Political rituals and nation building: exploring the Slovenian statehood day

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Abstract

The article addresses the Statehood day, one of the most important political rituals in Slovenia that occurs on every 25 June in order to commemorate the country's declaration of independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. The article reveals the role of the national holiday in consolidating and legitimising the new political reality, and represents particular symbolic actions that have established new mythical horizons. Further, by drawing on insight from the ethnographic observation and interviews with individuals from different social background, the focus is also on attitudes of Slovenians towards the ritual ceremony. After the first celebration and with few exceptions (accession to the EU and NATO), the attendance on the event was low. Slovenians are rather indifferent to the ritual event and to the national holiday as such. The opinions and narratives on the Statehood event thus illustrate some significant elements of Slovenian transition period and also of the contemporary era.

Key words: *Statehood day, political rituals, political symbols, nation building*

Povzetek

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Članek obravnava Dan državnosti, ki je eden izmed najpomembnejših državnih praznikov Republike Slovenije. Politični ritual obeležuje spomin na odcepitev države od jugoslovanske politične tvorbe, ki se je zgodila 25. junija 1991. Besedilo razkriva vlogo rituala v kreiranju spominov, ki odsevajo določeno politično, zgodovinsko in kulturno ozadje in prikazujejo določena simbolna dejanja, ki so utrdila nova mitična obzorja. Poleg tega besedilo na podlagi etnografske metode opazovanja ter pogovorov z različnimi sogovorniki obravnava odnos Slovencev do ritualnega dogajanja. Po prvem praznovanju ter z določenimi izjemami (priključitev EU in Natu) je mogoče opaziti, da je bila udeležba na praznovanju zelo nizka. Slovenci so precej indiferentni do nacionalnega praznika. Mnenja in narativi, ki se vežejo na ta praznik, pa ilustrirajo pomembne elemente slovenske tranzicije in tudi sodobnega časa.

Ključne besede: *Dan državnosti, politični rituali, politični simboli, politični miti*

Introduction

The article addresses the Statehood day, one of the most important political rituals in Slovenia that occurs on every 25 June in order to commemorate the country's declaration of independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. The ritual represents the emergence of the new political formation, which led to a break with the social, economic, political and cultural concepts of the former system. The Statehood day has aimed to establish and reaffirm particular social and political memories, myths and symbols presenting a construction material for Slovenian nation-building. It is a state-holiday, which takes a form of public festivities or public commemoration that in a way even exceeds the

significance of the political ritual as such (Mach 1992). Public commemorations are an important phenomenon, since they embrace a dense concentration of symbols and their associations. Their representations are inextricably interwoven with hidden cultural codes, which are seemingly invisible as they are sunk into the everyday social order. Exploration of such public events can reveal particular cultural codes which condition our everyday actions and perceptions. Those events create social spaces, where certain form of communication occurs, which orients participants to a form of social order in a relatively clear and coherent way. Public commemorations are means of legitimising the existing social order and authority and thereby contributing to social control and regulation (Handelman 1990).

The main intention of the paper is not in representing the structure and public performance of the ritual as such but to consider its role in creating social memories that reflect certain political, historical and cultural background, which became official Slovenian memories after disintegration from Yugoslavia. The political rituals are a crucial element in nation-building, which uses the national symbols, such as flags and anthems, and national myths in order to unify people within the state. Exploration of rituals should always be put into the framework of social context, which influences its emergence, contents and meaning. In 1991, the Slovenia became exposed to new political and economic circumstances, which took place all over the Eastern Europe. The collapse of communist totalitarianism caused the formation of new states, which were established on a basis of new identification codes. As Giordano says, the decline of socialist philosophy gave place to new ethnical discourses, which created new values and norms associated with nationality and citizenship. They were based on a concept of historical reversibility, which puts forward the idea of returning back to social order, which has not been yet violated by the communist experience (1998: 112). In Slovenia, just as in other countries of East and Southeast Europe where communist regime

lasted for several decades, the establishment of the new post-socialist government draw the legitimacy on symbols and myths leanings on the national memory and ideology of nationalism. The idea of Slovenian nation re-emerged not as the remnants of the nineteen century, but as the only possible response to totalitarianism. At national and local level was performed as a reaction to rebellion against the totalitarian system, which suppressed individuality and locality (Rihtman Auguštin 2000). As Simonič (2009: 52-53) argues, new ethno-nationalism combined local specifics and political and cultural nationalism. The role of nationalism in the period of transition should be understood also in the broader context of global changes characterised by the expansion of neoliberalism and globalisation. Ethno-nationalisms in Eastern Europe thus emerged in efforts to ensure the internal cohesion in time of propagation of private initiative and market self-regulation. Accordingly, the time of transition and liberation from the previous regime was characterised by the variety of post-socialist mythic structures.

Statehood day should have played an important role in that regard, as it aimed to contribute to consolidation and legitimisation of the new political reality. By using symbolic actions it attempted to established new mythical horizons. But, the question appears, if the holiday has really accomplished its purpose? The paper focuses on its actual role in establishing national feelings and replacing mythical horizons of Slovenian past. Drawing the insight from the on opinions and narratives on the Statehood event, which were conducted by using the ethnographic method of participant observation and qualitative interviews, we attempt to show, that ritual has not generated firm national feelings in terms of Durkheimian collective consciousness. The paper also attempts to reveal certain factors influencing the so called failure of the ritual in Slovenian nation building.

National narratives and myths of origin emerge at major social changes

and political transformations. Every society creates its own mythology, which defines its origins and establishes its own norms and rules. Each society is defined through a network of constructed symbolic meanings, which may include or exclude a historical basis. In order to understand particular political society and political rituals, one needs to consider such symbols and symbolic actions, which are fundamental components of the myths (cf. Kertzer 1988).

As Kos (1996: 8) argues, the emergence of the nation state cannot avoid mythologizing, while the situation in post-communist societies is somehow special. The societies in transition were facing a high degree of complexity, pluralisation and differentiation as a result of accelerated modernisation, which opened some new questions and re-actualised old ones. Contemporary national mythologies were built from various, mutually consistent and coherent, upgrading or concurrent old myths and new ideologies. Post-socialist countries in Eastern and central Europe, including Slovenia, were characterised by feverish search and articulation of new identities, and simultaneously by a restoration of old ones within the transformed image of the world (Velikonja 1996). Statehood day as a political ritual should have enabled the existence of new identities and transferred national mythologies confirming ideas of Slovenian nation.

At the establishment of new political systems, old myths become inappropriate. A new political government is in a need of replacing them. In order to constellate a new political mythology, political actions lean on the so called "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawn 1993), which embraces a set of practices and actions framed by tactically adopted rules. By regular repetition of those rules, they become engraved in certain human values and norms that condition generally accepted social behaviour. Instead of using the term of mythology, some scholar prefer the notion of legacy, which is also based on distortion of historical facts and creation of myths in efforts to establish collective and personal identities (Lowenthal 1998; Simonič 2009). Rituals play an important role in that regard as their

yearly repetition automatically includes the continuation of the past (Hobsbawn 1993: 4). In Yugoslavia, the idea of brotherhood and unity among the six republics was in the forefront, which neglected the ideas of ethnicity and nationality. But the Slovenian state forged its foundations on exact those ideas. Slovenian identity is a product of hegemonic discourses of specific social-historical space (cf. Foucault 1997, Pušnik 2003), which differ from the Yugoslav discourses. Nation is thus a product of different traditions, symbols, and myths, which were in a case of Slovenia created during the transition period after the break with socialist and communist ideologies.

The emergence of modern states and nations is therefore founded on constructions that are based on invention of tradition. As all holidays, also national holidays, are a subject to a change, which is in hands of political elites, which are 'making' a tradition, which suits them the most (Vovelle 2004, Habinc 2006). Only valid mythical explanation provides individuals with a basis for personal identification and places them into a collectivity (Velikonja 1996). Due to the fact that people can change the content of rituals, they are a powerful tool of political action. Political rituals are manipulative tools enabling to manifest the political ideology through public events. Participation on particular political rituals influences the people's perception of appropriate political institution and leaders. Rituals act as symbolic representations that contribute to our imaginings of political reality (cf. Kertzer 1988). The subjective experience meets the social force through the ritual, which shapes those experiences. Being an important part of symbolic activities, the ritual structures our experiences, perceptions and channels of our interpretations. The formation of Slovenia was accompanied by a series of new political symbols and myths, without which no country can establish a legitimate and convincing foundation of its history, mythology and ideology. Exploring the content of such a ritual as it is Statehood day reveals the complex symbolic structures that enable the existence of the state

formation.

The political ritual and Slovenian nation building

The framework for national narratives and myths

First elements of Slovenian statehood can be found in the Slovenian national revival, which began to take roots in the second half of the eighteen century. As Granda (2001) says, the idea of Slovenian national individuality emerged in that time, which embraced all Slovenians regardless of their belonging to administrative role or countries in Habsburg Empire. Their common linkage was based primarily on a language, and the then political efforts mainly depended on the formation of cultural and political institution within the *tabor* movement and regular meetings in reading-rooms.

After the collapse of Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, the national political emancipation led to the establishment of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, which lasted only for a month. It was reshaped in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and later in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In constitutional and legal terms, the first Yugoslav political formation relied on national unitarism that denied national and cultural individuality of South Slavic nations. Slovenian aspirations for autonomic-federal formation thus did not come to the realisation (Perovšek, Stiplovšek 2001).

After the World War II, the Slovenians gained the status of the Federal Republic in the Yugoslav Federation. They were able to form own parliament, constitution and other autonomies, but within the repressive totalitarian regime. The political efforts of Slovenians were therefore oriented toward a greater decentralization and autonomy. After a death of Yugoslav president Josip Broz - Tito in 1980, the severe economic and political crisis came to the forth, and interethnic relations tightened. The

conflict between advocates of centralised state and supporters of federative model emerged, which took place in the context of the bipolar division of the world and declining of Soviet Union. Slovenian peculiarity of the situation was that due to the self-governing form of socialism, the political space was more open to the circulation of ideas. There were relatively strong civil actions and the important role was played by the Slovenian media. According to the then situation, three concepts appeared: a demand for immediate secession, the requirement for an asymmetric federation and the requirement of original sovereignty, which would lead to the formation of the new federation based on the confederative concept (Repe 2001). A plebiscite was conducted on November 1990, followed by a declaration of independence in on June 1991.

After the independence, the idea of the Slovenian nation, which has its roots in nineteen century, has become the official idea of the state. The idea of a nation is always composed of collective memories, which represent a complex and continuing process of selection and negotiation over what will be remembered and what forgotten. It is therefore a process which involves changing and restructuring one's perception of the past so that it both supports the needs of the present and projects a logical future (Natzmer 2002). Memories create a sense of tradition, which substitute a national story or narratives. The memories of Slovenian origins existed parallel with the Yugoslav national memories, but if there were no significant division between both groups of memories, the Yugoslav ideology would overcome the differences between the six nations. Despite the dominant Yugoslav ideology, the collective memories of Slovenians remained in existence. Communist ideology was linked to the invented tradition of common Slavic community, but the myth of National liberation war and construction of the external enemy, which was firmly incorporated in the Yugoslav state memories, were also taking part in Slovenian memories. With the decline of the communist regime, the re-construction of Slovenian national memories occurred and the Slovenian

national identity was re-defined as the dominant national identity (Bajt 2003). As mentioned, the important part of remembering is forgetting, which was important in construction of Yugoslav multi-ethnic identity, as well as in formation of Slovene national identity (Rihtman Auguštin 2000). In time of crucial political changes of a system, especially the political myths concerning the origin of a particular social group (ethnic, national etc.) are a subject of major transformations. The political actions in the time of emerging Slovenian independence leaned on a more remote mythological bases as it were offered by Yugoslavian regime (Simonič 2009: 53). Accordingly, the celebration of the Statehood day does not only represent the emergence of the new country, but also the realisation of the thousand years old national dreams. Myths are a special formation of political symbols, which give certain importance to actions and events. They reflect perceptions of particular social groups who firmly stand behind their beliefs. Narrative referring to the thousand years of Slovenian dreams, which inevitably led to the independence, has become an indisputable fact, although historical evidences are not as lenient. An important role in that symbolic creation is played by each individual that along with his/her belief enters into specific identification process. By adopting the identification attributes, individuals can selectively reconstitute the past by co-constructing it on a basis of their beliefs. As Murray (1971) says, myth always occurs in conjunction with the feelings of anxiety, which is a result of precarious situation of individuals as it establishes socially defined identity and offers a collective course of actions that are able to release the tension. The confirmation of a narrative of thousand years of Slovenian dreams offered that kind release. In the situation, when individuals face a mismatch between what have they been taught to believe and the real situation, myth reduces a discomfort. It offers a wide range of expectations and actions, and prescribes a clear and socially acceptable identity.

Behind the Slovenian independence is a narrative of a very long struggle

of people, who preserved their culture and language despite the aggressive politics of neighbourhood countries and relatively small number of Slovenes who fought for their country. Collective memories were chosen in order to strengthen the Slovenian identity and confirm idea referring to Slovenian nation. Through shared narratives, a particular form of temporally organised individual memory comes to serve as cultural function. Personal memories which have been encapsulated within the individual get transformed through verbal narratives into social memory, incorporating a cultural belief system. Individuals compose life narratives by picking through all the events of the past and selecting and highlighting those experiences that weave a cohesive story about where they have been and where they are headed (Natzmer 2002). Narratives are therefore constellations of relationship that are embedded in time and space, and indicate that people use narratives not only to represent lives as storytellers or historians but also to emplot their action in them. Social action is thus guided by narratives, seeing that social interactions as well as institutional and organisational processes are mediated by narratives (see Kelleher 2006: 59). Collective memories serve as a transmitter of collective identity as they consolidate nation as a community with a specific territory presented as a homeland and create the concept of a common past. The latter is particularly important for nations lacking the collective memory of so called ''golden age'', which is often replaced by the importance of language and culture. The latter is well evident in the case of the Slovenian nation-building, which took roots in the reading rooms and *Tabor* movement in the nineteen century. Due to the lack of own country, and the influence of the strong external influence of military, economic and political elites, it was a literary language that institutionalised the Slovenian national memory. After the Yugoslavia disintegration, the myth of Slavic brotherhood and common origin lost its force. The Slovenian history and efforts in building the nation came to the front. The settlement of the Slavs on the contemporary Slovenian territory

became unimportant and lost its role in the myths of creation. The central role in that regard was attributed to Carantania, which was a Slavic principality that emerged in the second half of the 7th century, in the territory of present-day southern Austria and north-eastern Slovenia. The myth emerged in order to destroy the previous one, and to establish Slovenian identity. The central role in Slovenian political mythology was given also to the Freising manuscripts, which are the first Latin-script continuous text in a Slavic language and the oldest document in Slovene language. The honour of being the father of Slovenian nation was accorded to Primož Trubar, who was the Protestant reformer, most known as the author of the first Slovene language printed book, the founder and the first superintendent of the Protestant Church of the Slovene Lands, and notable for consolidating the Slovene language (Prunk 1996). Slovenian language is thus inextricably knitted with national identity forged trough national symbols and collective memories.

Political myths and ritual symbols

After the independence of Slovenia, new ideas on the Slovenian nation came to the forefront, which required a new symbolic world. Mythic structure of the Slovenian nation was based on the new or reinvented narratives and traditions, which were supported by the ritual symbolism. At the first celebration of the Slovenian independence in 1991, the important symbolic act representing the break with previous political system was done by descending the Yugoslav Flag from the top of the flagpole and ceremonially replacing it with the Slovenian one. The event was accompanied by the Slovenian national anthem. The Yugoslavian state symbols were thus signified as invalid and illegitimate. In that year, Slovenia completely replaced the national symbols, although they were not completely new. Flag with three coloured bands, i.e. white, blue and red, which are sorted in the same wide horizontal positions, resembles

colours of the old emblem of Carniola, which formation is assumed to take place in fifteen century. The colour combination was approved by imperial decree to be the provincial flag of Carniola. It was adopted also by the Slovenians living in Wien, Styria and Coastal region (Ovsec 1993). The same colour combination with additional a five-pointed star was preserved in the flag of the People's Republic of Slovenia in Yugoslavia. Slovenian national tricolour with an added national emblem was recognised as the national flag in 1991. The national emblem has a shape of a shield; in the middle is Triglav, with three golden stars of the Counts of Celje above it, and two blue curves representing the Adriatic Sea and Slovenian rivers below it (Vidic 1999). Triglav has been an integral part of Slovenian mythology already at the time of communist regime as a significant marker of Slovenian geographical belonging to the Eastern Alps. Imaginaries of alpine environment have become a focal point of identity constructions. Triglav has been established as a secular 'holy mountain' of Slovenian (Šaver 2004). It is a generally accepted saying that each Slovenian needs to climb up the Triglav once in a life-time to confirm that he or her really is a true member of Slovenian nation.

The first ceremony of the Statehood day was taking place in the large platform in the centre of the Republic Square (Trg republike), which is surrounded by the Slovenian Parliament, Shopping centre Maximarket and two towers TR1 and TR2, where is the biggest Slovenian bank's headquarter. The ritual space was thus in the centre of administrative-monetary complex (Simonič 2009), and also in the political centre of Slovenia. It was designed by the architect Edvard Ravnikar to serve the manifest needs of communist regime, and was initially named as the Square of Revolution. Declaration of Slovenian independence in that square did not occur incidentally, but in order to change the symbolic connotation of the place. Links between ritual and public spaces are the most efficient way to bring together different groups within the particular

ideological system. In that regard, the ritual is not just normative, but also transformative process enabling the conditions for smoothing tensions between local groups, institutions, historical processes and changing ideologies. The space where ritual is performed and the ways in which that space is materially and timely structured play a significant role in that regard (cf. DeMarrais et al. 1996, Dillehay 2004). According to the new ideological bases, the square was renamed and the linden tree, as an important symbol of Slovenianess, was ceremonially placed in the centre.

The event was a rite of passage (cf. van Gennep 1977) denoting the entrance of the national community to the new constitutional era. The important element of ceremonial actions was made by the then archbishop who blessed the linden tree as a sign of blessing the new state. Involvement of the Church in public and political event was a significant symbolic action. The period of transition was marked by post-socialist mythic constructions referring to the role of religion and Church. The latter revived the myth of Catholic Slovenia and reached their peak with the visit of a Pope John Paul II. (Velikonja 1996). In communist societies, the separation of a Church and a state was radicalised, and characterised by a more or less thorough exclusion of traditional religious element. In the transition period, the Church thus took over a protagonist role in creating national mythologies and various political myths. A time of post-socialist reconstruction reopened or expanded the space of civil society available to the Church, and state apparatus no longer presented the competing element in their relationship (Kerševan 1996). Accordingly, the words of the archbishop Alojz Šuštar were an important element of ritual performance. Since then, every celebration of a Statehood day is accompanied by the solemn mass in Ljubljana's Cathedral. However, the presence of the Catholic Church at the beginning of the 1990s, however, has not been more relevant than its absence in the subsequent statehood day events, where religious ceremonies were much more strictly

separated from the state ones, though there were no relevant changes in the constitutional order. Why this shift? The answer can be found in the ideological division, which has heavily marked the political space in Slovenia and also divided the public sphere. As Adam et. al. 2009) argue, the Slovenian political space is characterised by a bipolar division into two political blocs. The first is the so-called 'left-liberal' and the second the so-called 'right' bloc. The cleavage among both poles refer to the positions of the two camps in the past, meaning both the period between the two world wars and the communist period as well as to some other positions of a symbolic and ideological nature like the role of religion and the Catholic Church in society. Therefore, as Adam et. al. postulate (2009), the 'left' takes a quite lenient attitude to the communist period while it is more rejective of the public engagement of the Church, while the 'right' is strongly critical of communism yet relatively supportive of the Church public role. The latter has become visible also in the organisation of the Statehood day. In the beginning, the division between both ideological poles was not of such importance, but it gained meaning during the political domination of the 'left-liberal' bloc and after the victory of the 'right' in the parliamentary elections in 2004. The Statehood day has become a tool for promoting ideological perspectives of particular political elites. Consequently, the Statehood day has acted more as a mean of separation of Slovenian nation than a uniting one, which one can notice also in some other public commemorations, where a public sphere is divided in regard to one of the political ideological blocs.

However, all commemorations of Slovenian independence emphasised the importance and success of Slovenian nation. The ritual communication occurred also through visual performances. The important symbolic elements presented short movies that reconstructed the war of independence and accompanied events. The war that lasted for ten days is a part of mythological drama and presented a convenient

basis for Slovenian myth of liberation. As Velikonja (1996) says, *ten-day war for Slovenia* was given a special place in the Slovenian political mythology being an important historical breaking-point, which reached its peak in a bloody but revealing redemptive decisive battle between good and evil. The short movies also represented the success of the Slovenian athletes, which portrayed the story of the great success of the entire country. Slovenian sports are an important element in the national identifications. The participants of the rituals were also watching pictures, stories and movies on the Slovenian natural and cultural beauties, which would make them proud of being as Slovenian.

The important role in ritual symbolism and political mythology was occupied also by the idea of Europe. In the years following independence, the idea of belonging to Europe came to the forefront in political discourses. At first celebration of the Statehood day, the then President of Slovenia Milan Kučan in his ceremonial speech stated that Slovenians are being the creators of the European space and history for thousand years. Public and political life became manipulated with new mythical horizons associated with Europe. The convergence and integration with European and the accession to the European Union became the highest objectives of political efforts. Europe represented the Promised Land for economists, political and cultural criterions (Mastnak 1996). Europe became a cradle of values, while the Balkans was gained a status of the 'Other' in contrast to which Slovenia started to build a national identity. The new chapter in history of Slovenian nation was opened. After the Slovenian accession to the European Union in 2004, the symbols of the EU joined Slovenians, which was also ceremonially represented on the ritual event.

Prevailing attitudes toward the ritual performance of the Statehood day

Exploring the contents and performing structures of the ritual of the Statehood day reveals much about the nation building and the political mythology of the state. But there is another thing that one should find important, therefore the attitudes of Slovenians towards the ritual ceremony. Except on the first celebration and maybe with some few exceptions (accession to the EU and NATO), the attendance on the event was low. Slovenians are rather indifferent to the ritual event and to the national holiday as such. The opinions and narratives on the Statehood event, which were conducted by using the ethnographic method of participant observation and qualitative interviews, illustrate some significant elements of Slovenian transition period and also of the contemporary era.

The majority of informants believe that the Statehood day is or it should be an important holiday, but share the opinion that it is merely "a cultural program" and "nothing so special". As one said "I know what the holiday means for us but I don't see any sense in participating on the event. I watch the celebration on a TV, and we always wait what failure is going to happen this year". Or as the other similarly remarked "Personally I don't have any special feeling toward the event, we just watch it on a TV in order to criticise the happening".

Ritual performance of the Statehood day has become an event to which Slovenians became accustomed. They perceived it as something that is mechanically repeated every year. Particularly the young people see the event as an entrance to the summer holiday period or the opportunity for socialising and drinking alcohol. A slight exception in the responses was offered by those who remembered the celebration in June 2006, which used the concepts and techniques reinforced by memories of the first

celebration in 1991. The latter insinuates on a presumption that indifference of the Slovenian may be found in inappropriate organisation of celebration.

However, reasons for apathy and indifference toward the national holiday may be in a poor recognition of national symbols. Slovenian national symbols were adopted very quickly and a lot of Slovenians still believe that they are inadequate. One may find interesting that national symbols such as flag and emblem were officially recognised only two days before the first celebration of independence. Some people are dissatisfied with the Slavic tradition that is visible through these symbols and search for older or mythologised Slovenian history, while the others look for solution in the whole new ideas and images, which would represent a break with continuity. After the independence, there were several initiatives and competitions regarding the transformation of national symbols.

Another reason, which we think is very important, can also be in the heritage of foreign domination, and in strong rejection of former regime. Obligation of flying with national flags was a pronounced characteristic of Yugoslavia. The participation on national celebrations was also mandatory. In the last years of Yugoslavia'a existence, people no longer believed in the system. Accordingly, as one of the informants remarked: "the attendance on such events was a boring and painful experience". In a new independent Slovenia, people were not required to participate on national celebrations. The threat from sanctioning the disobedience was gone. As Bajt (2003) argues, the lack of waving with flags is an important dimension of Slovenian nationalism. Several decades of being under rigid totalitarian regimes entrenched distrust in the state rules.

The latter can be confirmed with viewing the intensity of Slovene national identity during the years after independence till nowadays. The indifferent or even negative attitudes toward the ritual do not mean that the national identity among Slovenians is low. Using the data from European value survey comparative data on national identity trends within years 1990 and

2010, one can see that the Slovenian national identity is quite high comparing with other countries of the European Union. In the study on national identity within Europe it was showed there are many differences between European countries in terms of intensity of national pride, feelings of belonging to one's country, beliefs in its superiority and so on (see Golob and Makarovič 2012). By clustering European countries in terms of national feelings as measured by social surveys, the Slovenia belongs to a group shared by Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Ireland, which is with the exception of Ireland, marked by countries that went through similar post-communist transition. The groups is mostly characterised by strong national pride, relatively low or decreasing feeling of belonging to the country, weak belief in one's country being better than others. Those characteristics are not purely coincidental but may follow certain cultural and historical patterns At least after the Middle Age and during the 19th Century Spring of the Nations these nations typically belonged to multinational kingdoms or empires dominated by other nations. Due to these circumstances, their collective memories seem to be more focused not on being the glorious conquerors but more of being the victims trying to survive the oppression by the others (e.g. by the Austrian, German, Russian, British etc. rulers), which is well represented in Slovenian political mythology. As already mentioned, nationalism has mostly been based on the idea of the (cultural) ethnic/national community, while the nation states have only been the secondary product – coming after the clearly developed feelings of the 'imagined communities'. Consequently, even now they generally seem to be more attached to the nation as a community and the need to preserve its cultural heritage and comparatively less to their country as such (more in Golob and Makarovič 2012: 51-55).

Discussion

The emergence of the new political formation led to a break with the former political system. It established new constitutional foundations on a basis of reconceptualised ideological concepts, cultural patterns and economic-developmental policies. The Statehood day had a certain role in that regard. The transformation of a social order cannot be achieved only by the oppression of a dominant group over the others. People need to believe that new ideas are good for them, and that could bring some advantages to a community. As Dillehay (2004) argues, the dominance, power and social order are created through a variety of meanings, and the easiest way to bring those meanings closer to a people is through ritual performances and symbolic actions. The political symbols and mythology, which we represented in the article have played crucial role in legitimising the new state and enabled a bridge between the past and the present. On the first celebration, the participation was high, which insinuates on the importance of such symbols denoting a rite of passage. Political reality is on a first level defined by ritual actions, which lead to confirmation of our beliefs through collective expressions. Rituals provide a social context to overcome the transition from one to another political thinking. Later, those symbolic actions partly lost their importance, but with yearly repetition they stay encoded in our political and cultural perceptions. In last decade, the participation on the Statehood day is low, and people are rather indifferent to those events, but the latter does not mean that symbols and myths are less important, just their intensity decreased. An important role is also played by the fact that Slovenians are willing to identify themselves with the nation, but the problem appears when it comes to the state. The latter is seen as an imposed entity, which is scarcely recognised as an element of belonging. The reason for such indifference can also be found in ideological cleavage dividing Slovenians

on the 'left' or 'right' side of the national story revealing the competing myths, which in diametrically opposed relation deal with the interpretation of communism, the role of Church in society, National liberation struggle and other events that happened after the World War II.

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