


• EDITORIÁL – EDITORIAL •



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In the first issue of *Studia Politica Slovaca* for 2025, we track current events. It encompasses all areas of political science covered in this multi-thematic and bilingual edition, which features four research papers. Additionally, after a long time, readers will find an interview and, finally, the traditional book review.

Against the backdrop of the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Slovakia—its government and specific segments of the population—are accused of adopting a pro-Russian stance. It is reflected in perceptions that it is not Russia but the West, particularly the United States and NATO, that are the aggressors. The anti-Western sentiment is being exacerbated, with Slovakia's NATO membership also being targeted. The Slovak National Party, along with Smer-SD, is vocally supporting this perspective. It may appear surprising to Western observers, particularly considering Slovakia's history as a part of Czechoslovakia, which was directly influenced by Soviet and, consequently, Russian authority after the Second World War. Furthermore, Czechoslovakia was occupied by Soviet forces during the suppression of the reform movement known as the 'Prague Spring' in August 1968. However, in Slovakia, the occupation is perceived more as a conflict between the Czech Republic and the Soviet Union or Russia. The Czechoslovak reform movement eventually led to the federalization of the state, which was enshrined in the constitution following the occupation. Although it existed only on paper, its establishment represented a long-held aspiration of the Slovaks. Furthermore, the Slovak nation experienced significant economic and intellectual growth between 1945 and 1989. The largely favorable perception of Russia in Slovakia is also shaped by the country's liberation by the Red Army in 1944.

In the history of Slovak (political) thinking, pro-Russian attitudes are nothing unusual in Slovakian political thought. They are part of the 'archive' of Slovakian political thought. Mateusz Gniazdowski's study illustrates this. Its subject is the (political) thinking of the Slovak writer and politician Svezotár Hurban Vajanský (1847-1916). His article shows that (radical) Russophilism has a long tradition in Slovak political thought. Its specific feature is the combination of Slavic discourse with a pro-Russian attitude, which manifests itself not only in a positive attitude towards Russia and its culture but also, to a large extent, in political sympathy for the Russian regime and support for its actions on the international scene. Gniazdowski's article contributes to a better understanding of current political attitudes in Slovakia.

In the present, characterized by a strong and almost escalating polarisation of political attitudes, leading to overheated controversies, the problem of othering is becoming increasingly important. "Othering refers to the interplay of processes and conditions based on affiliations to a group. It legitimizes inequality. A person who does not belong to one's group is to be morally delegitimized." In Slovakia, this can be seen in the aforementioned attitude towards the conflict in Ukraine, but also concerning refugees, multiculturalism, the LGBTQIA+ community, and others.

Combining an essay and a literary report, as well as political theory and sociology, Elena Kláťková's paper is dedicated to this problem. She first explains her understanding of othering and looks at its deeper roots. Then, she aims to offer suggestions on how to sensitize the general public to the problem of othering and how to "avoid" it.

As the rule of a single person, the monarch, the monarchy has been one of the fundamental forms of constitution since antiquity. Aristotle categorized it as a constitution oriented towards the common good. Its qualitative antithesis is tyranny. This distinction can be found in the subsequent centuries among the classics of political thought, albeit with slight variations. Montesquieu, for instance, distinguished between monarchies that served the common good and those that served self-interest. Monarchies also differ in terms of how the rule is transmitted—either through inheritance or election—as well as in the extent of power, whether unlimited or limited (constitutional or parliamentary). Since Machiavelli, at the latest, the republic has been viewed as the antithesis of monarchy. Today, both forms of government appear to represent a normative contrast, with democracy often linked with the republic and dictatorship with the monarchy. However, this prejudice does not withstand comparison with reality. Not every republic is a democracy. Simultaneously, monarchies can be democratic. The constitutional and parliamentary monarchies in Europe, such as those in the Netherlands, Norway, or the United Kingdom, provide evidence for this. The situation differs with monarchies in the Middle East, such as the constitutional monarchies in Jordan and Kuwait and the absolute monarchy of Saudi Arabia. From a Western perspective, they can hardly be described as democracies. Nevertheless, due to the necessary negotiation processes, democracies seem to be inferior to a single rule. At the same time, democracies appear to be more stable precisely because the lengthy decision-making process accommodates diverse views on a problem. Conversely, this suggests that monarchies are less stable.

The problem of the stability of (undemocratic) monarchies is addressed in Grzegorz Ł. Małachowski's article. He examines the question of whether the three monarchies in the Middle East influence stability in both domestic and foreign policies within the tense and unstable landscape. Have the monarchies in question been successful in creating long-term stability?

In the European Parliament elections, national rather than European issues usually take center stage. This is why the European elections are often used to settle accounts with the current national government. At the same time, in most EU countries, they are regarded as second or even third-tier elections. This issue is reflected in the relatively low voter turnout.

Matúš Žac deals with the 2019 and 2024 European Parliament elections. However, he is primarily concerned with the European and global political framework within which the elections took place and were influenced. Žac also provides a brief classic comparative analysis of the election results.

Although the central principles of the liberal idea, such as the right to self-determination, the limitation of political power, the freedom from the state, and the self-regulation of the economy based on personal property, have prevailed (in the Western world) and have been realized, 'the liberal idea has lost its power of political mobilization and integration.' In other words, with a few exceptions, liberalism is more or less at an end in terms of party politics. Furthermore, the end of the liberal idea in general is also frequently proclaimed. Democratization, parliamentarization, fundamental and civil rights, and civil liberties seem to be outdated values. However, are the freedoms of the individual and the rejection of any form of spiritual, social, political, or state coercion obsolete? Are there better alternatives available? If so, which ones?

The interview between Peter Dinuš and Marek Hrubec, printed in the interview section, revolves around these questions: “Liberalism has run out of breath?” and “What are the social answers?” Regarding the first question, both left-wing scientists use John Rawls as a basis for discussion. As they answer this question in the affirmative, they then pose the question of what could follow liberalism. Hrubec names five scenarios.

The issue is rounded off by a short book review written in Slovak by Anna Mravcová. The review is similar to the opening text dedicated to a topic in the history of ideas. Mravcová reviews the volume edited by Svetozar Krno et al. on the (political) thought of Jozef Miloslav Hurban (1817–1888), “one of the most important personalities “in the modern history of Slovakia. The writer, journalist, politician, and Protestant pastor “has left an indelible mark not only in the 19th century but also in contemporary [Slovak] society“.