# Slovene National Identity as a Part of Yugoslav Identity or as its Contradiction?

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## Introduction

One of the most characteristic features of human beings is the search for identity[1], which defines them on many levels, mainly on the personal, social, cultural, and national level. In the era of today's social and political transformation within the heterogeneity and complexity of Central Europe, the intensity of the search for 'national identity' arises. This concept plays an essential part in the development of one's 'identity' and subsequently the idea of every nation's self-determination and national history. National identity represents one of the strongest collective identifications in contemporary society. However, this phenomenon is a complex concept, which is not easy to define (and analyse) at once. Social categories and collective identities which have been used for self-definition in the past are gradually replaced by other categories that have different meanings now.[2] Scholars who deal with the matter of nation and identity from the perspective of sociology, anthropology and history consider the use of these terms as quite problematic and ambiguous, because the core problem of the concept of national identity is in the definition of its constituent terms themselves. Therefore, there is not a single explicit or general definition of these phenomena, which have been used in different approaches and discourses throughout history. Thus, in the first place it is needed to discuss the concepts of nation and identity, which will create a conceptual base for the subsequent discussion on the development of Slovene national identity and self-determination during the interwar era. This paper focuses on the development of Slovene national identity and investigates to what extent the Yugoslav identity influenced their self-determination, during the interwar era. The approach of the Slovenes towards their national identification is researched within the discourse of politics of the Slovene People's Party and the education policy and textbooks used in the territory of Slovene people under Yugoslavian educational policy and interwar Yugoslavian policy in general.

## Theoretical background of research on *'national identity'*

Self-reference or self-identification is closely related to the concept of identity, which can be pursued on personal and social level, as indicated by British social psychologist John

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[1] To remain gender-neutral, I will use the gender-neutral third person singular pronoun 'they' and its grammatical variations in contexts in which gender is irrelevant or undisclosed.
[2] Lášticová, *Slováci a/alebo Európania,* 35.

Turner, who states that *"self-concept can alternate rapidly between one's personal and social identity"*.[3] Anthropologists Brubaker and Cooper suggest viewing this matter as a category of practice which means to research the concept of identity by studying the mechanisms by which this concept crystallizes into reality which is not given.[4] In regard with the concept of national identity, this view opposes the perceptions of *nations* as *"real entities, social communities and substantial enduring collectivities",* which share collective "objective" characteristics such as language, religion, myths, memories, and self-understanding.[5] Following the Brubaker's idea of *social category of practice,* nations are constantly changing through nationalist and even non nationalist discourses. He addresses the concept of national self-awareness or "nationness" as a contingent event or a happening.[6] Thus, this paper supports the concept of national identity as a *category of practice,* which is continually forming and developing according to different circumstances but also taking on a culturally and politically institutionalized form as a result of these changes. Furthermore, it refers to the concept of identity as a process of identification of an individual with a certain group of people or a development of a feeling of "belonging" toward that group. According to this thesis nations are socially and politically constructed entities or groups which are historically contingent and change over time.

Nations are for most people a mixture of political and cultural factors. British sociologist Anthony D. Smith contributed to the theoretical discourse about nations and nationalism with division of four main theoretical approaches: primordialism, perennialism, ethnosymbolism and modernism.[7] The concept of nation is sometimes comprehended as an objective existing entity or a reality which has been already given.[8] That means a nation can be viewed as an organic social unit, whose members are characterized or categorized by a common identity based on common ancestors or ancient ethnic identities who share a common language, race, religion and territory.[9] This theory is mainly practised within the primordialistic perceptions towards the concept of a nation, which can be present even in today's political and social discourse in Central Europe.

This paper presents the concept of nation through the optics of modernistic conceptions of Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and the sociologist Rogers Brubaker, who precisely try to avoid this objectifying theory and rather focus on cognitive processes which shape the people's perception about their national identity. The paper also mentions some views of perennialist Walker Connor and ethnosymbolist, such as A. S. Smith, who reflect on the matter of nation, state and identity. However, I realize that the research of nations and nationalism exceeds even the approach of Smith, in regard to which

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[3] For the further information about John Turners Theory of self-categorization see *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory.*
[4] Brubaker and Cooper, *Beyond „identity",* 1–47.
[5] Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed,* 27.
[6] Ibid. 13–22.
[7] Smith, *Theories of Nationalism.*
[8] Vörös, *Analytická historiografia versus národné dejiny*, 48–71.
[9] For more about different analytical approaches towards the concept of *Nation* and *Nationalism* see Ladislav Vörös, *Analytická historiografia versus národné dejiny.*

Andrej Findor points out *"the insufficiently answered problem of 'ontological reality' of nations and research on this matter"*.[10]

According to anthropologist Benedict Anderson a nation should not be perceived as a political entity but as a state of mind, which is socially constructed.[11] As the author describes, nation is an imagined political community, because *"the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion"*.[12] Thus, the nation can be stated as a collective imagination, which consists of an imagined community of people, who are part of the same unit, live in an imagined territory, and share an idea of continuity of the existence of this unit.[13] This socially constructed community is imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that community. The author claims that a nation is always an imagined community, which provides its members with a sense of identity and belonging. The identification with the community is itself a cognitive process of an individual who creates a social classification in their mind, by which they form an 'imagined community' of certain people. Then, the individual either joins or differentiates themselves from these imagined groups (or a nation). Furthermore, Benedict Anderson refers to the nation as a community which is not only imagined but also *"inherently limited* and *sovereign"*.[14] Therefore, the concept of nation is a constructed idea, which makes people differentiate themselves from one another according to the concept of 'us' and 'them'.[15] A nation is formed by individuals who not only share the sense of fellowship between each other but also differentiate from those who do not share this special bond. 'Us' and 'them' then somehow live in the confrontation with each other, so they are more aware of their own identity as a group.

Like other modernists Anderson considers both nation and nationalism as products of modernity, during the era of modernisation in the 19th century, which have been created as means to political and economic ends. He partly relates with the modernistic approach of Gellner who sees nationalism as *„a political principle demanding the congruence of a national and political unit"*. Anderson sees nationality, "nation-ness" as well as nationalism as cultural artefacts which during the end of 18th century distilled to a complex "crossing" of discrete historical forces. After that they became "modular" and "[…] *capable of being merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations"*.[16] The nationalistic discourse assumes that *nations* sprung from previously existing ethnic groups, which are characterised by cultural and linguistic patterns and claims that all inhabitants of a certain area possess clearly defined notions of their *'national identity'* and consistently act accordingly. This work however does not aspire to further deal with the nationalistic notions about national identity and ethnicity.

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[10] Findor, *Začiatky národných dejín.* 20.
[11] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 6.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Škorvanková, *Vytváranie juhoslovanskej identity…* 9.
[14] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 7.
[15] For more on the *social identity theory* see works of Tajfel H. and Turner J / Bauman Z. and May T. *Thinking Sociologically.*
[16] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 4.

The terms of nation and state are not necessarily the same concepts. Like Connor states that there are no *"pure cases of a culturally, ethnically, and linguistically homogenous people (the nation) which corresponds perfectly to the sovereign territory of political control (the state)"*.[17] These concepts are often interchangeable which causes confusions among academics and even ordinary people. This problem with interchangeability occurs mostly in the contexts of multi-national states, such as Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes[18] (the Kingdom of SHS), which were both established after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary in 1918. The Kingdom of SHS, which later became the first state of Yugoslavia, was one of the most diverse and heterogeneous countries of Europe, which united three nations and other minorities[19] and managed (though with many difficulties) to exist as a state for decades, before and even after the Second World War. The national situation in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (and later Yugoslavia[20]), as a newly established successor-state after World War I, was unique in its multi-national, multi-cultural and multilingual and even multi-religious reality, which influenced the concept of self-determination and self-identification of the Slovene people (and certainly other national minorities and ethnicities in the Kingdom) during the whole 20th century.

The Slovenes, besides the Serbs and Croats, were the only Yugoslav group which developed its national identity before Yugoslavia.[21] In this context the Slovene nation can be perceived as a category which represent a social group or an ethnic group of people who referred to themselves as Slovenes and lived in the territory of Austria-Hungary and later Yugoslavia.[22] At the beginning of the 20th century the proponents of one ethnic Yugoslav nation referred to Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes as "tribes".[23]

The process of creation of national identity is closely conditioned by the highest authorities and institutions of national states.[24] As Anthony D. Smith suggests, national identification involves *"some sense of political community"* which *"implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community"*.[25] According to Dennison Rusinow, the Yugoslav state itself was a result of its *"appropriation and adaptation into originally and philosophically competitive national ideas and nationalist programs of existing 'proto-national' Croat, Serb and Slovene communal identities"*.[26] In contrast to the period before the First World War, during which the work of forging a Yugoslav identity was carried out largely by a narrow group of cultural elites, *"the new state and its executive organs directly held the reins during this frantic ride to-*

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[17] Ibid. 157.
[18] Within following pages, the author uses abbreviated form of *the Kingdom of SHS,* derived from the Slovene title *Kraljevina Srbov, Hrvatov in Slovencev.*
[19] Besides Serbs, Croats and Slovenes also Dalmatians, Bosniaks (Bosniak Muslims), ethnic groups in Vojvodina and Montenegro and other.
[20] The official name of the state was changed to 'Kingdom of Yugoslavia' by King Alexander I Karađorđević on 3 October 1929.
[21] Djokić, Introduction. *Yugoslavism: Histories, Myths, Concepts,* 6.
[22] Slovenes populated the regions of Carinthia, Carniola, Gorizia, Styria, Prekmurje, Istrija and Trieste.
[23] Djokić, *(Dis)integrating Yugoslavia,* 141.
[24] Škorvanková, *Vytváranie juhoslovanskej identity...* 10.
[25] Smith, *National Identity,* 19.
[26] Rusinow, *The Yugoslav idea before Yugoslavia,* 12–13.

*wards a unitary Yugoslav identity".*[27] During the reign of King Alexander I, modern unitary Yugoslav identity was propagated and used to erase particularistic identities, which later turned out to be unsuccessful. At the end it was the "artificiality"[28] and the identity politics of Yugoslavia which caused the failure of assimilation of the South Slav peoples of Yugoslavia into a united Yugoslav identity. The emergence of the Kingdom of the SHS thus brought together number of nations which differed in culture, religion, but also in their political traditions and governance. However, Slovenes played an integral part in the creation, development and later ultimate dissolution of the Yugoslav state. After 1918 territory of Slovene people became the most economically and industrially developed part in the Yugoslavia. According to Mitja Velikonja *"both Yugoslavias*[29] *played a key role in the development and formation of the modern Slovene national identity, just like the Slovenes played an important part in history of Yugoslavim(s) and Yugoslav state(s)".*[30]

The concept of Yugoslavism does not have a single clear definition because many concepts and approaches have been published on this matter.[31] Overall, the concept can be understood as a general idea of the 'unity' of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. This "unity" was often represented by self-perceived kin or even "community of blood" which makes different populations *"scarcely distinguishable from one another".*[32] Members of the nation or ethnic community often identified themselves as brothers who are linked by a bond of blood or race. This can be seen within the establishing process of Yugoslavia based on the idea of *narodno jedinstvo* (national oneness). In the Corfu Declaration of 1917, the Serbian Government and the Yugoslav Committee stated that their "trinominal nation" shared *"the same blood and spoken and written language"* and therefore *"the idea of its* [the Yugoslav nation's] *unity could never be extinguished".*[33]

The nationalistic approach about Yugoslav nation considers Yugoslav, Serbian, Croatian and Slovene (and any other sub-Yugoslav) nations as antagonist and mutually exclusive forces, which fight for their "predetermined" national autonomy and sovereignty. However, Pieter Troch suggest that Yugoslav nation should be viewed as a composition of *"contingent, dynamic and overlapping categories of national identity instead of hierarchy of clearly delineated, stable and determined, regional, national, and supranational identities".*[34] Therefore, it is needed to consider that these individual identities are overlapping and at the same time consistent through the institutionalization of Yugoslav nationhood which *"shaped their mutual relationship and connection to internal divisions with the nation-state".*[35]

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[27] Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs,* 5.

[28] Djokić, Introduction. *Yugoslavism: Histories, Myths, Concepts,* 4.

[29] The first Yugoslavia was established in 1918–1941, the Second Yugoslavia in 1945–1992.

[30] Velikonja, "*Slovenia's Yugoslav century,"* 99.

[31] For more on this subject, among many other see Djokić, *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea*; Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*; Wachtel, *Making a nation, breaking a nation.*

[32] Gat, and Yakobson, *Nations,* 18–22.

[33] *Krfska deklaracija od 20. (7.) jula 1917.* As cited in Djokić, *(Dis)integrating Yugoslavia: King Alexander and Interwar Yugoslavism,* 2003, 141.

[34] Troch, *Nationalism and Yugoslavia,* 11.

[35] Ibid.

**Approaches to the formation of Slovene national consciousness and its situation during the interwar Yugoslavia**[36]

The concept of Slovene nation and identity is broad in its various definitions among (mostly Slovene) historians. Slovene historian Repe notes that the development of Slovene national identity often clashes with myths and ideological political interpretations. Slovene historiography contains primordialistic explanations of the establishment of the Slovene nation, which presuppose that the nation developed from a pre-existing Slovene ethnic community and therefore in order to achieve its original *identity* they focused on various territories which were situated in the Slovene ethnic territory. Smith refers to this approach as 'cultural nationalism' which took root especially in Eastern European populations which existed only as *"ethnic categories, without much self-consciousness, such as the Slovaks, Slovenes and Ukrainians, who had few ethnic memories, distinctive institutions or native elites"* and also among *"well-defined nations with definite borders, a self-aware population and rich memories, like the Croatians, Czechs, Hungarians and Poles; or among peoples with religious memories and institutions like the Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians"*.[37]

The most known myth about Slovene identity is the Venetic theory, which presupposes the Slovene origin from Venetic territory. Other myth supports the idea of South Slavs who created their own state of Carantania already under the rule of Avar at the end of sixth century. This state which was considered as "a cradle of the Slovenehood" was later enslaved by the Germans who dominated Slovenes until the end of World War I.[38] Such mythology and romanticizing seems to be a typical feature for all Central European nations, *"which are believed to have had a kind of state (later lost) in the early Middle Ages – even though nationality played no role during those times"*.[39]

However, this work follows the argument that no such community had existed before the period when the modern Slovene nation was starting to form. Modernistic arguments state that Slovene nation is a modern phenomenon, which developed due to random sequence of historical events and not from a predestined community. Slovene historians Jernej Kosi and Rok Stergar oppose arguments about objectively definable ethnic communities.[40] They pursue this opinion by applying an analytical approach and considering modern interdisciplinary approaches about ethnic communities. The notion of Slovene community which would be territorially congruent with the modern Slovene nation did not exist yet because this notion or imagination of Slovene community only emerged as a new idea at the turn of the 19th century.

Slovenes or a Slovene nation, are referred in this work as a social group of people who lived in original regions of Carinthia, Carniola, Gorizia, Styria, Prekmurje, Istrija and Trieste[41], which were territorial parts of Austria and under the governance of the Austro–Hungarian empire until its dissolution. Those political-administrative units were the home-

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[36] The title Yugoslavia refers to the first Yugoslavia from the interwar era, which includes the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and its dictatorship after 1929.
[37] Smith, *Nationalism and modernism,* 178–180.
[38] Repe, *Regional differences, Slovene national identity,* 256.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Kosi, and Stergar, *Kdaj so nastali "lubi Slovenci"?* 458–488.
[41] Rychlík, *Dějiny Slovinska,* 6.

land of the heterogenous ethnical community of Slavs, which had preceded the later devel-
opment of the group of Slovenes (and certainly other ethnical and lingual groups of people,
mostly of German and Romanian origin). The population of *Slovenes* in that time did not
create their own territorial unit. After World War One this group became a part of the new
successor state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, later called Yugoslavia. In
that time the Slovene ethnic territory fell under management of two administrative regions
of Ljubljana and Maribor. However, the centralist *Vidovdan* constitution (28th June 1921)
divided the Yugoslav state into thirty-three provinces with no regard for ethnic composi-
tion, which signified a great disappointment of both Slovenes and Croats. After 1929 the
regions of Slovene people joined into a province called *Drava banovina,* which officially
defined Slovenes territorially for the first time. It was the only of the nine Yugoslav regions
which was occupied by a single nation.[42]

In Central Europe, during the era of the advent of modern nationalism, language was the
most common feature of 'national individuality' by which different ethnicities differen-
tiated themselves from one another.[43] The development of Slovene national identification is
a modern phenomenon which started during the 'spring of nations' when the sense of be-
longing to this nation was gradually spread among the Slovene population by means of na-
tionalist organizations' agitation, mass politization, and activities of the state. This process
of national development matches with the most well-known thesis about typologies and
phases in nationalism created by Miroslav Hroch. He defined three chronological stages in
the creation of a nation. The nation-forming process starts among certain groups of scholars
and intellectuals, then the process progresses with a period of patriotic agitation among
common people and at the end it culminates by mass-spreading national movement.[44]

The process of the creation of Slovene national awareness firstly began with the con-
solidation of the Slovene literary language[45] which was then the only unifying element of
all regionally divided group of Slavs (later known as Slovenes).[46] Slovene historian Janko
Kos suggests that only during this period the Slovene nation had the opportunity to shape
their national consciousness and identity.[47] The consolidation of Slovenia's common na-
tional identity, which took place between 1848 and 1918, was reflected also in school read-
ings which consisted mostly of modified translations of old German materials. These trans-
lations highly influenced the formation of a uniform Slovene literary language which pro-
vided an essential basis for the development of a common national identity.[48]

At the turn of the 19th century, the Slavs who lived in the south-eastern parts of the
Alps, were fragmented politically and administratively among different regions and histo-
rical territories. This prompted the development of regional or territorial consciousness

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[42] Luthar et al., *The Land Between,* 390.
[43] Hroch, *Úvodem k čítance textů o nacionalismu,* 12.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Slovene historiography considers the publication of the first Slovene Grammar book as the start of
the Slovene national awareness process during the 18th century. Even though in the 16th century Pri-
mož Trubar already wrote the first Slovene language printed book *Catechism,* which for the first time
presented the base for the Slovene literary language of Lower Carniolan dialect.
[46] Pugelj, *Slovenci in Kolektivne identitete,* 43.
[47] Kos, *Slovenstvo kot vprašanje istovetnosti in razlike,* 29–38.
[48] Almasy, *…za Boga in véro, za cesarja in domovino!* 508.

among them. The population of Slavs which lived in these territories did not yet refer to themselves as *Slovenes* or by any expression which would define their nationality or national awareness until the 19th century. Even within the multinational milieu of Austria-Hungary Slovenes were able to form, *"besides regional, also a national consciousness"*. The population of Slovene people in that time defined itself mostly in terms of location, region, and province.[49] This can be seen on the usage of old regional names such as *"Kranjci, Korošci, Štajerci"*.[50] German population of that areas referred to Slavs living in the area by the traditional name *Winden.*[51]

In the period of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, the formation of Slovene cultural identity was added to their ethno-linguistic identification. On this basis, they began to shape the structures of Slovene culture, society, and nation in a modern sense. The ultimate goal of the political endeavour and national awareness of the Slovene nation, in the sense of Anderson's imagined community, had started to form by the national program called *Zedinjena Slovenia* (United Slovenia), which de facto persisted as the basis of their political endeavours from 1848 until the first half of the 20th century, when the Slovene *nation* became a part of a common Yugoslav state, Yugoslavia. The main objective of this program was not the founding of a new separate state, but a union of Slovenes within a self-governed unit with its own national assembly. *Slovene* political mentality[52] was in 20th century characteristic by the idea that *"opponents must either be totally subjugated or be classified among national enemies"*.[53] Slovene people were able to acquire political consciousness and became accustomed to parliamentarism, although in a limited form.[54] During the Kingdom of Yugoslavia the Slovenes achieved a sort of informal cultural autonomy, despite the state being centralist and nondemocratic.[55] Under the Austria, *"national affiliation had never been a constitutive element of Slovene consciousness",* however, between 1918 and 1929 the national self-identification became exactly like that.[56]

*Slovene* political representatives entered the new state with great enthusiasm despite Yugoslav unification and unitarist policy.[57] They willingly accepted Yugoslav unification because it earned them protection from invasive neighbouring states (Italians and Germans) and belief in future realization of their national program.[58] However, the unitarian concept of Yugoslavism and multinational, multi-ethnic, and multilingual features of the new state started to clash with Slovene expectations.[59] Slovene self-government within the Kingdom of SHS was limited and the nation continued to be fragmented and divided, namely be-

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[49] Hladký, *Slovinsko,* 39–40.

[50] These names refer to original regions of Carinthia, Carniola, Styria; in Slovene language Koroška, Kranjska, Štajerska.

[51] Hladký, *Slovinsko,* 39.

[52] Of all three Slovene political camps: catholic, liberal, and social/communist parties.

[53] Repe, *Regional differences, Slovene national identity...* 255.

[54] Repe, *Between myths and ideology,* 20.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Luthar et al., *The Land Between,* 389.

[57] Velikonja, *Slovenia's Yugoslav century,* 4–5.

[58] The program included demands for the establishment of self-government or at least interconnection of Slovene ethnic territories.

[59] Luthar et al., *The Land Between,* 384.

tween four states: the Kingdom of SHS, Italy, Austria, and Hungary. The *Vidovdan* Constitution of 1921 was based on the distribution of power, among different regions, municipalities and circuits of Serbian, Croatian and Slovene territories and the king participated in all three forms of authority. The Constitution envisaged the centralist organisation of the state. Slovene view on *'the constitutional question'* in Yugoslavia was summed up by Slovene politician Albin Prepeluh who stated that *"The 'tribes' which have been united into the Yugoslav state developed for centuries severed from each other, and they took on their cultural-historical, religious, and socio-economic forms in milieus that were completely different, even mutually contradictory."*[60]

Yugoslavia was constituted by three nations speaking two languages and writing in two alphabets and practicing three religions. The two variants of the official language were Serb-Croatian and the Slovene language. Despite unitarist concepts, the national emancipation of the Slovene nation was reflected in at least the free use of the Slovene language, which became the second official language of the Kingdom of SHS. Slovene nation thus had an advantage over the Croats and the Serbs because not many of them spoke the Slovene language. Slovene language become the only language of instruction in schools and consequently led toward the "Slovenianization" of cultural institutions[61] in the territory of *Drava Banovina*.[62] Furthermore, Slovene lands[63] were, except the territories of central Serbia and Croatia, the only one territory which was nationally homogeneous.[64] The Slovenes were suddenly in a situation in which they identified themselves as people who talk with the same language, manage most of their offices and school themselves and share a unique culture. However, at the same time they lived in a state in which they officially met with the new identity of the united Yugoslav nation. The clash of the identities became apparent during the dictatorship in 1929, when school authorities from Belgrade attempted to get rid of Slovene textbooks of content that was *"extremely important for building up Slovenian national identity"*.[65] Despite a dissatisfaction with the new state, *Slovenes* considered unification as *"the least undesirable – if not best-liked – solution to its national question"*.[66]

Slovene political leaders, although they shared the same Habsburg heritage as the Croats, took a more pragmatic approach to the formation of the Yugoslav state. Slovenes were a small population and had no state tradition upon which to draw. However, the idea of Yugoslav unitarism divided Slovene political spectrum (just like the political spectrums of other member *nations* and groups). The politicians who uniformly opposed the idea of Yugoslav unitarist and centralistic state were the representatives of Slovene People's Party

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[60] As cited in Suppan, 2003, 157.

[61] Within the Yugoslav state *Slovenes* were able to set up their own education and cultural institutions e.g. University in Ljubljana in 1919, the Slovene academy of Arts and Sciences in 1938, etc.

[62] Gašparič, *SLS pod Kraljevo diktaturo,* 32.

[63] This term is a historical denomination for the territories in Central and Southern Europe where people primarily spoke Slovene language. Most Slovene scholars prefer to refer to the "Slovene Lands" in English rather than "Slovenia" to describe the territory of modern Slovenia and neighbouring areas in earlier times. The use of the English term "Slovenia" is generally considered by Slovene scholars to be anachronistic due to its modern origin.

[64] Pirjevec, *Juhoslavie 1918-1992,* 13.

[65] Luthar et al. *The Land Between,* 389.

[66] Ibid. 390.

which remained true to the concept of building Slovene national individuality unlike the unitarist and centralistic fractions of other Slovene political camps. Their policy gained the highest support among other Slovene political parties within the Slovene lands.[67] In 1923 Slovene People's Party published brochure called *Sodite po delih!* (Judge by Actions!) in which it proposed demand for Slovene autonomy. During the '20s the Slovene People's Party[68] continued in agitation for its national policy within the national programme and later within the autonomist and pro-federalist movements in which Slovenes demanded decentralization, their own parliament and, above all, recognition of Slovene national identity.[69] The Slovene autonomist and federalist demands were outlined in the Ljubljana Declaration in 1932, which were though supressed by the dictatorial Yugoslav regime. Until the death of King Aleksander and change of the regime in 1935, Slovene People's Party *"no longer emphasized the federalist demands, but it did not forget them"*.[70]

Even though the Slovene People's Party and other Slovene intellectuals rejected the idea of integral Yugoslavia, they were not anti-Yugoslav. These politicians initially stood for federal Yugoslavia, in which the Slovenes would gain sufficient political autonomy, but eventually the Slovene People's Party would officially accept the state centralism.[71] This can be seen in the dual and pragmatic policy of Anton Korošec, the head of the party, who was aware that political power of Slovene People's Party was relatively small within the Yugoslav parliament. However, the cooperative political activity with Croat autonomists and parliamentary partnership with the Serbian centralist was by him and his followers perceived as the only way to shape the state policy and facilitate the maintenance of prosperous positions for Slovene people.

### The Role of the School system in the formation of Yugoslav national awareness of Slovene people in interwar Yugoslavia

Modernistic approaches toward conceptions of nation and nationalism state that one of the most influential determinants which helped to form a modern nation is the educational system.[72] Eric Hobsbawm explains that one can understand the nature of a nation by analysing its national traditions and that national traditions are one kind of invented traditions.[73] He considers that education along with flags, images, ceremonies, music etc. helps to legitimize governance of ruling elites over a state and to influence or standardize certain norms of human behaviour and cognition. Moreover, Connor states that the nation forming process is conditioned by the mass-spreading of national awareness and national identity which are facilitated by state school systems.[74] The emergence of state-institutionalized, homogeneous, and mass school education originated in the 19th century. During that time, education

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[67] Rychlík, *Dějiny Slovinska,* 164.
[68] During 1923 also the communist party abandoned their initial unitarian centralist view.
[69] Perovšek, *Slovenians and Yugoslavia 1918-1940,* 52.
[70] Ibid. 57–58.
[71] Gašparič, *SLS pod Kraljevo diktaturo,* 37.
[72] The importance of education in the process of forming a modern *nation* was analysed by Gellner in *Nations and Nationalism,* 63–64.
[73] As cited in Findor, *Začiatky národných dejín,* 57.
[74] As cited in ibid. 27.

and the school system served as a tool for the governing authorities which enabled the formation and persistence of national states by the spreading of national awareness and national consciousness through certain 'representations' of national 'history' of the given state.

History is being referred as a set of events of the past captured in chronological order, which are connected through the concept of continuity.[75] At the same time, these individual historical events construct the history and the narrative of a nation. The term history is viewed as the concept of 'collective memory', which has been analysed by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs.[76] This concept refers to memories and perceptions of individuals who are part of a certain social unit. Collective memory then shapes or constructs people's perception about 'history' through the eyes of this social unit. Halbwachs also states that *"the beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present, shape the various views of the past as they are manifested respectively in every historical epoch"*.[77] The past is then shaped by the concerns of the present, which basically transforms the past into a construct. According to sociologist Émile Durkheim *"history does not consist of a series of discrete snapshots, but rather of continuous film in which, even though other images usually appear, the shots hang together and form a continuous stream of images"*.[78] He sees these 'images' as 'collective representations', which define society by objectifying ideas and values.[79] The representations create a base for the construction of collective identity by means of awareness of a common tradition and at the same time strengthen solidarity and loyalty among the members of a group. Therefore, the history represents a continuous sequence of events, which creates constructed representations of a social group and its identity. These representations of the past were and still are part of every social community. In the context of state-organization, one of the possible means of mediation of these representations is the school system, which can influence the national identity of a community and its individuals.

Control of the state over educational system is reflected in the acceptance of the curriculum and the approval of the textbooks and other possible teaching materials according to which the teaching process takes place. State's ideology influences the structure of history teaching, mostly by creating positive attitude towards their homeland, the state, and the authorities.[80] Also, according to Vodopivec, history teaching is the product of the ruling ideology and policy of the social and political system.[81] History teaching brings the pupils images of the past, which are propagated by ruling elites, ruling political parties and national institutions according to their methods and instruments.[82] The process of creation of a common identity is thus enabled by a common system of values and common historical (collective) consciousness. The concept of 'us' and 'them' which applies the concept of roles of "friendship" and "hostility" within the narratives in the history textbooks elaborates the orchestration of the process. History then serves as a source of various representations,

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[75] Škorvanková, *Vytváranie juhoslovanskej identity*… 11.
[76] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* 22.
[77] Ibid. 25.
[78] Ibid. 26.
[79] Findor, *Historické reprezentácie,* 408.
[80] Kos, *Ideološki koncepti v učbenikih zgodovine,* 64.
[81] Vodopivec, *Zakaj in kako otrokom pripovedujemo zgodovino?* 1258.
[82] Ibid.

traditions, myths, and stereotypes, *"as convenient tools for shaping and spreading the desirable historical consciousness"* as well as positive image towards nation and patriotism.[83] Such case can be seen within the school system and teaching materials in *Yugoslavia* which reveal how the state authorities *"attempt to instil national identity into young generations and how they define 'the cultural stuff' that determines national identity"*.[84]

During the interwar era, after the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the Main Educational Board *(Glavni prosvetni savet),* an advisory organ of the Ministry of Education, agreed that education should play a crucial role in the consolidation of Yugoslav identity. During the first annual meeting[85] of the Association of Yugoslav Teachers, the Association adopted a resolution which proclaimed that Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were *"three branches of a common tree"*.[86] The subsequent changes in the school system were proposed by educational authorities, which were considered the "creators" of the Yugoslav nation, much like the soldiers and diplomats who were considered the "creators" of the Yugoslav state.[87] However, in the first decade, the Kingdom of SHS had no official laws on education or its unified concept and continuity because of the overall political instability and problematic unification of different school systems. The new school reform was adopted and finally came into force in 1929 during the *6th January Dictatorship,* when a single Yugoslav nation started to be propagated. This act unified the school system of elementary schools in all areas of Yugoslavia and introduced compulsory eight-year school attendance.[88] However, most of the students in interwar Yugoslavia ended their schooling after finishing the fourth year of primary school. The Yugoslav population thus gained all its knowledge about its "own past" from history textbooks in the third and fourth years.[89] In the national elementary schools, pupils were meant to be educated *"in the spirit of the nation and national unity"*, with *"cooperation of all cultural institutions for the national enlightenment"* and prepared them for being *"moral, loyal and active members of the national and social community"*.[90] Besides the subject of history, Yugoslav national consciousness and ideology was mediated also through literature and geography.[91] The curriculum of common Yugoslav history emphasised the similarities, parallels and common ties in the histories of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes *"by reinterpreting symbolic resources, which had already been linked to Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian national histories, as a common Yugoslav state symbols."*[92] Though the main base of the Yugoslav history was constructed around the Serbian state history, Troch suggest that *"there remained considerable overlap between Yugoslav national identity and established definitions of sub-national collective identities among the South Slavs"*.[93]

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[83] Dimić and Alimpić, *Stereotypes in History Textbooks in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia,* 90.
[84] Troch, *Nationalism and Yugoslavia,* 12.
[85] Held on 17th and 18th July in 1920.
[86] Troch, *Between Tribes and Nation,* 156.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Bernik, *Vsebinske in metodološke spremembe...,* 17.
[89] Škorvanková, *Vytváranie juhoslovanskej identity...,* 103.
[90] Flere, *Zakon o narodnih šolah s kratko razlago...,* 13.
[91] Bernik, *Vsebinske in metodološke...,* 26.
[92] Troch, *Between Tribes and Nation,* 181.
[93] Ibid.

The Ministry of education had the final word in the matter of school textbooks, thus indirectly influencing the educational policies.[94] The curricula and the textbooks on history were written also in the Slovene language.[95] History of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was taught in the 3rd and 4th year of primary schools, for two hours a week in the third year and three hours a week in the fourth year. The focus of history teaching changed due to the new political situation in 1929. According to primary school curricula in 1933 Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were no longer the centre of history, instead, the pupils were meant to learn about the history of the Yugoslav nation.[96] After the partial liberation of the dictatorship in the 1930s, the culture of the Yugoslav nation did not favour Serbian cultural traditions nor repressed Croatian and Slovene cultural traditions in the curricula.[97] Yugoslavia did not take the stance of pure integrity but acknowledged tribal traditions, names and characteristics of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The textbooks written in this scheme were starting with Slovene history, which contained the history of Slovene dukes and the independence of Slovenes since the reign of "Slavic king Samo" in his empire until their common development with the Croatian state which was later incorporated into Hungarian kingdom. The textbooks then continued with the description of Serbian state during the middle ages until its formation of common Slovene, Croatian and Serbian "statehood" was interrupted by Turkish raids. After the Serbian uprising led by the house of Karadjordjević the process of "restoration" of the common Yugoslav statehood under "the original territory of Yugoslavs" have started.[98] After 1935, the Act on National schools from 1935, considered contemporary didactic and pedagogical requirements for modern schools, but also local problems and needs of individual regions of the Kingdom. Therefore, the teaching process in the fourth grade in the schools in the *Drava banovina* was focused more on "Slovene land" so the pupils could "*acquire the perception of the banovina as an administrative unit*".[99]

With the change of the state organization in the territory of Slovene lands at the turn of the 20th century, the Slovene school system underwent changes too. In the Slovene environment, textbooks were always supplied by the state and schools were not granted freedom of choice. Between 1918 and 1929 Slovene primary schools used textbooks written by Slovene authors such as Janko Orožen, Anton Melik and Josip Brinar.[100] After the establishment of dictatorship in 1929 the Ministry of Education licenced textbooks for publication for four years. After 1929, Slovene schools thus started using Serbian textbooks written by Serbian historians Vasili Popović and Trajk Antić[101] translated into Slovene.

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[94] Dimić, and Alimpić, *Stereotypes in History Textbooks in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia,* 89.

[95] Referenced as a school subject.

[96] Bernik, *Vsebinske in metodološke…*, 26.

[97] Troch, *Between Tribes and Nation,* 179.

[98] Škorvanková, *Vytváranie juhoslovanskej identity…,* 140.

[99] Dolgan and Vranc, *Podrobni učni načrt za ljudske škole.*

[100] Textbooks: Brinar, Josip, *Zgodovina za meščanske šole. Stari in srednji vek*, Ljubljana: Jugoslovanska knjigarna, 1927.; Brinar, Josip, *Zgodovina za meščanske šole. Novi vek,* Ljubljana: Jugoslovanska knjigarna, 1922.; Melik, Anton and Orožen, Janko, *Zgodovina Srbov, Hrvatov in Slovencev za nižje razrede srednjih in njim sorodnih šol, I. del*, Ljubljana: Jugoslovanska knjigarna, 1928.; Melik, Anton and Orožen, Janko, *Zgodovina Jugoslovanov za nižje razrede srednjih in njim sorodnih šol, II. del*, Ljubljana: Jugoslovanska knjigarna, 1929.

[101] Textbooks: Popović, Vasilij and Antić, Trajko, *Zgodovina starega veka: za I. razred meščanskih šol*, Beograd: Narodna Prosveta, 1934.; Popović, Vasilij and Antić, Trajko, *Zgodovina srednjega veka*

**Conclusion**

In the period of Austro-Hungarian administration, the South Slavic groups, who later became known as Slovenes, identified themselves according to the region and district in which they lived. National identity, as well as the name of Slovenes, is by modernist historians considered as a modern phenomenon which originated in the middle of 19th century and continued in the development in 20th century. The development of Slovene national identity was influenced by being a part of the multinational Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later the state of Yugoslavia), which was one of the most diverse and heterogeneous countries of Europe. This state united three state-creating nations Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (and certainly other national minorities and ethnicities within the Kingdom), which shared different culture, history, language and even religion. Besides Croats and Serbs only the Slovenians developed its national identity before Yugoslavia. The Slovenes willingly accepted the Yugoslav unification, which earned them protection from threatening neighbouring states. One of the most significant features of the Slovene national emancipation was Slovene language which provided an essential basis for the development of a common national identity. After the Serb-Croatian language, the Slovene language became the second official language of Yugoslavia, which also became the only language of instruction in schools and consequently led toward the "Slovenianization" of cultural institutions in the territory of *Drava Banovina.* However, the unitarian concept of Yugoslavism started to clash with the multinational, multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious features of the new state.

The Slovenes were suddenly in a situation in which they identified themselves as people who talk with the same language and share unique culture, but at the same time determined themselves as a part of the united Yugoslav nation. The pursue for the Slovene autonomy and demand for the federative Yugoslav state shows the effort of Slovene People's Party to espouse and support Slovenian interests and national identity. However, its policy cannot be stated overall as anti-Yugoslav, which can be seen in the opportunistic and pragmatic policy of Anton Korošec realised by his cooperative political activity with Croat autonomists and parliamentary partnership with the Serbian centralist. The Yugoslav nation is a composition of different categories of national identity which are overlapping and at the same time consistent through the institutionalization of Yugoslav nationhood.

Modernistic approaches toward conceptions of nation and nationalism state that one of the most influential determinants which helped to form a modern nation is the educational system. Control of the Yugoslav state over educational system was reflected in the acceptance of the curriculum and the approval of the textbooks and other possible teaching materials according to which the teaching process takes place. The curriculum of common Yugoslav history emphasised the similarities, parallels, and common ties in the histories of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, though the main base of the Yugoslav history was constructed around the Serbian state history. During the 1930s the Yugoslav state did not take the

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*za II. razred meščanskih šol*, Beograd: Narodna Prosveta, 1934.; Popović, Vasilij and Antić, Trajko, *Zgodovina novega veka za III. razred meščanskih šol*, Beograd: Narodna Prosveta, 1934.; Popović, Vasilij and Antić, Trajko, *Pregled kulturne in gospodarske zgodovine: obče in jugoslovanske: za IV. razred meščanskih šol*, Beograd: Narodna Prosveta, 1934.

stance of pure integrity but acknowledged tribal traditions, names and characteristics of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

Discussion on Slovene national identity or national consciousness certainly deserves more space than this work offers. Therefore, further analysis of the Slovene interwar textbooks is required. For the possible further research, it is suggested to focus on the national identity which could be more coherent with the territorial identity in *Drava Banovina,* because it was the only territory within the first Yugoslavia which was nationally homogeneous.

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### *Slovene National Identity as a Part of Yugoslav Identity or as its Contradiction?*

National identity plays an essential part in the development of the idea of every nation's self-determination and national history. National identity is a complex concept, which is not easy to define, especially within the context of modern, multinational states of the central European area, such as Czechoslovakia or the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which afterwards became Yugoslavia. The new state of Yugoslavia was one of the most diverse and heterogeneous countries of Europe, which united these three nations. Besides Croats and Serbs the Slovenians also developed their national identity before Yugoslavia. The present study examines the duality of the national identity of the Slovene people within the context of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, during the interwar period of 20th century. The Slovenes willingly accepted the Yugoslav unification, which earned them protection from threatening neighbouring states. However, the unitarian concept of Yugoslavism started to clash with the multinational, multi-ethnic, multilingual and multireligious features of the new state. The Slovenes were suddenly in a situation in which they identified themselves as people who talk with the same language and share unique culture, but at the same time identified themselves as part of the united Yugoslav nation. The aim of this study is to present the view of Slovene people on the Yugoslav identity and its influence on their self-determination. The study focuses primarily on the approach of the Slovenes towards their national identification. The first part of the study deals with the Slovene identity from the political discourse and the perspective of the *Slovenes people's party*. The second part deals with the reflection of the Slovene shift towards nationalism in school policies and history textbooks.