

GENDER ISSUES IN KOTLEBA'S PEOPLE'S PARTY OF OUR SLOVAKIA: AN ATTEMPT AT A THEMATIC ANALYSIS¹

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Abstract: The article analyses party documents and rhetoric from Kotleba's People's Party of Our Slovakia (LSNS) and demonstrates that it has a culturally conservative, instrumental and paternalist-populist attitude to gender issues. The thematic analysis indicates that the LSNS not only seeks to promote traditional gender roles and the exclusion of women from public space but also uses quasi-feminist arguments. These, for instance, call on women to engage more in public life but only in support of its patriarchal agenda. Our findings show that gender related issues feature only peripherally in LSNS rhetoric, however they are used strategically as a theme that cuts across the party ideology, forming not its core but being purposely used in relation to the party's main priorities. LSNS uses gender related themes as part of its political arsenal for (1) increasing the party's support amongst women and (2) seeking to involve more women in the party's activities to increase its acceptability among voters.

Key words: gender; far right; gender equality; gender ideology; EU.

Introduction

For many years political studies research has sought to investigate extremism and the far right, particularly since this political phenomenon led to the largest loss of life in European history. Towards the end of the 1980s Beyme (1988) defined these movements as having three waves of development or mobilisation. The first, relatively short, 'nostalgic' wave was the post-war neofascism that followed on from traditional fascist doctrines and emerged primarily in Germany and Italy, where they were linked to the economic and social hardships that were ushered in by military defeat. The second, 'anti-tax', wave emerged mainly in France between 1950 and 1960 and involved the mobilisation of small traders and merchants who felt ignored by the 'larger' political scene. The third wave was felt all across Europe, emerging in the early 1980s with the sharp increase in unemployment brought about by economic recession. Beyme (1988, p. 6) links the emergence this with the electoral successes of the Front National in France. The far right that currently exists in Europe is representative

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of this third wave and is considered to be the most politically and ideologically successful one (Mudde, 2007).

In conjunction with the above categorisation Mudde (2016) refers to three research waves whilst emphasising that there are aspects on which little research has been conducted. This is partly because the far right is closed off to empirical investigation, making research difficult. It is basically the case that studying these parties often requires very specific research methodologies not only because they are often located on the margins of society but also because media representations of them tend to be highly distorted. According to Mudde (2016) one aspect relating to far right parties that has yet to be sufficiently researched is their attitudes to gender issues. The existing work on gender and far right political parties mainly points to the fact that there is a gender gap, i.e. that women do not support or minimally support the far right and are little represented in these parties. These parties are apparently conscious of this lack of support amongst women and so are actively seeking to turn the situation around and gain political support from female voters and female members. One might even suppose that so long as the standing of women politicians in established parties is being weakened by gendered media representations that portray them as more moderate, then the far right may profit by having women at the top, because in that way they will become more acceptable to voters (Mudde, 2016, p. 13). The question remains as to whether this is a well-thought out strategy for overcoming the gender gap or simply the parties evolving internally and shifting more towards the established 'old right' and abandoning their extremist positions on ethnic and sexual minorities, migrants and democracy generally. The only way of answering this question is through a specific analysis of gender discourse within far right parties (FRPs) in terms of their overall values and ideological positions. Similar analyses have generally concluded that main role of women in the ideologies of such parties is to reproduce the nation and that even in the case of these 'minorities' their rhetoric is still built around 'us' and 'them' distinctions (Félix, 2015; Mudde, 2007; Zúquete, 2008). This finding is an isolated one and there has not been related analysis of other FRP attitudes and the parties' wider understanding of gender issues nor to other political solutions, i.e. they have not been analysed in relation to their political strategies for gaining followers and electoral support.

This research gap on attitudes to women and gender issues in these parties is the main concern of this article. Our study is structured as follows. Firstly, we survey the current state of the research and secondly we explain our method for analysing empirical data we obtained from the manifestos, websites and parliamentary interventions by deputies in the Slovak parliament. In the following, main part we present the findings we obtained on attitudes to gender issues within *Ludová strana Naše Slovensko* (People's Party of Our Slovakia, LSNS). In the concluding section we discuss our main findings and show that in LSNS policy gender issues are infrequently articulated and found in aspects of it rather than forming a core within its ideological programme. Gender issues therefore really only come to the fore when they relate directly to LSNS priorities (nationalism and the traditional family) and to a whole range of negative policies (aimed against ethnic and sexual minorities and the European Union). At the same time, however, we highlight the fact that gender issues are also used as a means of increasing the party's acceptance amongst women and culturally conservative supporters in general.

The far right and gender: What do we know?

The meaning of gender equality is constructed by the prevailing public discourse and therefore can differ according to place and time. For some gender equality is about family policy and domestic violence or issues relating to prostitution and gay rights (Lombardo, Meier, & Verloo, 2009). The current research on gender relations that deals with constructions of meaning associated with gender equality emphasises the role of key actors, including political parties (Van der Vleuten, 2007). The meanings and connotations of gender equality, particularly in western Europe, are therefore largely constructed by political parties that not only attempt to promote their own conceptions in the discourse but also seek to implement public policies that reflect their own ideologies. Although importance is accorded to the role of political parties in shaping public opinion on gender equality, insufficient attention is paid to gender, gender equality and far right parties (FRPs). The current literature is largely devoted to researching the number of women within far right parties and the positions they hold or the gender gap in the support these parties attract. Little has been published that looks at far right attitudes to gender issues and so this area is insufficiently theoretically grounded. This article attempts to analyse the existing knowledge and research and to indicate ways in which a theory could be developed on FRPs and their attitudes to gender issues.

The issue of gender and FRPs has been peripherally covered in research systematically analysing far right parties or in feminist research. The first research pathway is mainly concerned with two themes: firstly, gender-differentiated electoral support and secondly, female participation and representation in the parties themselves. The gender analyses of the far right draw on traditional theories of electoral behaviour and representation and generally do not stray beyond this theoretical framework. Thus this first pathway contributes to the development of theories on political parties, specifically the far right. However, the second—feminist—approach to researching the far right has the potential to build on theories of gender equality and gender differences. It is apparent that there is little communication between these two research areas, making it impossible to comprehensively explain, for example, the phenomenon of the gender gap. We argue that discourse research will enable us to combine these two research approaches in order to investigate this area.

Most of the literature on research on the far right and gender focuses on the gender gap in support for FRPs (e.g. Betz, 1994; Givens, 2004; Kitschelt & McGann, 1995; Norris, 2005). All the key studies emphasise that there are more male members than female members in these parties and that they also have more male than female voters. In 1994 Betz stated that all FRPs garner substantially more support amongst male voters than amongst female ones. A year later in their research Kitschelt and McGann (1995) revealed that this gender gap exists in all countries and that of all the votes for FRPs women's votes account for only 30 to 40 percent. The most recent figures, however, suggest that the gender gap is slowly disappearing. Spierings and Zaslove (2015) have stated that although FRPs still gain more male votes, the number of female votes now accounts for more than 40 percent of votes, and this is down to these parties having shifted ideologically to the centre and also to the more active participation of women in these parties.

Many academics have attempted to explain this gender gap. According to Betz (1994) there are four explanations for the phenomenon: employment (participation in the paid

workforce), religion, longevity and professional stratification. Since women participate less in the paid workforce and are generally tied to the domestic sphere there is less likelihood of them voting for FRPs. On the other hand working women may require the services of the state to help them with childcare and other family responsibilities. Consequently employed women may in fact be even more resistant to supporting FRPs than women who are not in paid work (Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais, & Nevitte (2005). Betz (1994) also points out that women are more religious than men and are more frequent and regular attenders of church services; hence they are more likely to remain loyal to the traditional conservative right and not switch to supporting FRPs. Betz also states that women generally live longer than men and so have a tendency to be more conservative than men. This argument has been used to explain why women traditionally support conservative parties, but it could also be interpreted as meaning they are less likely to vote for new FRPs. The last factor concerns structural differences in male and female employment. Women are more likely than men to work in the public sector, where they are less likely to experience the economic insecurity faced by men working in the industrial and manufacturing spheres. The public sector is also less susceptible to restructuring or competition from migrants (Betz, 1994). In addition women are also more dependent on the social state, not only in relation to employment but also because of the services it provides, requiring the 'social safety net' more frequently than men. Given that FRPs do not generally favour the public sector and social state these parties are less attractive to women.

Apart from these four factors there are other social and psychological explanations for the gender gap that concentrate on gender differences in values and priorities (Gidengil et al., 2005). There is the already familiar argument for example that far right ideologies simply do not benefit women because, amongst other things, they harbour negative attitudes to reproductive policies—they are anti-abortionist (Betz, 1994; Hainsworth, 2008).

Despite the gender gap explained above FRPs are increasingly trying to attract women. Félix (2015) has shown that although FRPs were originally masculine they are now also providing opportunities for women to achieve their goals. FRPs may nominate women to important, visible and extremely financially advantageous positions, so long as they are still able to perform their biological reproductive roles. These are women who often articulate quasi-feminist statements and by participating in and becoming visible in these FRPs they give them 'new clothes'. By virtue of being in these parties women often underline the importance of reproducing the nation, showing other women that they can be the caring mothers of young children as well as active members of the party. They often also propagate the idea that it is the state's duty to look after women, largely viewed as mothers by the FRPs. Having women actively participate is supposed to bring the FRPs new female voters and supporters. According to Félix (2015) these parties can offer new opportunities to women who suffer inequality largely because of the economic crisis. Female participation in FRPs also corresponds to a less radical and more traditional image, which is of key interest to these parties these days. However, we are still faced with the question of what we know about the attitudes and ideologies of the far left to gender and gender equality, and less attention has been paid to conducting analyses of this nature. We suggest that this is mainly because the far right has a similar rhetoric and manifesto priorities to the traditional, moderate and mainstream conservative parties.

Studies of the ideologies and attitudes of far right parties indicate that they are anti-feminist (Hainsworth, 2008; Norocel, 2013; Mulinari & Neergard, 2014; Towns, Karlsson & Eyre, 2013), and three different lines of argument are made in this respect. Mudde (2007) states firstly that attitudes are based on gender stereotypes, i.e. the traditionally conceived role of women as mothers and wives. The notion common to these parties consists in the fact that women should be housewives, while the man's role is one of breadwinner. Secondly they reject the right to freedom of choice, i.e. they are strongly critical of abortion, which they label as murder. Thirdly motherhood and childrearing have a particular significance in the far right rhetoric, which holds that women are responsible for reproducing the nation. Finally these parties are dismissive of the use of quotas as a tool for balancing out gender inequalities and even consider them to be discriminatory 'against members of the sex that dominates under certain conditions and expresses a greater interest in a particular position' (Klimovský, 2015, p. 507).

On the other hand some have pointed out that the far right also incorporates quasi-feminist declarations in its strongly anti-feminist gender discourse (Félix, 2015) and also in its fight against Islamification (Mudde, 2007; Zúquete, 2008). In this respect the far right in Europe states that the values cultivated by Islam run contrary to the values of a Western civilisation that seeks gender equality (Zúquete, 2008, p. 333). Indeed the fight against Islamification has led these parties to defend gender equality as a key value in their ideology (Mudde, 2007, p. 96). Mudde notes that in its fight for women's rights the far right even criticises feminists for doing too little for women. Zúquete (2008, p. 332) claims something similar when he states that the far right bases some of its arguments on gender equality. He points to the examples of far right parties arguing that the real aim behind the wearing of the headscarf and burka is to prevent women from becoming free and equal or that women in Muslim cultures are commonly raped, suppressed, beaten and also subjugated to men (Zúquete, 2008, p. 333). One could say then that the far right uses gender issues in a very selective and contradictory manner. They fight for the traditional family and promote gender inequality in the interests of ensuring the alleged survival of the nation. Consequently they only back policies that support women as mothers and wives. They do not back other policies relating to female emancipation. Yet, in connection with the fight against Islam these parties 'defend' gender equality, but they only do so in the interests of stressing the unacceptability of Islamic culture.

Some (Félix, 2015; Dworkin, 1983) have also stated that the recent ideological shift of these parties on attitudes to women can be seen in the fact that their discourse links patriarchal traditionalism with a quasi-feminism, i.e. they appeal to women, declaring that they are allowed to work and engage with the public but only so long as they do it in an ideologically appropriate manner. In this respect the FRPs often implicitly employ concepts borrowed from feminism, for instance encouraging women to be more self-conscious and assertive, to speak publicly and to occupy leading positions, so long as this is in accordance with the movement's patriarchal agenda. As Félix (2015) has noted that it is the visible and successful women in the FRPs who have the task of stressing the importance of women in allegedly preserving the nation and in setting an example to other women. Often they talk of women having to face hard choices in life and having to make compromises on whether to stay at home with the family or having to work for financial reasons. FRPs stress the fact that women who decide to stay at home with their children do not receive the respect and

support they deserve. In examples such as these they articulate quasi-feminist statements about the suppression of women; however, these de facto strengthen their patriarchal agenda. Akkerman and Hagelund (2007) and Towns, Karlsson, and Eyre (2013) come to the same conclusion: that FRPs defend the idea that gender relations should evolve naturally with no state interference. These parties leave aside any policies that would truly seek to balance out gender differences.

As we have shown in the above there is a global gap in the research on far right parties and gender; however, it is a gap that is even more visible in the lack of research on FRPs in central Europe and their ideologies regarding gender equality. It is this that we seek to help fill in this analysis on the links between gender and the far right by analysing a Slovak far right party, the LSNS.

Method of data analysis

The data for analysis was obtained as follows. We selected articles on the LSNS website, its election manifesto and interventions made by LSNS deputies in the Slovak parliament according to the key words: gender, woman, mother, family. The data collected for analysis consisted of nine relevant articles out of a total of 142 articles posted on the party's website and two items from their 10-point election manifesto. All 14 of the LSNS parliamentary deputies spoke in parliament during the period under investigation (from 23 March 2016—the date of the inaugural parliamentary session—to 18 October 2016). Only four of these deputies spoke on gender related issues, however.

We selected a thematic analysis of the data as the qualitative data are diverse, complex and finely nuanced and so thematic analysis appears to be a suitable tool for taking all these aspects into account. It is often referred to as 'a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Its main strength is its flexibility, particularly when combining deductive and inductive approaches to identify themes. This means that it can be used deductively on the basis of a particular theory. Equally a thematic analysis can lead to the emergence or grounding of a new theory—this is an inductive thematic analysis. The previously studied literature may help in the analysis because researchers will not neglect or overlook important aspects of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We therefore initially reviewed the existing state of the literature on far right parties and gender issues, and on the basis of our findings we suggested possible themes.

The flexibility of a thematic analysis brings a range of advantages, but of course it also has some shortcomings, as it is not possible to fully capture political context and meanings. Moreover, even in this simple method the researcher plays an active role, thinking about the data, seeking out connections within them and understanding and interpreting them in his or her own way. 'Often what one sees through thematic analysis does not appear to others, even if they are observing the same information, events, or situations' (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 1). Therefore the process of reviewing the analysis is very important; researchers must always know what they are doing, why and where they are headed, because a series of important decisions has to be made during the analysis (Petrjánošová & Lášticová, 2010). Some examples include establishing what the theme is and what they are looking for and also being open to making changes as the situation requires.

Findings

As indicated above we approached the themes deductively rather than inductively. First we used our review of the literature published thus far on the relationship between far right parties, gender and gender equality to establish our themes. We identified four basic themes in the literature and data on the basis of this deductive approach—gender stereotypes, the exclusion of women from public space, anti-European attitudes, quasi-feminist attitudes—and these are provided in the table below. We then analysed the data and searched for themes within the data we had collected (the LSNS election manifesto, website and its deputies' parliamentary interventions).

As mentioned in the previous section, for the analysis we used nine articles posted on the LSNS website, two points from its electoral manifesto and the parliamentary interventions of four LSNS deputies. In his 59 parliamentary interventions Deputy Marián Kotleba spoke three times about the traditional family and once about gender ideology, Deputy Milan Mazurek twice mentioned young families in his 11 speeches, while Deputy Rastislav Schlosár spoke in parliament six times and on one of these occasions he spoke about the traditional family. The person who spoke most on gender themes was Deputy Natália Grausová, who not only referred to the traditional family but also to the state's duty to look after women and especially mothers; in total she spoke about the issue nine times in 46 interventions. By quantifying the data like this we are able to show that gender issues are only a periphery theme for the LSNS and do not form the core of its ideological programme. Kluknavská and Smolík (2016) have shown that far right parties in Slovakia prioritised nationalist, populist and xenophobic appeals with a discourse aimed largely against the Roma and more recently immigrants.

Table 1. Selected themes for analysis

Theme	Description
Gender stereotypes	Women as mothers of the nation whose main role is to look after the child and family, men as the family breadwinner.
Excluding women from public space	Campaigning against equality: denying women the right to work and to participate in politics.
Anti-European attitudes, i.e. the rejection of 'gender ideology'	EU as an actor attempting to enforce 'gender ideology', i.e. rejecting the rights of the LGBTI community (registered partnerships, adoptions by gay couples).
Quasi-feminist attitudes, i.e. the use of gender equality themes for ideological control.	Denouncing violence against women but only when it concerns the unwillingness of Muslims to subscribe to European laws and norms. Promoting the public engagement of women if it helps propagate a patriarchal agenda.

Gender stereotypes

We labelled the first theme *gender stereotypes*, and it is about seeing women as the mothers of the nation, whose mission is motherhood and childcare; in other words, it is about their responsibility to reproduce the nation (Mudde, 2007; Zúquete, 2008). This is therefore an instrumental attitude to women. By contrast men are portrayed as the family breadwinners. In the next part we will give examples demonstrating the presence of gender stereotypes in LSNS ideology.

I wish to point out to the previous speaker that men do not go into teaching mainly because they cannot support their families as male breadwinner. This is true now and was also the case under socialism... (Grausová, 2016c)

This extract from a parliamentary intervention by Deputy Grausová was made in relation to the proposed raising of the pay brackets for teaching and specialist staff, and it is one in which she emphasises the role of men as the family breadwinner. She also referred to men in a similar manner in a submission during a parliamentary session on a proposed legal amendment:

... Children also need male teachers as role models; but tell me, what man is going to go and work in a school for a salary that will not enable him to buy a flat and so forth... (Grausová, 2016d)

Gender stereotypes can also be found in the party's pre-election manifesto. In it the party talks about introducing a just social system that will ensure:

... that we give mothers back the dignity and honour that is rightfully theirs. We will raise maternity benefit to 100% of the mother's salary. We will extend the entitlement to maternity benefit to three years. (naseslovensko.net, 2016a)

By raising and extending maternity benefit the party hopes to improve the country's demographics and support mothers in their role as the mothers of the nation. It is also worth noting that it says nothing about how all women are deserving of dignity and respect; instead it mentions only mothers. Behind this one can see how for the LSNS a woman's role is to become a mother and that mothers deserve respect because they are the ones who raise children, look after the family and thereby reproduce the nation. There is no mention in the manifesto of any support for working mothers.

Based on these examples relating to gender stereotypes in the ideology of the LSNS we conclude that the party promotes traditional and gender stereotypical roles for women and men in tandem with an instrumental approach to women just like other far right parties.

Exclusion of women from public space

The second theme we identified is the denial of a woman's right to work and participate in politics. The main characteristic here is anti-feminism; hence, the support for women staying at home and the scepticism of gender quotas, which would result in women being excluded from the public sphere. At first glance these two themes may appear to be the same

as the one identified in the previous section. However, the opposite is in fact true, since they mutually complement each other. While the gender stereotypes reflect the persistence and promotion of traditional male and female roles in the party's ideology in conjunction with an instrumental approach to women, the *exclusion of women from public space* complements the *gender stereotypes* theme, since it is on the basis of these that the LSNS would take away a woman's right to work and participate in politics. Below we give specific examples that attest to this.

I can agree with the sum of 300, and even with extending it to the child's fourth year, but I believe that it should for the woman to stay at home with her child. Because there is nothing that surpasses a mother who has a child. (Grausová, 2016a)

This extract from a parliamentary intervention by Deputy Grausová refers to a proposal to raise maternity benefit from 203.20 to 300 per month and extend the entitlement period from three years to four. The fact that the deputy agrees with this corresponds to previous findings that far right parties back policies that support women in their roles as mothers and thereby deny them the right to work, as is neatly illustrated in the example above. Deputy Grausová stresses that the purpose of maternity benefit should be to enable the mother to stay at home with her child. In addition to the fact that this thereby excludes the possibility of the mother working and caring for the child, it is important to note that while the legislative amendment is about parental benefit, which can be claimed by either parent, i.e. the mother or father, the LSNS deputy only mentions mothers, and this gender-stereotyped view of women thereby becomes linked to their exclusion from the public sphere.

The next example is again from interventions made by Deputy Grausová, who spoke once more about how a woman who has a child should stay at home with it and not go out to work or participate in politics. She was responding to the fact that the parliamentary deputy speaker had returned to work a couple of days after having given birth.

... You are marvelling at Mrs Nicholsonová, making her into a saint, it's a wonder you aren't going to bless her, declare her a saint for having returned to parliament five days after the birth of her child and still in postpartum. I can assure you that there is nothing saintly or positive about that. Mrs Nicholsonová is not even so hard up that she couldn't survive without the salary she gets as a parliamentary deputy and deputy speaker, and Mrs Nicholsonová is hardly irreplaceable or even indispensable. What would many Slovak women, citizens of this Republic, give to stay at home with their newborn or small, very small, child, and not be forced to go out to work for financial reasons. I therefore consider Mrs Deputy Speaker Nicholsonová's attitude to be inappropriate. ... (Grausová, 2016b)

The last example illustrating the way in which the LSNS exclude women from public space is again an intervention made by Deputy Grausová, this time in response to an amendment on the *Sociálna poisťovňa* [Social Insurance company] annual accounts.

I would just like to point out that we should not forget about single mothers and divorced mothers because these are modern widows. A divorced woman, a single mother, these are modern widows, they are also basically widows and apart from that they do not get a widow's benefits or a widow's pension. Thank you. We should not forget about them. (Grausová, 2016e)

The above highlights the fact that according to the LSNS the state should look after divorced women and single mothers by providing them with state benefits, and the state should provide them with financial security instead of it coming from the man or husband. If these women and mothers are financially secure they will not have to work and can devote their attention to their role as mothers, whereby they become excluded from public space. At the same time, however, all the extracts above demonstrate that the LSNS uses gender issues as a means of making the party more appealing to women and to those who are generally culturally conservative. It is by supporting all the proposals to extend parental leave and increase parental benefits, and by proposing that single mothers and divorced women should be entitled to state benefits that on the one hand the LSNS excludes women from public space and on the other seeks to gain their favour and thereby eliminate the gender gap in party support.

In this section on the exclusion of women from public space in the ideology of the LSNS we conclude, as we did in the previous section, that since the party denies women the right to work and participate in politics it excludes them from public space as do other far right parties that are anti-feminist, promote stay-at-home women and that are sceptical of gender quotas (Hainsworth, 2008; Mudde, 2007; Mulinari & Neergard, 2014; Norocel, 2013; Towns, Karlsson & Eyre, 2013).

Anti-European attitudes (campaigning against ‘gender ideology’)

The next theme identified is ‘anti-European attitudes’ to gender equality. The keyword relating to this theme is ‘gender ideology’. But what does gender ideology mean? The phrase was used back in 2013 by the *Konferencia biskupov Slovenska* (KBS) [Conference of Bishops of Slovakia] in a pastoral letter to the faithful in which gender ideology was labelled as a death culture and the propagators of gender equality were labelled as death culture sympathisers. The bishops claimed that

Death culture sympathisers have come up with a new ‘gender ideology’. In its name they wish to enforce ‘gender equality’. Someone hearing this term for the first time would think it was about men and women having equal rights and equal dignity. But these groups with their ‘gender ideology’ are seeking something quite different. They want to convince us that none of us are naturally either a man or a woman, they want to take away a man’s right to a male identity and a woman’s right to a female identity and the family’s right to a family identity so that no man can feel like a man and no woman like a woman, and marriage will no longer be a blessed holy communion between a man and a woman; instead they want to promote communions between two men or two women to the same level as marriage.

It is in this sense that gender equality is understood as ‘gender ideology’ by the LSNS and linked to the EU. The EU is seen as an actor attempting to promote the rights of the LGBTI community (registered partnerships, adoption of children by gay people), and the party emphatically rejects this.

We have already written on many an occasion about the decline in values and principles, the cultural decadence and the growing liberalism (that is, egoism). It is getting worse and worse, and the benchmark is dropping lower and lower. The EU is introducing nonsensical quotas for

the representation of women on company boards, introducing gay courses and attempting to fight against racism by disadvantaging white citizens, etc. (naseslovensko.net, 2015a)

...Traditional, national and Christian values are constantly being targeted by liberals and social democrats in the EU. They are imposing multiculturalism on us, the tragic consequences of which continually point to a West ravaged by crimes committed by non-European immigrants. They are putting pressure on us to give sexual deviants the same rights as healthy people. They want us to raise our children in the spirit of a perverse gender ideology. ... (naseslovensko.net, 2015b)

...This ongoing decline has not been lost on LS Naše Slovensko [LSNS] members, who have long been observing the homolobby heading our way from the European Union. Our members therefore organised an event on the same day aimed at amassing signatures for our petition to have a referendum on leaving the EU and NATO. We did it spontaneously because we can longer sit and watch as the EU keeps telling us that there is nothing wrong with people who wake up as men in the morning and go to bed as women. That two men adopting a child is normal. ... (naseslovensko.net, 2016b)

The three extracts above are from articles posted on the LSNS website and clearly show how gender equality is viewed as '*gender ideology*' emanating from the EU. Anti-gender equality attitudes are linked to conceptions of the traditional family and the rights of the LGBTI community, as is evident in the party's electoral manifesto as well, which contains a whole point dedicated to how the party will promote traditional values. Specifically it states:

We will always consider marriage to comprise a union between a man and a woman. The education and upbringing of young people will be based on traditional national and Christian values. We will protect children against immorality in the media. We will not allow registered partnerships nor will we allow children to be adopted by perverts. (naseslovensko.net, 2016a)

The above examples are only a small sample showing how gender equality is associated with '*gender ideology*' and the LGBTI community, referred to by LSNS members as sexual deviants or perverts. More articles like these that point to the link between gender equality and the '*gender ideology*' emanating from the EU can be found on the party website. It is in relation to this aspect that one can see '*originality*' in the LSNS position, since there are no similar references and connections to be found in the introduction to the literature on far right parties and their ideologies in relation to gender.

Quasi-feminist attitudes

The last theme identified is '*quasi-feminist attitudes*', and it is closely linked to violence against women, the rape of women and the wearing of the burka as a sign of inequality, and hence the fight against Islamification (Mudde, 2007; Zúquete, 2008). It has to be stressed that this is not a strong theme in LSNS ideology; nonetheless it should not be overlooked. Indeed its electoral manifesto refers to immigrants as aggressors who commit violence against women and who are unwilling to conform to European laws and social norms.

We will not allow our women to be harassed by aggressive immigrants in the way German women were in Cologne. We will not give up the Fatherland—we will defend

ourselves. Muslim immigrants cannot and do not wish to adapt to our laws and social norms. (naseslovensko.net, 2016a)

A further example linking immigrants to a lack of respect for gender equality and equality between men and women is an article posted on the party website giving examples of the rape of female immigrants in various European countries.

Denmark: a 17-year-old Somalian immigrant who raped a 10-year-old girl and then a 9- year-old was sentenced to 6 years in prison and then deported. Italy: Illegal immigrants gang-raped and then attempted to kill a 48 year old asylum worker. Sweden: Since 1975, when the Swedish government decided to make the country multicultural, and tens of thousands of immigrants began to arrive, mostly Muslims, the number of rapes per year has risen by 1472%. While in 1975 the total number of rapes reported was 421, in 2014 it was 6,620. In Stockholm alone on average five white women are raped every day. Sweden has therefore become the main rape country in the West.... (naseslovensko.net, 2015c)

The article continues pointing out that the very existence of Islamic ghettos in western European countries is evidence of the fact that immigrants will never accept European customs and that Muslim women will continue to wear the burka.

The fact that these Islamic ghettos are appearing all over western Europe is primarily the result of accepting immigrants who are different and incapable or unwilling to accept our civilised customs and adapt to the way of life of European nations.... It's down to us whether we want to decimate our own country. If we want to let Muslims build mosques in Slovakia. If tomorrow's reality will be women in burkas walking around Slovak towns and villages. *Ludová strana Naše Slovensko – strana Mariana Kotlebu* [People's Party of Our Slovakia – Marian Kotleba's party] is here for all Slovaks. (naseslovensko.net, 2015c)

These quasi-feminist statements in the LSNS discourse do not, however, advocate feminist values that seek equal gender rights and to overcome the misinterpretation and skewing of gender differences. The policies of the LSNS are designed to try and attract the attention of women insofar as this concerns participation in public life and politics, but only when it is in accordance with the party's patriarchal agenda. The LSNS may covertly use gender issues in their statements, but they do so in a purely instrumental way, i.e. only in order to improve the party's support amongst women. The ultimate goal is simply to increase women's dependence on men as the breadwinners of the family and on the paternalistic state.

On the basis of the quotes given above we can attest that on the one hand the LSNS believes the values cultivated by Islam conflict with the values of a Western civilisation that strives for gender equality (Zúquete, 2008, p. 333) and that the party highlights this when disseminating its ideology. On the other hand, however, the battle fought by the LSNS against Islamification does not mean accepting or defending gender equality as a conceptual value embraced by modern European parties (Mudde, 2007, p. 96). One can also state that Kotleba's party uses this quasi-feminism instrumentally, i.e. that it focuses its attention on women for the purposes of strengthening its patriarchal agenda.

Conclusion

Based on our thematic analysis of the data obtained and comparison with the literature on gender issues in FRP ideologies, we conclude that whilst these issues feature only peripherally in LSNS rhetoric, they are used *strategically as a theme that cuts across* the party ideology, forming not its core but being purposely used in relation to the party's main priorities. The position of women in society and gender issues mainly comes to the foreground when the LSNS focuses on the 'traditional' family and related policies directed against sexual minorities, the European Union and (cultural) liberalism. In all these cases, its defence of the 'traditional' family is closely linked to nationalism, i.e. to *the mission of women to reproduce the nation, or the white Christian majority*. The LSNS systematically emphasises the traditional role of women which in its view is motherhood and childrearing. The LSNS, like other FRPs, is openly and strongly anti-feminist, that is, it propagates the idea that women should be wives and mothers first and foremost, while men should fulfil the role of family breadwinner. Kotleba's party also rejects the introduction of any kind of quotas for women, whether in politics, companies or other public positions. Its negative attitude to quotas and emphasis of traditional, gender-stereotyped roles of women as caring stay-at-home mothers, deprives women of the right to work and participate equally in public life. The dilemma women face between the need to work and the right to look after their child is miscast as the self-sacrifice of women who are forced to work out of financial insecurity. This intensifies the exclusion of women from public space.

The LSNS systematically uses the issues of women's position and mission in society in an instrumental manner, as a means of making the party more appealing to social conservatives in general rather than women in particular. To fulfil this goal the party rhetoric is aimed mostly against Islamic culture and religion. In this context Kotleba's party predominantly uses quasi-feminist arguments, that is, it stresses that women are not only not equal to men in Muslim culture but are often repressed or even beaten and raped. It points out that in this Islam runs counter to western values. The issue of women and their status in society is, however, only part of a broader agenda—the fight against the Islamification of Europe. What is peculiar to the LSNS rhetoric is that it only uses this theme to strengthen its patriarchal agenda, for its quasi-feminist approach culminates in the demand that men or the state must take care to protect women against potentially violent Muslims. Unlike some other FRPs in Europe, the quasi-feminist rhetoric is much less oriented at building female awareness and does not attempt to openly recruit women for its activities, but focuses on increasing its popularity among young men whose duty it is to protect (white) women in Slovakia.

Since we have only researched one political party, the conclusions of this case study cannot be generalised to other parties that feature on the margins of the Slovak right like *Slovenská národná strana* [Slovak National Party] and *Sme rodina – Boris Kollár* [We are family – Boris Kollár]. Our findings, however, indicate that the systematic and strategic use of issues linked to the position of women in society and the position of ethnic and sexual minorities overlap with 'larger' far right themes such as nationalism, xenophobia and racism. The 'attention' devoted to women as wives and mothers only serves to moderate its rhetoric of hate against cultures and minorities that are different and propagate cultural conservatism

and patriarchal state paternalism. We suppose that if this issue were explored in relation to other far right parties in Slovakia, then at least three more parties could be compared, and this could bring new, valuable findings on the differences between these parties and their political rhetoric and strategies and therefore contribute to the development of a theory on the *gender gap* in relation to the far right.

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