REVIVING TRAUMAS AND GRIEVANCES: GEOPOLITICAL CODES AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN CENTRAL EUROPE

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Historical traumas and grievances greatly influence political culture and discourse, electoral runs, attitudes of society and voters' behaviour several years, decades, sometimes even centuries later. Such attitudes, reflected both in domestic political culture and discourse as well as on the international level, are not the exclusive domain of nationalistic, xenophobic or populist parties. They become, therefore, relevant mainstream issues. The aim of this paper is to analyse the role and intensity of selected events of the past in today's political culture and discourse, in chosen cases of Central European countries, i.e., the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. This region is rich in historical events of changing in size and shape of countries, or its geopolitical code, that seeded roots for further use of this 'heritage' in political movements. During the communist period, some of these historical traumas and grievances were artificially suppressed. However, after the 1980s they were free to emerge and become influential factors in electoral competition and political positions.

Key words: neoclassical geopolitics; trauma; foreign policy; electoral behaviour.

1 INTRODUCTION

Historical traumas and grievances have always been an integral part of each country's political culture and discourse several years, decades or even centuries later (Maňák 2019). Wounds of the past often hurt today. Traumatising events from the countries' past have influenced attitudes of society and voters, and thus have become part of not only scientific research, but also political culture and

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discourse, talks among friends and of course electoral campaigns. Recently, these attitudes towards historical grievances have been gaining a higher level of intensity and importance and have become one of the key sources of political phenomena such as Euroscepticism and national populism. However, it is certain that attitudes influenced and motivated by historical traumas and grievances are not the exclusive domain of extreme, nationalistic, xenophobic, antisystem and populist parties. Although the use of such tools in political marketing is often linked to new political parties challenging current office holders, traditional parties can also include topics related to a country's traumatic past in their appeals for voter support.

This paper intends to assess the role and intensity of selected events of the past, concerning geographical and geopolitical changes, in today's political culture and discourse. As noted by Ušiak (2018), policy making – either foreign or domestic – is shaped by the state's security environment. The state's security environment is, itself, largely formed by the specific type of the political culture that dwells in each country. Hence studying political culture and geopolitical codes helps in understanding state's policy and people's political options. The research goal is to be able to explain why certain political culture assumes certain contours, why the selected nations tend to vote in certain parties, and ultimately why they have their specific geopolitical codes. In this paper, the universe of cases includes the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia. The exclusion of Poland from this research piece – from the V4 viewpoint – is justified by the existence of literature already covering the topic (Zarycki and Warczok 2020).

In this way, the structure of the paper starts with an initial Section covering theoretical and methodological choices, roofed by the umbrella of the geohistorical approach and complemented by controlled comparison and narrative analysis, operationalizing a real intercross between domestic factors and systemic constraints. We work with three easily identifiable variables – systemic constraints as independent variable, and the people's perception of space, and the geopolitical agent's perception of space, as intervening variables. This is followed by Section 2 devoted to describing the 'sentiment of betrayal' by the great powers in the mentioned countries. Section 3 covers the Czech case, shedding light on the Munich Agreement and the project for a U.S. radar, whereas Section 4 covers the Hungarian grievances concerning the Trianon Treaty, which extend until today. Finally, in Section 5 the sorrows of the Slovaks over the non-existence of a democratic Slovak state throughout the centuries is brought up, linking them with recent efforts in political discourse to connect the Great Moravia with modern Slovakia.

2 THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

This research piece is eminently based on the geohistorical approach. As Vives asserted (1972, 72–76), the geohistorical approach largely corresponds to the observation of a determined geographical space throughout history, to trace cores of historical foreign policy. In this way, the paper focus on the space of the three mentioned Central European countries (Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia), and bounces between the end of World War I and the present. Comparative politics, by using a controlled comparison between the universe of the case studies, and narrative analysis conducted to assess the interpretation of traumas and grievances in political culture and discourse are complementary methods used to operationalize a real intercross between domestic factors (*e.g.,* public

opinion) and systemic constraints (*e.g.,* threats and power constraints in the establishment of borders).

In these circumstances, the analysis includes three sets of variables, applying the structure of the model of neoclassical geopolitics (Morgado 2020, 151). Our observations depart from the independent variable of the constraints of the international system (*e.g.,* international treaties, military threats, political restrictiveness). In other words, assessing not only the distribution of capabilities in the international system – what Rose (1998, 146) designated as "the place of the state in the international system"-, but also making several notes about the state potential of each selected countries in determined periods of history. In this way, we accept the basic premise that international politics is branded by a never-ending struggle for power and influence (Ripsman *et al.* 2016, 43) and that, although the international system certainly imposes constraints on states – as Waltz discussed (1979) – those constraints do not dictate exactly how the state is going to react or to behave. Some other complementary variables are then necessary.

For that reason, the mentioned observations run through the intervening variable of the perception of space of two determined groups: (1) the people's perception of space, which constitutes part of Flint's concept of 'popular culture' (Flint 2006, 102), and (2) the geopolitical agent's perception of space, as developed by one of us (Morgado 2020, 147). As mentioned, the research goal is to be able to explain why certain political culture assumes certain contours, why the selected nations tend to vote in certain parties, and ultimately why they have their specific geopolitical codes. The characterization of the geopolitical agents – and that will be extended to popular culture – involves (a) an analysis of strategic culture through the study of perceptions of geographical space, and (b) an exploration of the intentions of the geopolitical agents and nations by identifying their ambitions. The (a) analysis of strategic culture involves scrutinizing the nations and geopolitical agents' sense, or perception, of geographical space. This means studying what kind of perceptions the nation and the geopolitical agents have about the implications of the incentives of the geographical setting in geostrategic formulation, the creation of geopolitical design, and foreign policy conduct. The (b) exploration of the intentions of the geopolitical agents (Chauprade and Thual 1998, 496) is accomplished by identifying their ambitions (and these are supposed to be, at the same time, the interpretation of the national aspirations). Rose (1998, 152) asserted that relative material state potential, being the foundation of foreign policy, impacts the ambitions of geopolitical agents in terms of their shaping of the external environment.

As for key concepts, geopolitical code is one of the most important. We accept Flint's definition of a geopolitical code as 'the manner in which a country orientates itself toward the world…'. The geopolitical code is a product of the calculation of the allies, enemies, how to maintain the former and counter the latter, and finally how to justify policy options to the domestic public opinion and in international relations (Flint 2006, 55–56). The geopolitical agents (Morgado 2019) – or the foreign policy executive (Ripsman et al 2016) – is yet another concept applied in this research by identifying and characterising political agents with international influence (e.g. Klvaňa, Orbán, Fico). The relative material state potential, which designates "the capabilities or resources… with which states can influence each other" (Wohlforth 1993, 4); strategic culture, which corresponds to "…a set of inter-related beliefs, norms, and assumptions…" that establish "…what are acceptable and unacceptable strategic choices…" (Ripsman et al 2016,

67); and the geopolitical design, which means both a list of state objectives (national objectives) and its hierarchy (Chauprade and Thual 1998, 486–487) and further operational concepts of the paper.

Trauma, grievance, betrayal, or abandonment have been sentiments taken as research topic in recent literature (Ilg 2021). On the other hand, geopolitical codes have also deserved the attention of several scholars (Dijkink 1998; Fard 2019). This paper is included in this line of research.

3 CENTRAL EUROPE: INTRODUCING THE SENTIMENT OF "BETRAYAL"

The re-emergence of historical grievances and their use in political discourse is especially intensive and visible in the region of post-Communist Central Europe. There are two major reasons for this.

First, many historical traumas were artificially suppressed or tabooed during Communist rule (Woods 2020). This applies mainly to the traumas concerning bilateral relations between countries that were part of the Eastern bloc during the Cold War. These were mainly caused by the mutual relations between countries and nations from the pre-World War I period as well as the interwar period. Looking back to the history of Central Europe before 1939 one can observe several border and territorial disputes, as well as majority vs. minority conflicts within multinational and multi-ethnic states, which created grounds for sensitive and problematic mutual relations. Any past disagreements between countries belonging to the Eastern bloc during the Cold War were considered a possible source of instability in the entire Communist area and either remained hidden or did not reach a high level of intensity.

The second reason for the re-emergence of historical grievances in post-1989 Central Europe is that during the non-democratic Communist period after World War II not only 'old' grievances were tabooed, but also some 'new' ones appeared. These 'new' ones were usually related to Soviet or Communist activities in satellite countries, mainly limits of sovereignty of Central European countries executed by Soviet military interventionism into internal affairs (Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968) or threats of the interventionism (Poland 1981). The Communist period and serf status of Central European satellites of the Soviet Union have also been examined among both political elites and broad society of newly democratised countries after 1989. Democratisation processes at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s reopened these previously artificially suppressed wounds and brought them back to the agenda of political parties as well as society.

4 CZECH REPUBLIC: FROM MUNICH TO THE U.S. RADAR

Czech traumas and grievances in general are closely connected with the distrust in any foreign powers and/or international actors. These grievances reflect several events from the Czech (Czechoslovak) past that can be characterised by the feeling of 'being abandoned and betrayed by allies'.

This refers to the most significant betrayal in modern Czech (Czechoslovak) history, the 'Agreement concluded at Munich, September 29, 1938, between

Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy' hereinafter the Munich Agreement of 1938. Signatories of the treaty agreed to the transfer of the Sudeten German territory (part of Czechoslovakia inhabited mainly by Germans) to Germany (Munich Agreement 1938). While Great Britain and France believed this step would satisfy Adolf Hitler's territorial expansion ambitions, Germany took it as the first step in its gradual attempt to break up Czechoslovakia. This breakup was eventually confirmed six months later, when the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia seceded and declared independence (14 March 1939), while the rest of Czechoslovakia was subsequently invaded and occupied by Germany (15 March 1939) and fully integrated into the Third Reich as its Protectorate (16 March 1939).

Since Czechoslovakia was excluded from the negotiations and was just informed about the outcome of the Munich conference, the term 'about us, without us' immediately came in handy for this event. Moreover, the bitterness of this event was strengthened by the fact that one of the signatories was a strategic ally of Czechoslovakia during the interwar period. The alliance with France was one of the main pillars of the interwar foreign policy of Czechoslovakia. That's why its participation at the Munich conference and agreement with the German takeover of parts of Czechoslovakia was labelled as the 'Munich betrayal'.

The events related to the 1938 Munich conference and its consequences have since then been the main source of historical grievances in Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic. The impact of the conference and the position of West-European powers, namely the feeling of being abandoned and betrayed by France, influenced the thinking of both political elites and society after World War II. As Czechoslovakia was looking for another strategic partner after World War II, the position of former (interwar) allies was very much discredited by their participation at the 1938 Munich Conference and their signature under the Munich Agreement. Then President Edvard Beneš, who as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1918–1935 had been a strong advocate for Czechoslovak–French cooperation during the interwar period, took the 1938 French position towards Hitler's demands very personally. The Soviet Union benefited from this atmosphere and made it easier for Joseph Stalin to get Czechoslovakia under the Soviet sphere of influence.

As discussed earlier, the 1938 Munich conference's impact on Czechoslovak and Czech society can be seen in a general distrust towards any foreign powers and/or international actors, not even towards those pretending to be the Czech Republic's allies. It is considered one of the sources of the very intense Euroscepticism in the Czech Republic. Critics of the European Union (EU) and Czech membership argue that the entire European integration process is managed by two West-European powers – Germany and France – and thus cannot be trusted, referring to the involvement of these two countries in the 1938 Munich Conference.

A reference to the 1938 Munich Agreement was used when the Czech Republic was negotiating with the United States of America about the possible construction of an American radar base (as part of the United States' missile defence system) in Czech territory. The Czech government's plan to offer the military grounds in Brdy (in the Central Bohemia region) for the construction of the United States' radar base drew intense criticism and opposition not only from some political parties, but also from several civic initiatives. Critics of the plan considered it a loss of sovereignty comparable to the 1938 Munich Agreement.

The anti-radar 'Munich' narrative was chosen to influence public opinion and thus gain support for their position of radar opponents. 'Radar is the new Munich!' was one of the arguments presented by an anti-radar activist during public discussion with Tomáš Klvaňa's government plenipotentiary responsible for running the pro-radar campaign (SKG 2008, 12). Banners brought by anti-radar activists to several protest assemblies read signs 'Say NO to radar! 1938 Hitler, 1968 Brezhnev, 2008 Bush!' (Lidovky 2008), again referring to similarities between the 2008 negotiations about the radar construction and the 1938 Munich conference.

The above-mentioned banner inscription not only included reference to the 1938 Munich Conference and related subsequent events, but also to another milestone in 20th century Czechoslovak history, the 1968 intervention of five Warsaw Pact countries: the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Eastern Germany (German Democratic Republic), Hungary and Poland. This is another example of an historical grievance that has influenced Czechoslovak and Czech society, again falling into the category of acts caused by a foreign power (or powers) and acts showing the betrayal of a close ally (Czechoslovakia was part of the Soviet bloc and a member country of the Warsaw Pact as well). The intervention of five Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968, followed by 23 years of military presence, and the de facto occupation, of the Soviet army of Czechoslovak territory (1968–1991) was a reaction to the attempt to reform the Czechoslovak regime during the so-called Prague Spring in 1968. Although the reform leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) did not have any intentions of leaving the Eastern bloc, exclusion from the Soviet sphere of influence and/or withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact or Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation (COMECON), Moscow leadership did not want to jeopardise and gamble its control over the strategically located satellite country. The Soviets were also afraid of a possible domino effect, which means a chain reaction, if other Soviet satellites followed Czechoslovakia.

Despite both events – the 1938 Munich Agreement and the 1968 Warsaw Pact intervention – having different geopolitical roots, they both comply with the Czech national trauma and feeling of being betrayed by a close (foreign) ally and treated as an inferior subject. Therefore, using parallels between these historical events on one side and any contemporary events on the other side increases the chances of catching public attention and influencing public opinion, no matter whether the comparison has any relevant grounds or not.

Back to the radar base issue. By using comparison with the traumatic events of 1938 and 1968, the anti-radar activists aimed at influencing public opinion to reject the proposal, which eventually later proved effective. Data collected by the Center for the Public Opinion Research (CVVM) based at the Sociological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences had shown continuous opposition to the radar base. The CVVM had been including this issue in its public opinion surveys conducted between 2006 and 2009, e.g., in the relevant period when the issue had been on the political agenda both on a domestic level in the Czech Republic and on a bilateral level during Czech–U.S. negotiations. The support of the Czech public had never surpassed 30% of respondents, while the opposition had never dropped below 60% of respondents (CVVM 2009). Similar data were presented by public opinion surveys conducted by other institutions and organisations (see STEM 2008), as well as the media. Although the exact shares of supports vs. opponents differed, the general results proved that the project was favoured only by a minority of citizens.

The construction of the United States' radar base in the Czech Republic had majority support only among voters of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the leading coalition party in 2006–2009. Data showed that 54% of ODS voters favoured this project, while 40% opposed it, with 6% having no opinion. Support for the radar base among voters of the other two coalition parties, Christian and Democratic Union – the Czechoslovak Peoples' Party (KDU-ČSL) and the Green Party (SZ) – was significantly weaker than in case of ODS. The project was supported by only one third of KDU-ČSL and SZ voters (CVVM 2009). The issue caused internal conflicts in both junior coalition parties. Most both parties' voter bases rejected the project, while both parties' top representatives in the coalition government were among the biggest advocates for it (then Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg who represented SZ and then Minister of Défense Vlasta Parkanová who represented KDU-ČSL).

Supporters of both opposition parliamentary parties in the 2006-2009 period, the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), strongly opposed the project. Up to 80% of ČSSD voters and 90% of KSČM voters rejected the plans (CVVM 2009). The latter one was logically the strongest and most vocal opponent among political parties. Today's Communist Party itself builds on the pre-1989 Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) from the non-democratic era and its perception of international politics is based on the Cold War conflict between East and West with the United States still as the 'evil' Western power in the eyes of the KSČM. In the case of ČSSD, it was rather a political approach, as the first talks about the Unites States' radar base installation took place before the 2006 election when ČSSD was the leading coalition party. Once the social democrats became the opposition party following the 2006 parliamentary elections, their approach changed from support to opposition.

5 HUNGARY: FROM TRIANON TO SOFT IRREDENTISM

Almost 20 years before Czechoslovak society was traumatised by the 'Munich betrayal', a *de facto* prelude to World War II, the winning powers of World War I discussed the fate of the countries that had caused the war and lost it. In addition to the more well-known Treaty of Versailles that dealt with Germany, there were other treaties dealing with other losing countries. Among them there is one that evokes emotions to this day – the Trianon Treaty adopted on 4 June 1920. As a result of this treaty, Hungary lost two thirds of its pre-World War I territory and about one third of the Hungarian population remained behind the newly established Hungarian borders. Although Hungary achieved a partial revision of the Trianon Treaty by the two Vienna Arbitration Awards in 1938 and 1940, respectively (with the help of Germany and Italy), the borders returned to their pre-1938 state after World War II, when Hungary was again part of the alliance that lost the war (Hungary joined Axis powers Germany, Italy and Japan in 1940).

What 'Munich' is for Czechoslovakia, 'Trianon' is for Hungary. The Trianon Treaty and its consequences have since then been considered by Hungarians 'a national tragedy, even the greatest', while 'for Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs, etc. a great national victory, perhaps the greatest' (Gál 2020). The 'Trianon betrayal' has resonated in Hungarian politics and society even more than the 'Munich' betrayal has among Czechs. The issue has driven attention and emotions the entire period after 1989 and was brought into the public debates mainly (but only) by the national conservative party Alliance of Young Democrats – the Hungarian Civic

Alliance (FIDESZ-MPSZ) led by Viktor Orbán. Their rhetoric regarding the Trianon Treaty strengthened especially after their 2002 and 2006 electoral defeats (Szabó 2020, 31), and substantially reached its peak after the 2010 parliamentary elections and the major victory of the FIDESZ-MPSZ. Orbán's national-conservative government "cultivated anew the 'tragedy' of the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920, which had been a dominant storyline of Horthy's interwar Hungary" (Walsch 2018, 185).

However, in 1998, shortly before winning his first elections and becoming the Hungarian prime minister for the first time, Viktor Orbán had already 'interpreted twentieth-century history as a series of tragedies for the Hungarian nation' (Benazzo 2017, 202), referring not only to the above-mentioned Trianon Treaty, but also to the Communist takeover after World War II and the events related to the Hungarian uprising in 1956. After becoming the prime minister in 1998, Orbán called for 'some serious changes for the politics of memory' (ibid.). This political approach also includes praise and glorification of the regime of Miklós Horthy (1920–1944).

It was during Horthy's term as a regent[2] when the continuous attempt to revise the Trianon Treaty became one of the pillars of Hungarian foreign policy (Hetényi 2008, 13; Klimek and Kubů 1995, 39). This foreign policy goal was eventually partly successful during Horthy's term. This was possible due to Hungary's alliance with Germany (Hopkins 2020) and followed the successful German attempt to revise the Treaty of Versailles's borders during the Munich Conference at the end of September 1938, as mentioned in the previous section. Following the same argumentation used by Germans regarding German-speaking areas of Czechoslovakia, Hungary claimed possession of the Hungarian-speaking territories of Czechoslovakia (southern Slovakia and southern Carpathian Ruthenia) during the Vienna Arbitration in November 1938. The First Vienna Arbitration Award from 2 November 1938 was the first step in Hungary's partial revision of its post-World War I border. It was later followed by the occupation of the rest of Carpathian Ruthenia in March 1939 and finally by the Second Vienna Arbitration Award in August 1940 that affected the region of northern Transylvania (then part of Romania) (United Nations 2007). Following World War II and the 1947 Treaty of Paris, the Hungarian borders returned to their pre-1938 settlement, except for three villages Horvathjarfalu, Oroszvar and Dunacsun, which were moved to then Czechoslovakia, now Slovakia (Treaty 1947, article 1, section 4c).

The 1920 Trianon Treaty led to the loss of approximately two thirds of Hungarian territory with more than three million Hungarians inhabiting these seceded territories (Woods 2019). Since the post-World War II context made Hungary return to pre-1938 borders and nullified both Vienna Arbitration Awards, as well as other Hungarian gains made in 1938–1941 (see Treaty 1947, article 1, sections 1-4), the bitterness over Trianon injustice remained deeply rooted in Hungarian society. However, during the Communist rule the issue was a taboo (Woods 2020), therefore it was not until transition to democracy and following development that the issue again became part of political culture, discourse and agenda. It is no surprise that Trianon-related public opinion surveys have shown

[2] The monarchy was restored in Hungary in 1920. However, the throne was denied to Charles I, the last Emperor of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and also the last Hungarian King before 1918. Instead, Miklós Horthy became regent, a position he held until he was forced by Germans to resign in 1944. The office of regent is characterized as 'a person who governs a kingdom during the minority or absence or incapacity of a king' (Rees 1819).

that most Hungarians, regardless of their political preferences, describe the treaty as an act of injustice (MTI 2020). A poll conducted at the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Trianon Treaty showed that up to 85% of Hungarians consider the treaty as 'biggest national tragedy', and 77% say the country has 'never really recovered from the loss' (Latal et al 2020).

It is natural that any historical topic of significant importance becomes part of political discourse even many years after. In 2010, on the 90th anniversary of the Trianon Treaty, the newly elected Hungarian parliament declared 4 June as 'National Cohesion Day'. It is understood as a day of unity with Hungarians living abroad, namely in pre-Trianon areas of Greater Hungary. The issue of unity was reflected in the new Fundamental Law (Constitution), adopted in the following year. The Preamble of the 2011 Fundamental Law pledges to 'preserve the intellectual and spiritual unity of our nation, torn apart by the storms of the past century' and honours 'the achievements of our historical Constitution and the Holy Crown, which embodies the constitutional continuity of Hungary and the unity of the nation' (Constitutional Court of Hungary 2011).

While it can be assumed that none of the key political actors believe in the real possibility of revising the Trianon Treaty today, because it does not apply anymore and also because it was replaced by the Treaty of Paris signed in 1947, many Hungarians believe the wide-spread myth that the Trianon Treaty had been signed for 100 years and that 'in 2020 all lost territories will suddenly return' (Woods 2019). As Slovak-Hungarian political scientist Zsolt Gál points out, among Hungarians there is 'still a significant group of people who hope that the "torn-off territories will eventually return", while on the other hand, among Slovaks, Romanians, etc. many still share fears that they will lose "their" territories. On both sides, these are minorities, but perhaps not so negligible' (Gál 2020).

According to Gál (ibid.), one of the main problems is that ethnic majorities in different countries often do not understand the other minority ethnic groups. 'They know woefully little about real historical events; they perceive almost everything only through their narrow national prism and the wider international (Central European) context goes completely aside'. To support his argument, he pointed out that while most Hungarians regret the dissolution of Hungary after World War I, most Slovaks or Romanians interpret the same act as gaining freedom from Hungarian oppression.

In this way, the Trianon Treaty is not remembered only in Hungary. In May 2020, the Romanian Parliament passed a bill declaring 4 June as Trianon Treaty Day and making it a public holiday. During this day, several events promoting the significance of the treaty are held. Some analysts consider this motion 'a response to Hungary's decision of declaring June 4 the "Day of National Cohesion"' (Hungary Today 2020). The motion to declare 4 June Trianon Treaty Day further fuelled tensions between Hungarians and Romanians not only on the level of interstate relations, but also within Romania.

While there is no Trianon Treaty Day marked in the Slovak calendar, we can find some memorials marking this event in Slovakia. On the 90th anniversary of signing the treaty on 4 June 2010, a memorial plaque was placed on the building of the Slovak Post Office on Slovak National Uprising Square in the downtown of the Slovak capital Bratislava. The memorial plaque, whose installation was initiated by the Slovak National Party, reads the following: 'The Slovak Republic

expresses thanks to the allied powers for concluding the Trianon Peace Treaty with Hungary on the day of June 4, 1920, at the Grand Trianon Chateau in Versailles near Paris, which sealed the dissolution of Hungary, situated Czecho-Slovakia and other countries in its relevant borders and gave Europe its new face. Grateful Slovaks' (Just 2019; Veverka 2011). The plaque also includes a quotation of Štefan Osuský, inter-war career diplomat and envoy who signed the treaty on behalf of Czechoslovakia: 'When I signed my name at the bottom of the treaty bearing name Trianon at three-quarters to five on June 4, 1920, I knew that I was signing the settlement of the Slovak nation with the former Hungary, settlement of accounts signed from the top to the bottom with the blood, suffering and misery of my nation. And such a settlement is eternal' (Just 2019; Veverka 2011).

6 GREAT MORAVIAN EMPIRE: THE FIRST SLOVAK STATE?

The research already put forth arguments about the Czech and Hungarian grievances and traumas related to the territorial losses as decided by the great powers in the past. Unlike the Czech Republic, Hungary or Poland, Slovakia has never had its own independent state before 1918, which can be understood as one of the sources of (not only) contemporary grievances and traumas. Slovak territorial identity had been suppressed in the past by the fact that Slovak nationality 'was formed in the conditions of a subordinate community, living in an asymbiotic relationship with the ethnically distant nationality of the Hungarians, while the Czechs lived in their own state unit' (Nikischer 2013, 15).

The absence of independent Slovak statehood in the past was a driving force behind two 20th century events that eventually ended with the declaration of independence. The first such event occurred in 1939, when the Slovak state was declared, although not because of the struggle for independence, but rather because of the pressure from Germany's leader Adolf Hitler and his attempt to break up Czechoslovakia. Secession of Slovakia thus became one of many steps in Hitler's plan to break up Czechoslovakia. A step which was preceded by the Munich Treaty in September 1938 and the Vienna Arbitration Award in November 1938 as mentioned above. The events in both Munich and Vienna led to the revision of the post-World War I treaties from the Versailles and Trianon, and the transfer of the Czechoslovak territories inhabited by Germans, resp. Hungarians to Germany, resp. Hungary. Slovak independence, declared on 14 March 1939, was followed the next day by entry of German forces into the territory of the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, and finally its declaration as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia on 16 March 1939. The Czech part of former Czechoslovakia thus became an integral part of the German Third Reich (Klimek and Kubů 1995, 94).

From the international law perspective, Slovakia was in a different situation. It was officially an independent country. However, Slovak independence in 1939–1945 was quite limited. There were several official, legal limits as well as some unofficial limits to Slovak sovereignty. Among the legal limits we can name the German-Slovak bilateral 'Treaty on the Protective Relations between the German Empire and the Slovak State' (*Deutsch-Slowakischen Schutzvertrag*), signed on 23 March 1939. The treaty additionally legitimised the entry of German troops into the territory of Slovakia and guaranteed Germany's control over the protection zone along the border with the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. According to the treaty, Slovakia subordinated its foreign policy, defence, but also economic (industrial, agricultural, transport) policies and economy to the interests of

Germany. A secret amendment to the treaty ('Confidential Protocol on Economic and Financial Cooperation') also gave Germany preferential rights to the use of minerals extracted in Slovakia. In accordance with the treaty, Slovakia became part of Hitler's alliance and alongside Germany (and the Soviet Union as well) participated in the invasion of Poland in September 1939, an act considered as the starting point of World War II (Klimek and Kubů 1995, 94). Thanks to the involvement in the German and Soviet attack on Poland, Slovakia gained some Polish territories. Later Slovakia participated in the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941.

Another limit of Slovak sovereignty was represented by the presence of German advisors at the Slovak ministries and other administrative offices. These advisors served more as controllers, who oversaw the implementation of German policies by the Slovak government. In accordance with the limits of sovereignty, Slovakia was in fact a puppet state or satellite of Germany. Contemporary perception of the 1939–1945 Slovak War State shows that there is still substantial support for the acts of the Slovak administration during World War II. According to a 2013 survey, 29% of respondents think that Slovak wartime President Jozef Tiso saved the lives of 'many Jews', the same share of respondents also think that it is 'time to stop commemorating the deportations and murders of Jews' (Blaščák et al 2013, 6). The same survey also showed that the awareness of the main events related to the 1939–1945 period is very low. Only 22.3% of respondents are aware what the term 'aryanisation' means and only 15.3% know the approximate number of Jews that were deported to concentration camps (ibid., 5)

The desire for independence, this time already in democratic conditions, appeared again after the fall of the Communist regime in 1989 with the rapid pro-independence movement that ended in the disintegration of Czechoslovakia and the formation of two independent successor countries in 1993, one of them being Slovakia. This time, modern Slovak independence came because of a non-violent, peaceful and democratic process and the state began to operate under democratic conditions (unlike the previous case of 1939–1945 statehood). Although an independent country since then, the issue of territoriality has remained vivid. The Czech-Slovak dimension was, however, replaced by the Slovak-Hungarian dimension with the Slovak approach towards the Hungarian minority living in the southern belt of Slovakia alongside the border with Hungary being one of the sources of the clashes, and Hungarian soft irredentism, as mentioned, being the other one.

Any reminder of the Trianon Treaty has naturally provoked reactions from countries that feel threatened by possible Hungarian irredentism, and Slovakia can serve as a great example. While in the Czech and Hungarian cases mentioned above the core of the historical injustice is the loss of territory or sovereignty, in the Slovak case everything revolves around the previous non-existence of independent Slovak statehood (Nikischer 2013) and the efforts to establish it or achieve it as soon as possible so that Slovaks could be – finally – masters of their own territory, of their own country.

After the foundation of independent Slovakia, however, an interesting phenomenon can be observed – the effort to find proof that there was Slovak statehood sometime in history. This approach has reversed the generally perceived interpretation of Slovaks living 'in the conditions of a subordinate community' (Nikischer 2013, 15), either in the territory dominated by Hungarians or Czechs. This phenomenon has been represented by the well-

known statement of former Prime Minister Robert Fico, who on the 15ᵗʰ anniversary of the foundation of Slovakia in January 2008 stated that 'Svatopluk was the first King of Old Slovaks' and claimed that historians agree that 'we can use the term of Old Slovaks' (Kern 2008). Fico was referring to the 9ᵗʰ century Great Moravian Empire, generally considered to be state of 'Old Slavs' (not 'Old Slovaks').

7 CONCLUSION

The paper has contributed to a broad understanding of the region of Central Europe by analysing the role and intensity of grievances and traumas of past events, such as the Munich Agreement and the project for a U.S. radar in the Czech case, the Trianon Treaty in the Hungarian one, and the non-existence of a democratic state in the Slovak case, on these nations' political culture and discourse, as well as their political agents. From a comparative point of view, we can conclude that while in the cases of the Czech Republic and Hungary the grievances are built related to the loss of once-owned territory and harmful foreign influence (international constraints), the Slovak grievance is mainly because that nation never had the chance to have their independent territory until very recently. As it was problematised in the paper, such traumas and grievances do have a significant role in clarifying the nature of national political cultures and discourses. Therefore, traumas and grievances have explanatory power over the reasons why large portions of Czechs, Hungarians and Slovaks sustain, support, and vote for certain parties (not even necessarily nationalist or xenophobic ones). This seems to be a result of a successful management in effectively using these memories, traumas, and grievances for political gains. Cumulatively in time, this political culture and discourse determines the geopolitical code of the state and, therefore, ends up influencing the international system throughout the decades. Apart from this, the paper also has the innovative aspect of applying the new theoretic-methodological model of neoclassical realism to study the topic, operationalising it in the intercross of domestic and international variables, opening the path for other similar exercises, examining recent political facts in the light of these traumas and grievances.

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APPENDIX

List of abbreviations

COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation
CVVM	Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění [Center for the Public Opinion Research]
ČSSD	Česká strana sociálně demokratická [Czech Social Democratic Party]
EU	European Union
FIDESZ-MPSZ	Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége – Magyar Polgári Szövetség [Alliance of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civic Alliance]
KDU-ČSL	Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová [Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak Peoples' Party]
KSČ	Komunistická strana Československa [Communist Party of Czechoslovakia]
KSČM	Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy [Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia]
ODS	Občanská demokratická strana [Civic Democratic Party]
SMER-SD	Smer – Sociálna demokracia [Direction – Social Democracy]
SNS	Slovenská národná strana [Slovak National Party]
SZ	Strana zelených [Green Party]
V4	Visegrad Four, Visegrad Group

OŽIVLJANJE TRAVM IN ZAMER: GEOPOLITIČNE OZNAKE IN POLITIČNA KULTURA V SREDNJI EVROPI

Zgodovinske travme in zamere močno vplivajo na politično kulturo in diskurz, volilne procese, odnos družbe in obnašanje volivcev več let, desetletij, včasih celo stoletij kasneje. Takšna stališča, ki se odražajo tako v domači politični kulturi in diskurzu kot tudi na mednarodni ravni, niso izključna domena nacionalističnih, ksenofobnih ali populističnih strank. Zato postanejo pomembna vprašanja. Namen prispevka je analizirati vlogo in intenzivnost izbranih dogodkov iz preteklosti v današnji politični kulturi in diskurzu na izbranih primerih srednjeevropskih držav, torej Češke, Madžarske in Slovaške. Ta regija je bogata z zgodovinskimi dogodki spreminjanja velikosti in oblike držav ali njihovimi geopolitičnimi oznakami, ki so pognali korenine za nadaljnjo uporabo te 'dediščine' v političnih gibanjih. V času komunizma so bile nekatere od teh zgodovinskih travm in zamer umetno potlačene. Vendar so se po osemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja lahko spet svobodno pojavile in postale vplivni dejavniki volilne tekme in političnih položajev.

Ključne besede: geopolitika; travma; zunanja politika; volilno vedenje.