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»LOCKED UP« IN NATION STATES: PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STATE AND NATIONAL COMMUNITY WITHIN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DISCOURSE IN LITHUANIA

ABSTRACT

This article examines how the idea of the nation-state is articulated in political and social discourse. In particular, it explores how the national community and the state are positioned vis-à-vis each other in discourse surrounding national flags. I locate my analysis in Lithuania after the dissolution of the USSR. I explore how the interaction between the state and the nation is discursively represented among politicians and ordinary citizens when they discuss Lithuanian national flag(s). Intriguingly, whereas semi-public discourse could generally be described as "locked up" in thinking in terms of the nation and state as interdependent entities, for political actors the intertwining of the nation and state was a less doxastic state of affairs.

KEYWORDS: national symbols, nationhood, statehood, Lithuania, discourse analysis

»Zaklenjeni« v nacionalnih državah: percepcije odnosa med državnimi in nacionalnimi skupnostmi v političnih in družbenih diskurzih v Litvi

IZVLEČEK

Članek preučuje, kako je ideja nacionalne države artikulirana v političnih in družbenih diskurzih. Raziskuje, kako so nacionalne skupnosti in država medsebojno pozicionirane v diskurzih, ki zadevajo nacionalne zastave. Analiza se osredotoča na primer Litve po razpadu Sovjetske zveze. Avtorica ugotavlja, kako je interakcija med državo in nacijo diskurzivno reprezentirana v političnih razpravah in razpravah navadnih državljanov o nacionalnih zastavah. Medtem ko – zanimivo – poljavne diskurze splošno lahko opišemo kot »zaklenjene«, in sicer v smislu, da se nacijo in državo misli kot povezani entiteti, je za politične akterje preplet nacije in države manj samoumeven.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: nacionalni simboli, nacionalnost, državnost, Litva, analiza diskurza

1 Introduction[1]

Countless obituaries for the nation-state have already been penned, and we are just waiting, it seems, for the body to topple conveniently into the grave.
David Miller (2003: 119–120)

Before we witness the final and irreversible "fall" of the nation-states, it is important to understand how this particular form of political organization permeates thinking about the relationship between political authority and its subordinates. This article explores how thinking in terms of nation-states informs the way one understands the relationship between its two summands: the national community and the state. What is, might be, or should be the relationship between these two entities?

I search for some possible answers to this question by exploring political and semi-public social discourse about the national flag in post-1990 Lithuania. I consider discourse surrounding national flags to be one of the key loci where the production, maintenance, and transformation of ideas pertaining to statehood and nationhood can be observed. This view is based on several theoretical premises. The focus at the discursive level is justified by the assumption that national communities are "*discursively*, by means of language and other semiotic systems, *produced, reproduced, transformed* and *destructed*" (De Cillia et al. 1999: 153; emphasis in the original).

However, I agree with Pierre Bourdieu that the constitutive power of a given discourse depends on the amount of symbolic capital acquired by the producer of that discourse. He defines symbolic capital as a resource, or the power of being acknowledged as a legitimate authority in a given field (Bourdieu 1999: 337). In politics, this means being recognized as an authority in matters relating to the production of social categorizations and nominations (Bourdieu 1989: 20).

Simon Harrison convincingly argues that political symbols are among the principal resources for symbolic capital within the political field. He claims that "competition for power, wealth, prestige, legitimacy or other political resources seems always to be accompanied by conflict over important symbols, by struggles to control or manipulate such symbols in some vital way" (Harrison 1995: 255). This is because symbols, in his view, are "status markers" and objects of "emotional attachment" that, when appropriated by a group or an individual, become a "source of legitimacy and may confer specific rights and prerogatives such as the ownership of a territory or the entitlement to a political office" (Harrison 1995: 270). Thus, "political symbols are to symbolic capital what money is to economic capital" (Harrison 1995: 269).

National symbols are particular types of political symbols that "give concrete meaning and visibility to the abstractions of nationalism" (Smith 2000: 73) and enable the state to legitimize "itself vis-à-vis the concept of the nation that undergirds it" (Geisler 2005:

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xix–xx) through their use. Therefore, I expect discourse related to national symbols to reflect the representations of nationhood and statehood attached to them.

According to Thomas Hylland Eriksen, national flags stand out among other national symbols:

> In the modern era of the nation-state . . . , flags signify, at an abstract large scale, some of the same things that totems and heraldic symbols have done in the past, but – in the case of national flags – they signify the metaphoric kin group of the nation rather than other groups. . . . disputes over flag design, which flag to use and how to use it, reveal conflicts which are ultimately concerned with the nature of "we-hood". (Eriksen 2007: 3)

This suggests examining discourse on national flags in order to understand the content that the concepts of the state and national community are imbued with in the particular case at hand.

The question is which discourse on the national flag to scrutinize. This article proposes the state (understood as a constellation of bureaucratic institutions; Bourdieu and Champagne 2014: 20; Swartz 2013: 36; Bourdieu 1998: 23–24) and its people ("imagined" as the nation within the context of the modern nation-states; Canovan 2005: 43) as crucial actors within the discursive (re)production of statehood and nationhood.

The state becomes one of the main producers of such social categories as a "nation" or "state" by inculcating the very "cognitive structures by which it [the state] is thought" (Bourdieu and Champagne 2014: 164). It takes part in creating "common, everyday assumptions . . . that individuals and groups make about the nature of the social order" (Swartz 2013: 80). Bourdieu calls such assumptions *doxa* – a popular opinion that provides the perception of the existing social order as natural and self-evident (Bourdieu 1977: 164) or the "pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world" (Bourdieu 1990: 68). The power of doxa is at its strongest when individuals internalize the categories on which its power structure is based – such as the "nation" or "state" – to such a degree as to appear as natural, unquestionable, and taken for granted.

Although the state is a central agent in the production of social groups and doxa, it "never establishes an absolute monopoly . . . . In fact, *there are always, in any society, conflicts between symbolic powers that aim at imposing the vision of legitimate divisions*, that is, at constructing groups" (Bourdieu 1989: 22; emphasis in the original). Even though social groups are constructed by political actors, there are limits to how such a construction can be carried out.

Building on this idea, I suggest that the role of the national community comes into the picture when one wants to study whether official (political) discursive representations of nationhood and statehood also emerge in the semi-public (social) discourse on the national flag; and, even more, how much those representations come across as doxastic – that is, unquestionable, self-evident, and taken for granted. Such a juxtaposition of official and semi-public perceptions of the "nation" and "state" offers an intriguing perspective for analysing the process of thinking in terms of "nation-states".

2 Post-1990 Lithuania: Discourse or Discourses of the National?

The choice of Lithuania is grounded in it being a particularly interesting case in nationalism studies. First, Lithuania is one of the fifteen post-Soviet republics. Arguably, nationalism was one of the main driving forces behind the collapse of the Soviet Union (see, e.g., Barrington 2006; Beissinger 2009). Second, Rogers Brubaker argues that, after establishing independent statehoods in Soviet successor states, nationalism not only did not evaporate but became characterized by a:

> . . . deeply institutionalized ethnocultural understanding of nationhood; an understanding of the state as the state of and for the ethnoculturally defined "core" or "titular" nation; the claim that the core nation is in a weak or unhealthy condition, and that its very survival is at stake; the argument that state action is needed to strengthen the demographic, cultural, economic or political position of the core nation; and the justification of such action as remedial or compensatory. (Brubaker 2011: 1807)

Yet, Lithuania may not fit neatly within Brubaker's statements pertaining to the relationship between the state and the nation. Lithuania's relatively liberal laws on citizenship and minority rights (Budryte 2005: 143; Kasekamp 2010: 184–188) as well as small ethnic minority groups[2] may be considered the main factors for the absence of open, large-scale ethnic clashes (Kasatkina 2003; Steen 2006). However, these circumstances have not guaranteed tension-free integration of ethnic minorities. Scholarly attention has focused on the shortcomings of the existing legal framework and its practical implementation regarding equal opportunities and non-discrimination against ethnic minorities (Budryte and Pilinkaite-Sotirovic 2009), disaffection with politics and low political participation among ethnic minorities (Agarin 2013; Kasatkina 2003), mistrust in the political loyalties of ethnic minorities at the level of political elites and within everyday society (Agarin 2013; Clark 2006; Janeliūnas et al. 2011; Kasatkina 2003), and tendencies to social the isolation of Lithuania's ethnic minorities (Kasatkina 2003; Janušauskienė 2016; Savukynas 2000).

The relationship between the Lithuanian state and the titular ethnic group is at least as complex as that between the state and its ethnic minorities. I have not found academic studies that focus on possible tensions solely between the state and ethnic Lithuanians. However, the findings of studies on Lithuanian society as a whole inevitably also relate to ethnic Lithuanians. Scholars have noted significant and continuing levels of political alienation – exemplified by low trust in state institutions (in particular, the Lithuanian parliament,

2. According to the 2011 census, Lithuanians made up 84.2% of the total population, followed by Poles (6.6%) and Russians (5.8%) (Statistics 2013). From 1989 to 2011, the proportion of the ethnic Lithuanian population increased from 79.6% to 84.2%, whereas Russian dropped from 9.4% to 5.8% and Polish decreased from 7% to 6.6% (Statistics 2013).

or Seimas),[3] low political participation, and disenchantment with democracy – as major challenges for Lithuanian society (Donskis 2011: 105–116; Ramonaitė 2007). There is no consensus on the causes for this state/society alienation: explanations vary from attributing it to "fast and drastic sociocultural change" (Donskis 2011: 107) to explaining it as an outcome of the way an individual relates to the Soviet regime (Ramonaitė 2007: 147).

Finally, the question of the state and nation relationship came to the fore in symbolic policies relating to the national flag of Lithuania. The legalization of the historical national flag[4] (the white knight of the Lithuanian coat of arms, known as Vytis – which was also an emblem of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania[5] and of Lithuania during the interwar period – on a red background) by the Lithuanian Parliament on July 8th, 2004 gave rise to considerable debate, not least of all as to whether it might replace the tricolour[6] (yellow-green-red) as the national flag in the future. Should the tricolour remain as the "national" flag representing the national community of the country, whereas the historical national flag would represent the state? This idea had supporters and opponents among politicians, scholars, journalists, and social activists. The historical national flag was a compromise outcome. Although it did not replace the Lithuanian national tricolour as the official flag of the state, it did challenge the exclusivity of the national tricolour as a sign of the state and the nation. Be that as it may, this reveals not only the relevance of the analysis of the national symbols within the study of nationalism but also potentially indicates that the

3. In a representative opinion survey in 1993, 12% of ethnic Lithuanian, 5% of ethnic Russian, and 7% of ethnic Polish respondents stated that they did not trust parliament (Rose and Maley 1994). In 2001, the figures were dramatically higher: 70% of ethnic Lithuanian and 68% of ethnic Russian respondents declared that they did not trust members of parliament (Rose 2002). Since then, the trust in this institution has remained very low. According to the representative survey on trust in state institutions among residents of Lithuania carried out from June 30th to July 9th, 2017, only 9.1% of respondents claimed to trust the parliament (Vilmorus 2017).
4. This flag is defined in the Law on the National Flag as a "historical symbol of the State of Lithuania, a piece of cloth featuring a red field with a silver armoured knight on a white horse holding a silver sword in his right hand above his head". In the official English translation of the law it is called a "historical national flag". However, in the Lithuanian-language version of the title of this flag, it is called the "historical flag of the state of Lithuania" (*Lietuvos valstybės istorinė vėliava*).
5. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a feudal multi-ethnic polity that existed from the thirteenth century until 1795.
6. The Lithuanian national flag has three equal horizontal bands: yellow on top, green in the middle, and red on the bottom (in a ratio of 3:5). Discussions on a national flag began as early as 1905 at the Lithuanian Congress in Vilnius. However, it was not until April 25th, 1918 that the Lithuanian tricolour, based on the colours of ethnic Lithuanian folk costumes and weaving, was finally established as the national flag. It remained as such throughout the interwar period until the Soviet occupation, and was replaced with the red flag on July 30th, 1940. That flag was replaced with a red, white, and green flag with a hammer and sickle in the upper left corner on July 15th, 1953. The tricolour re-emerged in public life in the summer of 1988 at the rallies and gatherings held by the Lithuanian Reform Movement (Sąjūdis). Due to social pressure, the tricolour was legally established as the national flag of the Lithuanian SSR on November 18th, 1988. With the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union on March 11th, 1990, the tricolour remained the national flag of Lithuania. Its legal status and use are regulated by the Law on the National Flag (adopted on June 26th, 1991) and the constitution (adopted on November 6th, 1992).

relation of the state and nation within the singular unit that is a "nation-state" is just as pertinent an issue for post-Soviet Lithuania as it is for scholarly discussions.

The relatively mild yet latent ethnic tensions, persistent high-level political alienation, and discussions about the historical national flag in Lithuania do not seem to offer a straightforward confirmation or negation of Brubaker's views that the state is perceived "as the state of and for the ethnoculturally defined 'core' or 'titular' nation; the claim that the core nation is in a weak or unhealthy condition, and that its very survival is at stake; the argument that state action is needed to strengthen the demographic, cultural, economic or political position of the core nation" in the post-Soviet countries. However, these issues certainly raise the question of whether this particular perception of the state and nation has acquired an overwhelmingly dominant position within the plurality of discourse on statehood and nationhood in post-1990 Lithuania.

This article examines official and semi-public discourse surrounding the national tricolour and the historical national flag in order to determine how much representations of state and nation within the particular context of national flags resemble or differ from those present in Brubaker's argument. Certainly, discourse on the national flag(s) selected for this study forms a very specific and narrow framework, which cannot and does not aim to comprise all possible variations of the way statehood and nationhood are perceived in Lithuania. Therefore, my goal is not to refute Brubaker's claims, but to reconstruct the diversity of discourses of the national that must be considered in order to better understand the complexities of statehood and nationhood in post-Soviet space.

3 Empirical Material: Data Collection and Analysis

My empirical materials are, first, the texts of the Law on the National Flag (LNF)[7] and its amendments, the texts of the Provisional Basic Law of the Republic of Lithuania (PBL)[8] and the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania[9] and transcripts of parliamentary sessions.

The focal empirical material for my analysis stems from the LNF because "state control and legitimation of authority is exercised through flag laws and notions of 'desecration,' which shed light on the political as well as the sacred nature of the national flag (and the nation)" (Elgenius 2011: 63). The LNF is the main legal document that regulates

7. The Law on the Lithuanian State Flag, as it was called in the English translation of the original version (June 26th, 1991) has changed its title several times: in the Lithuanian version of the law this was done even more times than in the English translations. From 2004 until the most recent English translation in 2013, the English translation is the Law on the National Flag and Other Flags. In order to determine the suitable English term for use in this article – one that could be used when referring to the versions before and after the 2004 English one – I decided to call it the Law on the National Flag, hence, the abbreviation LNF. Further nuances regarding the title of the LNF are presented in the analysis of this law.
8. The Provisional Basic Law of the Republic of Lithuania was in force from March 11th, 1991 until November 2nd, 1992, when a new constitution came into force.
9. It was adopted in the referendum of October 25th, 1992 and came into force on November 2nd, 1992.

the status of the national flag in Lithuania. I examine the transformation of the LNF text from its introduction on June 26th, 1991 through its various amendments until January 17th, 2013, when the sixteenth and most recent amendment was adopted. I chose to supplement analysis of the LNF with an analysis of the texts of the PBL and the constitution because the LNF was a subordinate law to the PBL (while it was still in force) and the constitution.

Both the legislative discourse on the Lithuanian national flag and the speeches of members of the Seimas (MPs) were examined when discussing this legislation during sessions of the Seimas. Although the LNF and its amendments provide official and legally binding nominations (thus imposing certain representations of the national flag and its meaning, as well as setting guidelines for behaviour regarding the flag), they do not provide an explanation of the need and the reasons why they were adopted. In contrast, the statements made by the MPs in discussing certain decisions concerning the national flag provide supplementary material that can help overcome this shortcoming of the analysis of the legal texts. They also offer insights into the specific socio-political contexts at the time of the deliberation and adoption of the LNF and its amendments.

Empirical material for the discourse of the MPs consists of the transcripts of forty-two plenary sessions altogether. Transcripts of all plenary sessions are available via the search engine on the Seimas website. My search timeframe was from March 11th, 1990 (the date of Lithuania's declaration of independence) to March 5th, 2015 (the date of the discussion of the final focus group).[10]

The sample of semi-public discourse was gathered in the form of three focus group discussions (FGDs) on the status, private use, and public use of the national flags conducted in Lithuania in March 2015. Targeted participants for the focus groups were adult citizens of Lithuania that started their schooling from 1990 onwards (making them between eighteen and thirty-two years old at the time of the FGDs) and with self-ascribed ethnic affiliation to the three largest ethnic groups in Lithuania since independence from the Soviet Union: Lithuanians, Poles, and Russians. My goal is not a representative study of all adult Lithuanian citizens that started school from 1990 onwards. I position this analysis within an interpretivist framework. Therefore, I did not consider all possible demographic variables, such as religion, profession, marital status, and so on in connection with the sampling, although I did take care to be aware of these when analysing the data: they might be mentioned by the FGD participants in their discourse on nationhood and statehood.

Certainly, there are enormous differences between the setting in a plenary session of the Seimas and the one in a focus group, ranging from the size of the group and the degree of acquaintance (MPs are normally at least partly acquainted with each other, whereas in FGDs the participants do not know each other beforehand) to the social roles, motivations, and possible wider impact of the statements of MPs and FGD participants. However, with both a plenary parliamentary session and a FGD one can "observe the

10. Although the LNF was last amended in January 2013, I wanted to check whether any discussions regarding the LNF were taking place in the Seimas at the time when I was conducting my focus group discussions.

processes through which important concepts like 'nation' are being 'co-constructed' during an ongoing discussion" (Wodak et al. 2009: 3).

For analysis of the data I applied selected methods of the discourse-historical approach (DHA) within critical discourse analysis (see, e.g., De Cillia et al. 1999; Krzyżanowski 2010; Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Wodak et al. 2009). I explore one particular element within the DHA analysis model for analysing empirical data – three discursive strategies: referential/nomination, predicational, and argumentation. Whereas referential and predicational strategies make it possible to investigate how one "constructs" and "qualifies" "social actors, objects/phenomena/events and processes/actions" (Reisigl and Wodak 2009: 95; see also Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 45); argumentation strategies provide insight into how those nominations and predications made by the speaker are justified (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 45).

With regard to nomination strategies, important forms of realization are "deictics, anthroponyms, metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches, verbs and nouns used to denote processes and actions, etc."; further, predicational strategies may employ "explicit predicates or predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns, collocations, explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors and other rhetorical figures, etc." (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 95). Within argumentation strategies, "topos" is my central device of analysis. The term *topos* has manifold interpretations within argumentation theory (Walton et al. 2008: 275). As explained above, I follow Reisigl and Wodak's definition of "topoi" as belonging to "the obligatory, either explicit or inferable, premises. They are the content-related warrants or 'conclusion rules' that connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion, the claim" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 74–75). The definition of *topos* in both formal or content-abstract terms (e.g., topos of analogy) and content-related terms (e.g., topos of economic efficiency) is justified, according to Reisigl, because of "the observation that argumentation is always topic-related and field-dependent (i.e., depending on the configuration of social domains, disciplines, theories, etc.)" (Reisigl 2014: 77).

To sum up, in this article I investigate how the Lithuanian national flag(s), nationhood, and statehood are referred to and labelled; and, further, how these references and labels are justified in the texts of the laws, statements of MPs, and statements in FGDs by selected participants. Due to the limitations of an article format and the richness of the data, the examples from empirical material are only meant to be illustrative of the main summarized findings.

4 The Lithuanian Tricolour: Flag of the Nation and/or the State?

4.1 Official Discourse

The status of the tricolour as Lithuania's national flag shows how the complexities of understanding and defining the nation-state generate difficulties in establishing a single dominant perception of its symbols. Various interpretations of what the state and the nation are, explicitly or tacitly, characterize how the tricolour is perceived and defined, not

only the original LNF and its amendments, but also in parliamentary discussions as well as by FGD participants. The official discourse tended to interpret the tricolour either as the symbol of the state or the symbol of the nation, whereas for discussants in the focus groups the nation/state dichotomy was more blurred.

The wording of the LNF, from its inception on June 26th, 1991 throughout its sixteen amendments, consistently defined the tricolour as the national (*tautinė*) flag and the flag of the state (*valstybinė,* adjective; *valstybės,* noun). At the time of the adoption of the LNF, these two terms defining the tricolour – national and state – were both used as adjectives. Article 1 of the LNF declares that the "Lithuanian State Flag shall be the national[11] [*tautinė*] cloth, consisting of three equal horizontal coloured stripes, arranged with yellow above, green in the middle, and red below". The words *national* and *state* here are used not as nouns but as adjectives: not as objects to be defined, but as qualifiers that already have certain meanings. This indicates that thinking in terms of nations and states appears to be understood as self-explanatory and perhaps self-evident. Thus, categories of nation and state may belong to doxa in the newly re-established Lithuanian state.

The transition of the *state* from a qualifier to a subject was reflected in the February 17th, 1994 amendment to the LNF. The name of the LNF was changed from the Law on the State Flag to the Law on the Flag of the State. This modified the definition of the tricolour from a *state* flag (Lithuanian: *valstybinė vėliava*) to a flag *of the state* (Lithuanian: *valstybės vėliava)*. Thus, in 1994, the word *state* used as a noun positioned the state as the owner of the national flag, and so it has remained throughout further amendments.

The introduction of the historical national flag in the early 2000s triggered an earnest discussion regarding the state and nation relationship within official discourse for the first time. Because the tricolour is also defined as the flag of the state in the LNF, the interrelation between these two flags became an object of discussion. The questions of what the nation is and what the state is could no longer be left in a doxastic slumber and had to be addressed. Interestingly, the MPs that expressed their opinion on this matter chose to resolve the puzzle by arguing that the tricolour ought to be perceived as the flag of the nation rather than the state.

MP Vytenis Andriukaitis – when introducing the amendment to the parliament on May 25th, 2004 – began by noting that "unsuccessful discussions on whether Lithuania may have the state and the national flags took place in Lithuania". He followed up by saying that the possibility of introducing a flag based on Vytis together with the Lithuanian tricolour had been considered by Lithuanian political elites ever since 1918. This was never implemented "in the course of history, although many nations have two flags, they have a national flag and a state flag". Such statements legitimize the introduction of the historical national flag in a twofold manner. First, they rely on the topos of the historical precedent of

11. The English noun *nation* can be translated by two Lithuanian words, *tauta* and *nacija*, and the adjective national can be translated by both *tautinis(-ė)* and *nacionalinis(-ė)*. Whereas nacija and *nacionalinis(-ė)* have a somewhat stronger political connotation, the terms tauta and *tautinis(-ė)* can refer to both political and ethno-cultural perceptions of nationhood. In my analysis, I examine how these words are used in the empirical material, noting the different Lithuanian words used if necessary for interpreting the empirical data.

interwar Lithuania, thereby emphasizing that the issue of the historical national flag is not a new idea, but has been reflected on for a long time. Moreover, the historical precedent of the interwar period is highly significant because it marks the creation of the Lithuanian nation-state upon which the statehood of present-day Lithuania is largely based. This topos can be summarized as follows: because serious consideration was given to the flag based on Vytis already at the inception of modern Lithuanian statehood, this unfinished task should be completed. Second, the topos of good examples is employed to show that similar practices are common among other nations and are not as experimental or novel as they might seem. MP Andriukaitis went on to state:

> Unfortunately, the national tricolour flag at the same time became the flag of the state in Lithuania; this is established in the constitution. Heraldry specialists note that the historical flag of the state of Lithuania also ought to be regulated and flown in connection with certain celebrations – our most important celebrations of the state – such as the day of the coronation of Mindaugas[12] or other occasions . . . although now that historical flag is flown next to the President's Office and the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania,[13] and outside the Ministry of National Defence, and outside the War Museum in Kaunas[14] according to tradition, but this was not regulated by laws. Therefore, the chapter on the historical flag appeared.

By using the adverb *unfortunately*, MP Andriukaitis depicts the designation of the tricolour as the flag of the state as a regrettable mistake. This manner of reasoning expresses one more nuance of the topos of the particularity of the state: the state and the nation ought not to be considered as synonymous concepts, and should be represented by separate symbols. The need to disentangle these two components of the nation-state – at least at the symbolic level by means of two different symbols – is justified by two rather different means. On the one hand, MP Andriukaitis refers to the recommendations of heraldry specialists, using the topos of expert knowledge as one of the premises for his argument: because experts are better informed in matters of political symbols, their advice ought to be followed. On the other hand, he supports his claims by appealing to the topos of tradition: because the historical national flag is already used *de facto* by many public institutions, *de jure* regulation should follow. This corresponds to MP Andriukaitis' earlier statements on the historicity of the use of the historical national flag.

The change of the LNF on April 1st, 2008 slightly modified the description of the historical flag by adding in brackets the adjective *armorial*, thus explicitly indicating that

12. Mindaugas (c. 1200–1263) was a grand duke of Lithuania and the only king of Lithuania.
13. The national museum in the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania *(Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės valdovų rūmai*) is a reconstruction of the palace constructed in the fifteenth century for the rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and demolished in 1801. For an extensive analysis of the process of reconstructing this palace and the uses of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's heritage in both the Soviet and post-Soviet regimes in Lithuania, see Rindzevičiūtė 2010.
14. Initiated in 1919 and officially opened in 1921, Vytautas the Great Military Museum in Kaunas (the provisional capital of Lithuania during the interwar period) "was specially designed to house an exhibition that narrated the heroic story of the Lithuanian nation, especially its fight to establish an independent state" (Rindzevičiūtė 2011: 542).

the Vytis coat of arms served as the basis for this flag. The problematics of boundary demarcation between the state and the nation in the context of discussing this amendment in the Seimas on April 1st, 2008 re-emerged. The topos of particularity of the state became even more prominent in the arguments of MP Egidijus Klumbys:

> Honourable colleagues, I think the flag of our state – Vytis against a red background – is the real flag of the state. If we remember the flags of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Vytis was there all the time, but never the tricolour. The tricolour appeared around 1920 and is not the flag of the state, but a national flag, the flag of Lithuanians, but not the flag of the state of Lithuania. Out of fear of the red colour, it [the tricolour] was made a state flag. This, I would say, injustice exists until now. I know that to restore it [the historical flag as the official flag of the state] is very difficult. Vytis with its red background is essentially not our historical flag but the flag of our state, which connects us with the fountainhead of our state. The tricolour essentially connects us with the interwar flag. . . . I hope that sooner or later this will be understood and the flag of our state will be Vytis with the red background.

Here the Lithuanian tricolour is distinctly referred to as the national flag, with strong connotations as a symbol of a national community and not of the state. Its connection to statehood is represented as being merely the result of historical circumstances (the reference to red alludes to the Soviet Union and "fears" of it) and causing an enduring "injustice". The perception of the statehood of Lithuania as having its roots in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania epoch and not in the interwar period is more than a simple underscoring of the importance of the historicity for the state. "Statehood" in the statement of MP Klumbys cannot be reduced solely to the national community – hence, the need for both the flag of the state and the flag of the nation is justified.

Through all its amendments and statements made by MPs when debating it, the LNF refers to the "nation" more in political terms or in relatively ethnically or culturally neutral terms. This is particularly noticeable in the LNF in the 1990s, where people living in Lithuania were generally referred as "citizens of Lithuania", "citizens of the Republic of Lithuania", and "other persons in Lithuania" or "citizens of foreign states residing in Lithuania". Since 2000, the LNF lexical choice has been terms such as "private individuals", "natural persons", and "legal persons", rather than "citizens". The preferred lexical choices among MPs, both in the 1990s and since, have been "citizens" *(piliečiai)*, "people" *(žmonės)*, and "person" *(asmuo)*, and only once "Lithuanians" in the statement of MP Klumbys above.

However, perceptions of the tricolour as the flag of the nation (even referred to in terms of political membership (citizenship) or relatively neutral words such as *people* or *persons*) were used not in attempts to accommodate the state and the nation together, but to separate them. In line with the advice of heraldry experts, some MPs held that there should be a symbolic division between the symbols of the state and the symbols of the nation. Therefore, although not replacing the tricolour, the historical national flag was adopted to exclusively represent the *state* of Lithuania, understood in institutional terms as well as in terms of a perennial political entity dating from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania period and to be used in connection with specific public occasions and venues.

4.2 Semi-Public Discourse

In contrast to the official discourse, participants in the FGDs found it difficult to establish a clear-cut separation between the nation and the state when talking about the tricolour. This was exemplified by the circumstance that the same participant could define the tricolour as the flag of the state, and then as a flag of the nation – in the same sentence. That is not to say that the discussants used those terms completely interchangeably, but the line between the two was often rather blurry.

This can also be seen in other lexical choices of focus group participants. The most common terms used in defining the tricolour were the flag of the "country" (šalis) and the flag of Lithuania – implying territorial, political/institutional, and social elements. In referring to those living in Lithuania, discussants most commonly (although not exclusively) employed the term "people" (žmonės) not in the political sense of the word but in the sense of "persons". Unlike the case with the text of the LNF or in parliamentary discussions, the ethnic identity of "people" or "persons" was important for focus group participants when discussing how different ethnic groups should live together. For instance, a participant in the Lithuanian focus group expressed the following:

> Because not everything depends on the flag, in truth, it depends on the person and the reaction to it [the flag]. For example, if I were a Russian and would put on [myself] the Lithuanian flag, and would say this is it – I'm Lithuanian . . . . I think it's not . . . They could if they were true Lithuanians who believed in what they are doing, in truth, if they really consider themselves Lithuanians. However, we see that most Russians in Lithuania have already been here for a relatively long time but don't speak Lithuanian. I think that a person who lives in a nation and believes in that nation – well, that country – would normally learn to speak normally [sic] the Lithuanian language in that time. Then, I think, it would not be a problem for that person to display the Lithuanian or, for example, Poland's flag.

Whereas a participant in the Russian group claimed:

> If a [Russian ethnic] person on a certain day, if he with all respect on February 16th, will fly the flag of Lithuanians, he has lived here from birth, he flies the flag with respect, and on, for example, on the day of independence of Russia, he will also fly the flag of Russia, with respect. And he will be responsible for this. And if a Lithuanian should raise the flag on February 16th with clenched teeth, as if he didn't want to, he could not care less, but it's normal. Though inside, exactly, there are no feelings. He doesn't feel anything, but this is orderly. And if the person [Russian] does, I don't know, with pure heart, this doesn't count.

The main symbolic asset of the tricolour was seen as being its connection with Lithuanian independence from the Soviet Union (the topos of independence). However, this historical event was represented not only as something that politicians or state institutions achieved on their own but as the achievement of the entire nation, thus involving both the public and the personal level. For example, one of the participants in the Lithuanian group argued:

> Yes, regarding this issue [preference of tricolour or Vytis], I also think that there should be both. Not that one is the main one and the other would be like . . . . All those colours are also arranged: red – blood, then green – grass, then – the sun. So I think that it's also like we were struggling for our independence, where [people] were standing unarmed [the January events of 1991 in Vilnius], so I think, for them it [the tricolour] is also an important sign.

Moreover, the tricolour gains its symbolic capital within this particular age group as a symbol that is familiar, that one has "grown up" with, providing a sense of stability and continuity (the topos of habit). All of this indicates that, for these discussants, thinking about the nation and the state as interdependent entities is part of the habitual or doxastic way of viewing and categorizing the social world, at least to some extent.

This might also be why, for some participants, the introduction of a second flag, the historical national flag, next to the tricolour seemed not only unacceptable but even incomprehensible. For instance, one participant in the Lithuanian focus group said:

> I think that it's something unnecessary . . . Well, unnecessary talks, unnecessary discussions [about replacing the tricolour with the historical national flag as the national flag], well, after all, that yellow, green, red is, well, like inherent. So you can see right away that it represents Lithuania precisely. And here that Vy . . . well, the coat of arms of Vytis is like . . . you also know it very well, you recognize it, but, on the other hand, you can apply it to every country because every country has been at war, every country has its own knight . . . Somehow . . .

Two participants in the Russian focus group also were against a possible change of the tricolour:

> R_06: I think that flag can be changed only when . . .
> R_05: . . . something . . .
> R_06: . . . for the country . . .
> R_05: Yes . . .
> R_06: . . . a revolution, in such a case, or . . .
> R_05: . . . some fundamental turning point in history, but here . . .
> R_06: To be able to change out of the blue . . .
> R_05: Let's change [the flag], then what do we do next? Change the coat of arms?

Moreover, those that were positively inclined towards this flag did not see the historical national flag as exclusively the sign of the state, to be flown only by state institutions in connection with public venues (as is done in political discourse). They talked about it as either already accepted or potentially acceptable for use in the private sphere. Explanations for the appeal of this flag also differed from those of the MPs. Although there were some references to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania period, the main attraction of this flag was seen to be its distinctive, charismatic, memorable design that would either appeal to the emotional and aesthetic senses of the individual or as a way to distinguish and provide greater visibility to the Lithuanian state among the symbols of other countries (the topos of distinction). Thus, in the justifications provided by the focus group discussants, the relevance of the historical national flag stems more from its appeal at a personal level rather than

its political and historical connotations. To cite an example, one of the participants in the Polish group explained:

> P_04: Vytis is closer.
> Moderator: Why?
> P_04: Well, maybe it would emphasize . . . not nationalism [*nacionalizmą*] . . . but like, for example, Poland has the eagle.
> Moderator: So, more character [meaning 'charisma']?
> P_04: Perhaps.

Or the participants in the Russian group claimed:

> R_06: Canada's [design of its maple-leaf flag] . . . it has some kind of distinction. . . . All right, we know yellow, green, red, but others . . . For others, what's the difference whether the colours are set in reverse order? . . . Well, of course, Vytis would be better, but now it's too late, the sign [the tricolour] is already given and this is it.

This can help explain why this rather statist designation of the historical national flag as the flag of the state to be used by public institutions, according to the LNF and the discourse of the MPs, does not prevent private individuals and groups of individuals in Lithuania from "appropriating" and using it during national celebrations and sport events, or as decorations for their cars and personal attire.

5 Conclusions

Why is this relatively "statist" approach towards the tricolour as well as historical national flag and relatively ethnically neutral reference to the inhabitants of Lithuania present in the LNF and the parliamentary debates, whereas the "national" and "ethnic" factors coexist with statist interpretations of the meaning of this symbol in the group discussions?

I would argue that a variety of ethnocentric and civic strands coexist in the official discourse, employed selectively depending on the strategic goals of the producers of the discourse. Within the framework of symbolic policies regarding national flags, in contrast to Brubaker's expectations that the states in post-Soviet countries would be concerned about the "health" and "survival" of the "nation", the dominant preoccupation of the LNF and the MPs appears to be state, and not national, issues of Lithuania. The insecurity felt by MPs about the sustainability of Lithuanian statehood (exemplified by attempts to "prove" its historical roots and continuity, to mark flags as exceptional symbols of public institutions and state holidays, etc.) together with the absence of perceived divisive or problematic issues within the nation (for instance, ethnic tensions) in their discourse can help explain why references to the "nation" in the LNF and in the statements made by MPs are kept in more political or ethnically neutral terms: operating with a more inclusive category serves to make the law or MPs' statements applicable to larger numbers of individuals. Moreover, concerns with the perceived fragility of the state may help in understanding why the intertwining of the state and the national community was seen as problematic and requiring alternatives.

It is within the semi-public realm that the nation-state as an entity and not two separate elements comes to the fore as compared to the political discourse. For the discussants, thinking about the nation and the state as interdependent entities is part of the habitual or doxastic way of viewing and categorizing the social world.

Perhaps this interconnectedness of the state and nation within social discourse is one of the reasons why national cohesion and interethnic coexistence emerge as key preoccupations within group discussions conducted for this study. Ethnic-based tensions were seen as existing not only between different ethnic groups in Lithuania but also between the state and its ethnic minorities. Thus, the perception that the Lithuanian state is of and for the titular ethnic group emerges as having more at stake in semi-public and not official discourse.

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