribed to Slovakia and its inhabitants the most diverse qualities – favorable and noble, but also derogatory or offensive; warm and sympathetic, but also unflattering or repulsive; promising and progressive, but also unadventurous or small-town”<sup>22</sup>.

Two years later, the following creative material was prepared from the resources of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, partly by the same authors. The study formulated the following messages for the previously defined attributes:

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[https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/12365/Studia\\_imidz\\_Gyarfasova\\_Butora\\_Butorova.pdf/a09de88a-d3f3-41da-a59e-aedbdf46bea](https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/12365/Studia_imidz_Gyarfasova_Butora_Butorova.pdf/a09de88a-d3f3-41da-a59e-aedbdf46bea) [accessed: January 25, 2021].

<sup>21</sup> A. Bán, J. Bátora, M. Bútora, O. Gyárfášová, P. Hunčík, P. Hajdin, Z. Jaurová, M. Madrová, V. Talian, M. Timoracký, *Slovensko koncept s potenciálom. Ideový koncept prezentácie Slovenska*, <https://www.sario.sk/sites/default/files/files/slovensko-krajina-s-potencialom.pdf> [accessed: February 17, 2021].

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18

Table 1. Nation branding messages of Slovakia

attributes	messages
authenticity	<p>“We are flexible, we can adapt to any conditions.”</p> <p>“We can be headstrong – and reach a goal!”</p> <p>“Not ‘we’re home here,’ but ‘feel at home in here.”</p> <p>“Let’s talk to foreigners in Slovakia, invite them to our homes, show them our true hospitality.”</p> <p>“Normally informal.”</p> <p>“Whether we do have a relationship to it or not, our folklore is simply unique.”</p> <p>“Let’s look for as many informal authentic attractions as possible in our surroundings.”</p> <p>“Slovakia as a country perceived by all senses.”</p>
diversity	<p>“The more varied, the more diverse, the better. Wealth in diversity.”</p> <p>“In nature, man draws energy.”</p> <p>“Diversity of the regions is our wealth.”</p> <p>“We have something of the Nordic cold in us and at the same time something of the southern temperament.”</p> <p>“Where do our / your family’s ancestors come from?”</p> <p>“It’s natural that we don’t have the same opinion on everything.”</p> <p>“We know how to live together in diversity.”</p> <p>“Let’s apply traditional elements to the present, let’s mix folklore with modernity!”</p> <p>“Creating regional clusters with various attractions and services is an opportunity for the development of tourism.”</p> <p>“Better in smaller quantities, but quality alcohol.”</p>
vitality	<p>“Slovakia as a country, that is alive, something is still happening here.”</p> <p>“Small but nice.”</p> <p>“Slovakia is a country where one feels free.”</p> <p>“Water is the most precious resource we have.”</p> <p>“We have a firm root.”</p> <p>“Still waters wash out the banks (we will reach our goals using a peaceful path).”</p> <p>“‘We will make it,’ Slovak companies can also assert themselves in the world. Let us have global ambitions.”</p> <p>“Slovakia as a country of positive surprises.”</p> <p>“Slovakia = progressive country.”</p>
ingenuity	<p>“Let’s discover authentic, gastronomic experiences.”</p> <p>“If you invented something, show it.”</p> <p>“Fortune favors those who dare.”</p> <p>“Nothing is impossible.”</p> <p>“Let’s define the Slovak approach”, which is the exact meaning of “In Slovakia it is like that.”</p> <p>“To be successful, we have to work harder than others.”</p> <p>“Let’s perform the best we can, even here at home.”</p> <p>“Invented in Slovakia.”</p> <p>“There’s a designer in each of us.”</p> <p>“Slovakia, a country rich in experiences.”</p>

Source: M. Timoracký, O. Gyárfášová, J. Bátora, *Branding Slovenska: Od ideového konceptu k posolstvám a komunikácii*, <https://www.sario.sk/sites/default/files/files/branding-slovenska.pdf> [accessed: June 15, 2021].

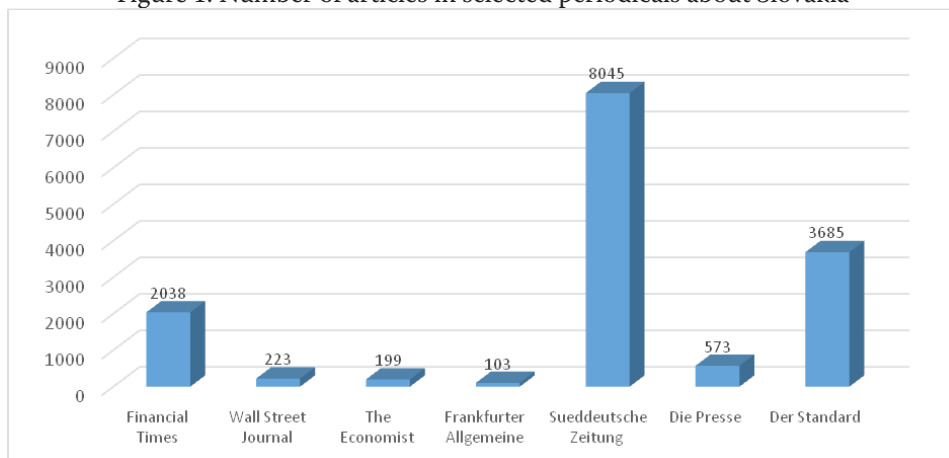
The above-mentioned messages arose through a discussion within the six focus groups – employees of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR, public institutions, media, students, representatives of tourism and creative design and communication. They made several recommendations for nation branding communication – removing negativity, telling stories, highlighting successes, creating internal branding, using humor, finding synergies and working with honorary consuls of the Slovak Republic abroad (at the time of the study, the Slovak Republic had 140 honorary consuls abroad).

### Image of Slovakia abroad

In 2012, the trio of authors Gyarfášová, Bútorá and Bútorová prepared a study for the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR, which dealt with the international reputation of Slovakia – Image of Slovakia from a foreign perspective. Among the basic methods, content analysis of selected foreign print media was used. The authors analyzed articles about Slovakia in the period January 2011–February 2012 in American, British, German and Austrian periodicals: *The Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Der Standard* and *Die Presse*. The articles were analyzed to identify topics, people, country features and places. The same analysis was prepared for the period 2016–2020. The Figure below shows the total number of articles that were published on the topic of Slovakia in selected periodicals. According to the obtained data, it is evident that Slovakia was several times more often publicized in German-speaking countries. In the group of English-speaking media, it was a slight surprise that the British *The Economist* published only a fraction of the number of articles about Slovakia that were published in the next three periodicals.

Furthermore, the topics that were associated with Slovakia in selected media were identified. A total of six areas were identified – politics, sports, culture, as well as information concerning the tragic murder of the Slovak journalist, Ján Kuciak, and his fiancée. In the overall result, information concerning about economics was published the most, which however was caused by articles from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Subsequently, the most frequent reports were the ones concerning the sport in Slovakia.

Figure 1. Number of articles in selected periodicals about Slovakia



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on own calculation.

Table 2. Topics of articles about Slovakia

	sport	politics	economic	culture	Kuciak
Financial Times	124	523	1209	132	50
Wall Street Journal	2	14	179	23	5
The Economist	2	100	72	1	24
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	7	28	8	3	57
Süddeutsche Zeitung	3315	1235	1644	1747	104
Die Presse	46	309	118	51	49
Der Standard	466	1337	1456	377	49
overall	3962	3546	4686	2334	338

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on own calculation.

In terms of content, political articles reported mainly on the results of the parliamentary and presidential elections. Negative evaluations appeared in connection with the activities of the far-right Kotlebovci – Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko party and its chairman Marián Kotleba, as well as the activities of the government of Robert Fico, corruption and relations with Slovak Roma. Due to the economic development, positive articles about the Slovak economy prevailed. Information about the COVID-19 pandemic was brought to the international and foreign media in connection with the so-called nationwide testing of the population in the autumn of 2020. In the previous five years, Slovak culture has been publicized comparably to the murder of Ján Kuciak since February 2018.

However, it is necessary to take into account the different time frame of both topics (5 years on Slovak culture and 3 years on the murder of J. Kuciak).

### Development of the diplomacy of the Republic of Slovenia

In our text we so far focused on Slovak diplomacy and in the next part of this article we will try to approach the diplomacy of the Republic of Slovenia. Slovakia and Slovenia are often mistaken not only in terms of similar names, but also because of the similarities between the countries. Therefore, we perceive that the comparison of diplomacy and the emergence of diplomacy in these two countries is relevant and will provide an insight into how, respectively on what foundations can diplomatic relations be built.

Slovenia and Slovakia are similar in the fact that as countries they both emerged from disintegration activities. Slovakia by disintegration, resp. the division of Czechoslovakia and Slovenia by the disintegration of the Former Yugoslavia. According to the country's origin, it can be noted that the beginning of diplomacy in Slovenia began in a more challenging environment, when Slovenia had to defend its position and declare independence from Yugoslavia. Current Slovenia is a parliamentary democratic republic with the Prime Minister as head of the government and the directly elected president as head of state. The government has executive and administrative power. Both the prime minister and the ministers are elected by parliament.

Slovenia gained recognition of its independence (at the same time as Croatia) on January 15, 1992, when the then European Community (and hence today's European Union) recognized the declaration of independence<sup>23</sup>. To be more precise, six months after its declaration of independence they recognized the Republic of Slovenia as an independent international subject. This recognition of course exerted a positive influence on the views of those countries that had still not recognized it. In his article, Daniel Conversi<sup>24</sup> speaks of a critique of the recognition of the independence of these countries. According to critics, the move was premature, resulting in an acceleration of the dramatic circumstances that followed. Kogoj states that US diplomacy has also criticized the way in

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<sup>23</sup> Skoko B., *Perception and Communication Issues Between Croatia and the European Union – From Croatian Independence in 1991 to EU Accession in 2013*, "Communication Management Review", 2016, Vol. 1, No. 1.

<sup>24</sup> D. Conversi, *German Shadows in the Balkan Wilderness: International Reactions to the Recognition of Croatia and Slovenia*, "Revija za sociologiju", 1998, Vol. XXIX, No. 3–4, pp. 141–165.



which Slovenia and Croatia have declared their independence, especially their unilateral actions<sup>25</sup>.

The very recognition of independence was preceded by the political and economic isolation of Yugoslavia from socialist Europe since 1948. As Jazbin writes, the economic ties that the former Yugoslavia was forming in spite of the then ideology in Europe at the time contributed to the isolation of Yugoslavia in the first place. They formed economic ties mainly with Western European states. Secondly, it did not become an instrument of Soviet socialist integration, which, however, also resulted in a deepening of differences between the respective republics in the then Yugoslavia. At that time, the most economically advanced among the countries of the former Yugoslavia were Slovenia and Croatia. There were already possible manifestations or signs of disintegration, which could only be kept under control by strong political force. For this reason, an administration was created in Slovenia to work on the agenda of international agreements. This proved to be a very important element in the creation of Slovenian diplomacy. Slovenia decided in March 1990 to declare its economic independence from the federal economy, and in April the then President Milan Kučan (elected in the first democratic elections) began legislative steps to prepare a declaration of independence. A referendum on independence was held in December 1990, resulting in 88.2% of the total electorate voting for independence<sup>26</sup>, on the basis of which came the decision to declare independence on June 25, 1991. Slovenian diplomacy also sent its representatives to the US, where they tried to defend their decision. It was also for a prosaic reason that, in view of Article 4 of the UN Charter, Slovenia could not become a member of the UN if it had a dispute with any permanent member of the Security Council – in this case the U.S.<sup>27</sup>.

Following the declaration of independence, Slovenian diplomacy had to work for the international recognition of Slovenia as a sovereign and equal entity outside the still existing Yugoslavia. This was the main goal of foreign policy and their diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was focusing in particular on political issues and international economic relations<sup>28</sup>. Slovenia has incorporated diplo-

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<sup>25</sup> M. Kogoj, *Relations between the United States and Slovenia: From U.S. Adverseness to Acceptance and Cooperation*, [in:] *The Relations of Central European Countries with the United States*, ed. A. Péczeli, Dialóg campus, Budapest 2019, pp. 175–196.

<sup>26</sup> M. Kogoj, *Relations between the United States and Slovenia: From U.S. Adverseness to Acceptance and Cooperation*, [in:] *The Relations of Central European Countries with the United States*, ed. A. Péczeli, Dialóg campus, Budapest 2019, pp. 175–196.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> B. Udovič, T. Burkelc, *Gospodarska diplomacija Slovenije*, “IB revija (Ljubljana)”, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp. 27–35.

macy into its foreign policy and in 1992 became a member of the United Nations. Foreign policy or Slovenia's diplomacy respectively is working on a strategy of: "Promoting the security, prosperity and reputation of the Republic of Slovenia and its people in the world"<sup>29</sup>. In honor of joining the UN, Slovenia celebrates Slovenian Diplomacy Day on 22 May, as it is seen as a strong start to Slovenia's diplomatic era. As part of its membership in the United Nations, at 75th session of the UN General Assembly Slovenian representative declared its priorities in the field of foreign policy and diplomacy: "Effective multilateral cooperation in new global circumstances, International peace and security, Respect for and progressive development of international law, New technologies – the digital agenda and artificial intelligence (AI), Human rights, Green recovery/Sustainable development and climate change/Economic and social themes"<sup>30</sup>. Following the success of Slovenia and Slovenian diplomacy in recognizing independence, Slovenia subsequently sought to join the European Union and successfully managed the integration processes with the result of EU membership. It has been a member of the European Union since 2004, specifically since May 1, when it became a member of the EU together with Slovakia and other countries.

### Challenges of the Slovenian diplomacy and the strength of diplomacy

Slovenian diplomacy has made efforts to resolve the bilateral dispute with Croatia over the borders of the two countries. Their good relations, as we have mentioned, began after the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991 and the mutual recognition of diplomatic relations. In recognition of their relations, they declared that they had no territorially unsettled issues between themselves and, in parallel with international recognition, declared that they perceived each other as subjects of international law. Musladin states that a change in tolerance in this issue occurred when Slovenia claimed the territory. In addition to the exit of its territorial sea to the high seas, Slovenian diplomacy has demanded sovereignty over the entire bay. They reasoned among others with the exercise of jurisdiction during the former Yugoslavia in the given territory of the Piran Peninsula<sup>31</sup>.

According to international law, the sea belongs to the coastal area and thus the Savudrijski val (Gulf of Piran), resp. The Gulf of Piran should belong to the

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<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, *Priorities of the Republic of Slovenia at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly*, <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MZZ/Dokumenti/multilateralala/OZN/Prioritete-RS-UNGA75-za-splet-ANG-popravljeno.docx> [accessed: January 25, 2021].

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> M. Mustladin, *Europska politika proširenja i Republika Hrvatska: specifične okolnosti*, "Medianali", 2012, Vol. 6, No. 12, pp. 105–122.

territory of the Republic of Croatia, and Degan agrees with this statement in his analysis, claiming that Slovenia did not have the right to request a maritime territory or coast. According to Degan, there is no legal claim to the maritime space that excludes the right over the coast<sup>32</sup>. On the other hand, there is a statement in support of the Slovenian side that the two countries did not have reference points when it came to the sea border, as in the former Yugoslavia the sea borders were not defined and had the status of inland waters<sup>33</sup>. In December 2008, Slovenian diplomacy used its position under the Slovenian Presidency of the European Union to resolve this dispute with Croatia. At that time, Slovenian Prime Minister, Borut Pahor, announced the blocking of further negotiations on Croatia's accession to the European Union. As Croatia has been seeking EU membership for several years, it has sought to resolve the bilateral dispute. It took 10 months to block their accession processes until Croatia and Slovenia agreed on an arbitration settlement. This was preceded by European Union intervention through the European Commission's Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn. Rehn submitted drafts of a compromise to both countries in 2009.

The initiative of the European Commission brought a meeting of Croatian and Slovenian representatives in Brussels, where the then Croatian Prime Minister, Ivo Sanader, presented two proposals together with a request for unblocking. He declared that Croatia would take over the border in the same way as Slovenia. In the end, however, the result was a change of government in Croatia and the new Croatian Prime Minister, Jadranka Kosor, met with the Slovenian Prime Minister, Borut Pahor, in Trakošćane in 2009. The outcome of the meeting was an agreed plan to resolve the border dispute. The agreement was completed in September 2009 in Ljubljana<sup>34</sup>. The result of their agreement was an arbitration agreement on the settlement of the border dispute, which was signed at the end of 2009 in Stockholm. According to it, Slovenia should have direct access to international waters in the north of the Adriatic Sea through a corridor crossing Croatian waters. Currently, this dispute is alive again because Croatian diplomacy used its position as the then presidency and challenged the outcome of the arbitration decision. The reason was the mistake of Slovenian diplomacy. Transcripts of an interview between the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Slovenian representative at the arbitral tribunal on how they will affect

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<sup>32</sup> E. Degan, V. Đuro, *Pravičnost i međunarodno pravo u razgračenjima morskih prostora*, "Poredbeno pomorsko pravo", 2010, Vol. 49, No. 164, pp. 139–151.

<sup>33</sup> international-arbitration-attorney.com

<sup>34</sup> M. Mustladin, *Europska politika proširenja i Republika Hrvatska: specifične okolnosti*, "Medi-anali", Vol. 6, No. 12, pp. 105–122.

other members of the arbitral tribunal have been published. In 2015, Croatia rejected arbitration and called the court compromised<sup>35</sup>.

It is not just Slovenia and Croatia that have bilateral disputes in the Balkans, but as Popescu states, there are several similar or worse disputes<sup>36</sup>. The Balkan region is considered a potentially conflict region due to bilateral disputes, border disputes, war crimes punishments and frequent violations of minority rights. For example, the Croatia-Serbia dispute, the Serbia-Kosovo dispute, the Kosovo-Montenegro dispute, the Macedonian bilateral disputes and the Albania-Greece dispute. Due to the large number of different forms of bilateral disputes, the territory of the Balkans, especially the Western Balkans, is still considered a conflict region. Therefore, the diplomacy of countries also has a relatively important and challenging role in resolving their disputes. Popescu states as a possible solution the so-called Parliamentary diplomacy, which she considers to be the most effective tool for resolving disputes, but also for eliminating tensions<sup>37</sup>. Berridge-James defines parliamentary diplomacy as the way in which the state achieves its interests externally, especially through negotiations, negotiations within its representations abroad or at home, and through personal contacts<sup>38</sup>. Popescu cites parliamentary diplomacy as an effective way of communicating and possibly resolving disputes due to membership in various institutions, organizations, the involvement of parliament and thus the combination of domestic and foreign policy<sup>39</sup>. A very important point in this diplomacy is its flexibility due to the possibility of resolving a dispute or conflict through members of parliament, as well as political dialogue on sensitive issues with the importance of one-to-one contacts. Slovenia seeks to use diplomacy in this context in addition to professional political, cultural and economic diplomacy (representation of its diplomats, diplomatic missions, etc.).

Among other necessary attributes, the strength of diplomacy depends on the international relations and ties that the country has in the framework of diplomatic relations. It is not certain whether the quality of representation in diplomatic relations also depends on the length of membership in international organizations, such as the European Union. In his research from 2012 to 2017, in which he examined representation in national diplomatic corps (Romania, Cro-

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<sup>35</sup> hnonline.svet.sk

<sup>36</sup> A. Popescu, *Bilateral parliamentary diplomacy – a key to preventing conflict in the Balkans*, [in:] *Cross-Border Cooperation, Security and Development Perspectives of the Wider Black Sea Region*, ed. V. Bouzov, IVIS, Veliko Turnovo 2018.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> G.R. Berridge, A. James eds., *A Dictionary of Diplomacy*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2003.

<sup>39</sup> A. Popescu, *op. cit.*

atia and Slovenia), Pajtinka concluded that adequate representation of a state did not necessarily correlate with the length of its EU membership or its presence in the EEAS (citing Croatia and Romania as examples, but also comparing Slovenia and Romania, which are members in the same way but with different results)<sup>40</sup>. He also concluded that the success rate of an EU Member State in obtaining senior management positions in the European External Action Service (EEAS) does not necessarily correlate with the population – the example of Slovenia with ten times less population than Romania, but the same number of EEAS appointments as Romania<sup>41</sup>. Slovenia was the best represented in the European exterior Action service in the monitored period (2012–2017). In comparison with the population, which counted 2.1 million inhabitants, Slovenia had the highest share of staff in the European External Action Service.

### Image of Slovenia abroad

As in the case of Slovakia, we decided to characterize the image of Slovenia according to the frequency and focus of articles concerning the country in the same sample of periodicals as in the case of Slovakia. The time frame was also the same. We obtained data for the period 2016–2020. Most articles related to Slovenia were published in *Der Standard* daily newspaper. The number of articles in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* was about a third lower. And the third most frequent appearance in quantitative terms was in the *London Financial Times*. This was followed by the German-language *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Presse*. The last two newspapers with the lowest numbers of appearance were *The Economist* and *Wall Street Journal*.

In terms of content and focus, information with a focus on politics dominated in the above-mentioned periodicals. Information on the Slovenian economy and sport was about a third less frequent than on politics. The only exception to this was *The Economist*, where information about the economy prevailed against politics. At the same time, the same journal gave more space to cultural news in terms of content. It was similar in the German-written *Die Presse*, where there was more cultural information than about sports. This was also the only newspaper where cultural reports prevailed over information on sports. Generally, Slovenian cultural production was the least reported topic in the selected media.

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<sup>40</sup> E. Pajtinka, *The nationality structure of the European Union's diplomatic service: towards an adequate representation of all EU member states within the European external action service staff? A case study of Slovenia, Romania and Croatia*. *Studia Politica*, "Romanian Political Science Review", 2019, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 103–125.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

Table 3. Topics of articles about Slovenia

	sport	politics	economic	culture
Financial Times	85	293	742	111
Wall Street Journal	13	34	34	11
The Economist	0	81	63	38
Frankfurter Allgemeine	1	180	100	24
Süddeutsche Zeitung	1704	455	138	95
Die Presse	48	147	28	42
Der Standard	347	1832	1257	276
total	2198	3022	2362	597

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on own calculation.

### Comparison and conclusions

From the introduced information and data on public diplomacy of Slovakia and Slovenia, several parallels and at the same time differences can be seen, which, however, are ultimately not fundamental to the image of countries abroad. With regard to the research findings, we dare to state that the national branding of the compared countries differs minimally and therefore the identity of the countries is partially interchangeable.

Both Slovakia and Slovenia are countries that gained their current state sovereignty during the disintegration of the originally federal countries – the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. These were political processes that took place at the beginning of the transformation processes of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Their formation took place only 18 months apart (Slovenia was established on June 25, 1991, but its existence began to be recognized by the international community at the turn of 1991/1992. In June 1992, parliamentary elections were held in the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, which was decisive for the future of the federation, which ceased to exist at the end of the same year). Due to the state-building processes, both states built their diplomatic service and foreign policy infrastructure almost simultaneously.

Until 2004, domestic policy in both countries focused on issues of international integration – especially in NATO and the EU. Although the countries of Central Europe – Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary – became members of the North Atlantic Alliance already in 1999, Slovakia and Slovenia became members on the same day – March 29, 2004. Two months later, they also became members of the EU. Finally, with regard to the focus of the article, it is worth

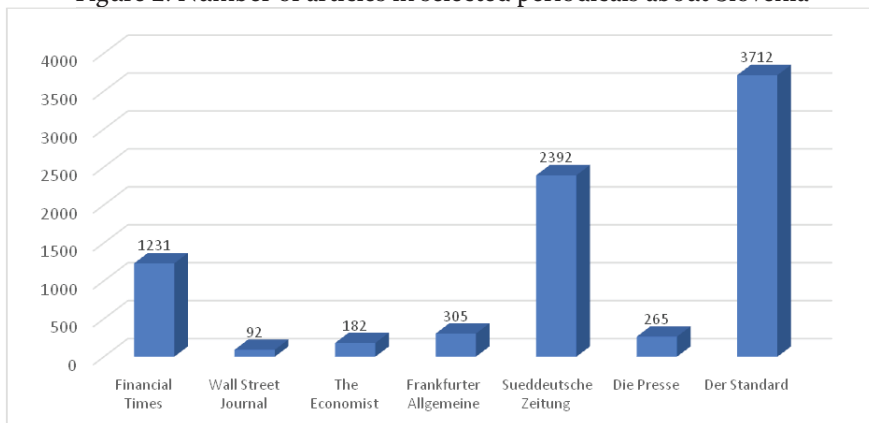
recalling a concise curiosity – although for various reasons, on the same day, March 15, 2018, the two Prime Ministers of Slovakia, Robert Fico, and Slovenia, Miro Cerar, resigned. On social networks, the event was aptly commented on by the Reuters reporter, Tatiana Jančáriková, who wrote: “Slovakian and Slovenian prime ministers announce resignation on the same day, trolling those few people still able to tell Slovakia and Slovenia apart”. On this occasion, the non-European media had to make some effort and realize after a short time that these were indeed two different European countries. The Finnish news agency STT even had to apologize for the mistake.

Despite the fact that in 2003 Slovenia tried to purposefully change state symbols and despite Slovakia’s efforts since the end of the 1990s to purposefully build national branding through strategic documents and activities implemented according to them, the ability of international actors to distinguish between the identity of Slovakia and Slovenia remained practically unchanged. In addition to occasional mistakes in practical international life, this is also indicated by comparisons of the number and focus of articles in selected media, which were presented within this article in the previous chapters. The comparison of data for both countries is visualized in Figure 3. Gathered data make it possible to see that periodicals from both the German and English-language world publish similar articles in terms of quantity and content about both countries. The only exception to this statement is the periodical *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

The international identity of Slovakia and Slovenia, according to the introduced data and context, will most likely remain interchangeable. However, this perhaps too laconic statement can be an example of the fact that the history shaping collective identity has so far reliably dominated over the sophisticated methods of modern marketing.

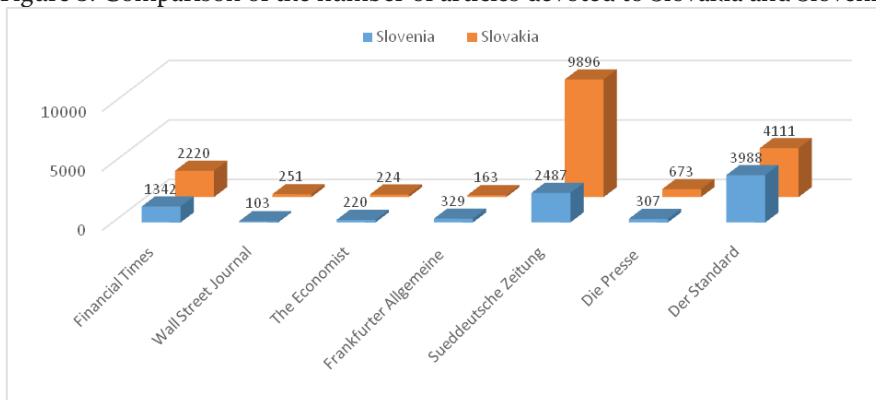
Primarily through the content analysis of articles in selected periodicals and their quantification as well as historical description, we state that Slovak and Slovenian diplomacy, despite the presumed kinship, were different. Although both countries gained state sovereignty and independence within a similar time frame, both countries pursued different foreign policy goals. Therefore, we consider the first hypothesis to be unfulfilled – Slovak and Slovenian diplomacy were not similar. In the case of the second hypothesis, we state that the identity, international awareness and national branding of both countries were mainly formed by the German media. The hypothesis was confirmed. (Figure 3) The last hypothesis of the article was also confirmed – in general, articles about politics and economics were published in the analyzed media about both countries.

Figure 2. Number of articles in selected periodicals about Slovenia



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on own calculation.

Figure 3. Comparison of the number of articles devoted to Slovakia and Slovenia



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on own calculation.

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**Summary:** Although public diplomacy and nation branding as research topics do not currently represent a significant subject of professional interest or analysis, they are still relevant and can be continuously evaluated mainly in the form of case studies. In the recent past, several works evaluating various nation branding strategies have been created, but so far none has addressed nation branding of such (externally) similar countries as Slovakia and Slovenia. The theoretical part of the study is devoted to the definition of basic concepts and the introduction to the state of current knowledge. The research part deals with the description of the beginning and development of independent diplomacies of both young countries. We further approach the creation and implementation of both nation branding programs and subsequently, through the content analysis of the world's most important periodicals, we will try to compose the main media image of Slovakia and Slovenia from an international perspective.

**Keywords:** public diplomacy, Slovakia, Slovenia, national branding, identity of state

### Porównanie dyplomacji publicznej i brandingu narodowego Słowacji i Słowenii

**Streszczenie:** Chociaż dyplomacja publiczna i branding narodowy jako tematy badawcze nie stanowią obecnie istotnego przedmiotu profesjonalnych zainteresowań lub analiz, są nadal aktualne i mogą być stale oceniane, głównie w formie studiów przypadku. W niedalekiej przeszłości powstało kilka prac oceniających różne strategie brandingu narodowego, ale jak dotąd żadna nie dotyczyła brandingu narodowego tak (zewnętrznie) podobnych krajów, jak Słowacja i Słowenia.

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Część teoretyczna artykułu poświęcona jest zdefiniowaniu podstawowych pojęć oraz wprowadzeniu do stanu aktualnej wiedzy. Część badawcza dotyczy opisu początku i rozwoju niezależnych dyplomacji obu tych młodych krajów. Kolejno omawiane jest tworzenie i wdrażania obu programów brandingowych, a następnie, poprzez analizę treści najważniejszych światowych gazet codziennych, zostaje podjęta próba opisanie medialnego wizerunku Słowacji i Słowenii z perspektywy międzynarodowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyplomacja publiczna, Słowacja, Słowenia, branding narodowy, tożsamość państwa

