

The Gap Between Sympathy and Social Change: Political Discourse on LGBTQ+ Rights in Slovakia Following Tepláreň bar Terrorist Attack

Barbara Lášticová, Institute for Research in Social Communication, Slovak Academy of Sciences

Mária Macková, Comenius University in Bratislava

Xenia Daniela Poslon, Institute for Research in Social Communication, Slovak Academy of Sciences

This study examines political discourse on LGBTQ+ rights in Slovakia following the terrorist attack at Bratislava queer bar Tepláreň in 2022, where two people were killed. It focuses on expressions of solidarity, sympathy, and hostility to identify shifts and patterns in discourse.

Slovakia has one of the lowest levels of LGBTQ+ tolerance in Europe, with legislation and political discourse legitimizing hostile attitudes. Despite initial support from authorities, hostility intensified after the attack. Previous research suggests that populist politicians often frame LGBTQ+ issues in exclusionary terms, contrasting a "pure" majority against a "flawed" minority, while others use more inclusive language but maintain group boundaries. This normative context limits allyship and intergroup solidarity.

Reflexive thematic and critical discourse analyses were applied to 108 instances of political discourse from the Slovak Press Agency and politicians' social media posts in one year following the attack.

Three levels of support were identified: declaratory, benevolent, and activist. Support peaked in the first month, with the activist support—advocating social change—limited to a minority of statements. Declaratory support focused on sympathy for individual victims and their families, not the LGBTQ+ community. Benevolent support condemned hate speech but avoided explicit advocacy. Hostile statements appeared within a week, portraying LGBTQ+ people as a threat to national identity. Supportive discourse declined over time, reducing the potential for social change.

Although the terrorist attack has shaken society, the sentiment was short-lived, sympathy and solidarity were rather performative, and the political discourse reverted to the mobilization of anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment.

Keywords: LGBTQ+, political discourse, allyship, intergroup solidarity, social change

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Escaping Russia, Trapped by Identity: National Identity Negotiation in Light of In-group Wrongdoing

Elena Mikhina*, Institute for Research in Social Communication, Slovak Academy of Sciences, elena.mikhina@savba.sk

Xenia Daniela Poslon, Institute for Research in Social Communication, Slovak Academy of Sciences, xenia-daniela.poslon@savba.sk

Barbara Láštiová, Institute for Research in Social Communication, Slovak Academy of Sciences, barbara.lasticova@savba.sk

Purpose: The actions of the Russian government caused a wave of emigration, with vast numbers of people fleeing due to opposing the regime, political prosecution, or safety concerns. The study aims to examine how Russian emigrants engaged in the process of negotiating their self-identification under conditions of in-group wrongdoing and devalued and fragile national identity.

Background: Previous literature documented that having a stigmatized identity can lead to self-group distancing. Yet these studies mainly concerned groups that can be characterized as victims of violence or discrimination, and there is a lack of research on identity negotiation of people who can be seen as representing perpetrator groups in an ongoing conflict.

Methods: Two rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted with Russian emigrants (N = 12). The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis.

Results: Participants described pervasive feelings of collective shame and fear of identity disclosure. Even though they actively disidentified from Russian identity, they compared their perception of Russia to an abusive family, highlighting the inability to break away from their national identity completely. Instead, they actively searched for other anchors of social identification, emphasizing 1) nationality in terms of cultural identity as opposed to citizenship, 2) alternative ethnic identities, and 3) belonging to particular physical places rather than the country as a whole. Despite active self-group distancing, participants continued to embrace collective guilt rooted in the actions of their national group, expressing solidarity with Ukraine.

Conclusion: We discuss the implications of disidentification and collective guilt for the lack of a successful resistance movement in Russia, but might facilitate expressions of intergroup solidarity.

Keywords: national identity, in-group wrongdoing, self-group distancing, identity negotiation, collective guilt

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