

## THE COLLOCATION *HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD* ‘DOVE-LIKE NATION’ AND *HOLUBIČIA POVAHA/NÁтура* ‘DOVE-LIKE NATURE’ IN CONTEMPORARY SLOVAK JOURNALISM

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**Abstract:** This article explores the linguistic expression *holubičí národ* (“dove-like nation”) and the related collocations *holubičia povaha/nátura* (“dove-like nature”). The research material was drawn from the Slovak language corpus *prim-10.0-public-sane* (journalistic subcorpus) as well as from general Slovak language dictionaries. Particular attention is given to semantic shifts in these expressions, their deviations from prototypical meanings, the functioning of modified meanings in specific contexts, and their axiological dimensions. To trace meanings and metaphors, the study examines the definitions of the analysed lexemes and their paradigmatic relations. The use of the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura* in Slovak journalism and public discourse reflects an ongoing, intense debate about the auto-stereotypical characterization of Slovaks encapsulated in the concept of a dove-like nation. This process is evident in the semantic shift of the term, which originally denoted a nation characterized by peacefulness, tolerance, and moral integrity. Over time, however, it has acquired negative connotations, suggesting cowardice, a lack of assertiveness, and an absence of significant achievements. These semantic transformations align with the metaphor of the non-warrior, which emerges from both corpus occurrences and an analysis of the definition and paradigmatic relations of the adjective *holubičí* as well as the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura*.

**Keywords:** Slovak language, dove-like nation, non-warrior metaphor, semantic analysis, stereotype.

### Highlights:

- This article examines the linguistic expressions *holubičí národ* (“dove-like nation”) and related collocations *holubičia povaha/nátura* (“dove-like nature”).
- The study contributes to ongoing intense discussion about the autostereotypical characteristics of Slovaks, which is captured in the concept of *holubičí národ*.
- The selection of the dove as a symbol of this stereotype is driven by its positive symbolism, deeply rooted in both Slavic folklore and Christian tradition.
- The data from contemporary texts prove semantic shift of the term from its originally positive connotation (initially, it denoted a nation characterized by peacefulness, tolerance, and moral integrity) to negative connotations (implying cowardice, an inability to stand up for oneself, and a lack of significant achievements).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article examines the linguistic expression *holubičí národ* ‘dove-like nation’ and, additionally, the collocation *holubičia povaha/nátura* ‘dove-like nature’ provided it is used in the same sense as the phrase *holubičí národ*<sup>1</sup>. The material for the analysis was drawn from the Slovak language corpus *prim-10.0-public-sane* (journalistic subcorpus) as well as from general dictionaries of Slovak language and a dictionary of synonyms. In the introductory section, which is dedicated to the historical background and scholarly discussion of the analysed expressions, examples from the subcorpus of academic and popular science texts, as well as other sources from the relevant literature, are also considered.

The selected examples were analysed in terms of the meanings of the expressions *holubičí národ*, *holubičia povaha/nátura*. Particular attention was given to semantic shifts in these expressions, the ways in which they deviate from their prototypical meanings, the functioning of modified meanings in specific contexts, and their axiological dimensions (Puzynina 1992). Cognitive metaphors (cf. Lakoff – Johnson 2010) identified in the analysed examples were also discussed. To trace meanings and metaphors, the definitions of the studied lexemes and their paradigmatic relations — such as their synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms were explored.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF *HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD* – GENERAL OVERVIEW

The expressions *holubičí národ* ‘dove-like nation’, *holubičia povaha/nátura* ‘dove-like nature’ are employed to describe the Slovak national character. The origins of these expressions can be traced back to the works of authors from the Romantic era. This collocation was frequently used by Ján Kollár in his poem *Slávy dcera*, where he depicted the Slavs as a peaceful people, linguistically articulating this notion as *náš národ holubičí* ‘our dove-like nation’. Juraj Palkovič is also regarded as one of the first to introduce the image of the dove-like character into Slovak culture (Škvarna – Šoltéz 2008).

The selection of the dove as a symbol of this stereotype was driven by its positive symbolism, deeply rooted in both Slavic folklore and Christian tradition. The dove is perceived as a pure and sacred bird, and it serves as one of the most representative symbols of the soul. It is also associated with the Holy Spirit (Masłowska 2022, p. 184). Stereotypical attributes ascribed to doves include gentleness, kindness, and a monogamous lifestyle, which is linked to loyal love (Masłowska 2022, p. 185). Furthermore, the dove is an international symbol of peace.

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<sup>1</sup> In the article, I do not analyze other expressions whose original meaning refers to pacifistic attitude, e.g. *holubičia duša*.

In contrast to other Slavic nations, among Slovaks<sup>2</sup>, the motif of the dove-like nation gained significant popularity and became one of their self-stereotypical traits. According to ethnologist Eva Krekovičová, the myth of the dove-like nation, portraying Slovaks as a “better, kind, polite” people, is typical of nations occupying a non-dominant position (Gális 2005). Politicians frequently draw on the myth of the “dove-like nation” (Zenderowski 2022, p. 27), and its disregard – like the neglect of other national myths and stereotypes – may result in the loss of political support or even the collapse of entire political movements. Krekovičová (Gális 2005) asserts that one of the reasons for the decline of the Slovak political movement *Verejnost' proti násiliu* ‘Public Against Violence’ was precisely its failure to acknowledge this fact. On the international stage, the Slovak MEP Miroslav Radačovský’s peace appeal during a session of the European Parliament, where he released a dove, attracted significant attention.

The motif of the dove-like nation also appears in literature, theatre, and other forms of artistic expression. As Pekarovičová (2020, p. 155) observes, “It becomes the basis for literary representation with a full range of portrayals, from sympathetic tolerance to its parody.” One of the most popular Slovak songs is *My sme národ holubičí* ‘We are the dove-like nation’, performed by Richard Müller and written by Milan Lasica and Jaroslav Filip. However, criticism of the dove-like nation is expressed in Peter Krištúfek’s novel *Dom hluchého* ‘The House of the Deaf Man’, where dove-like does not denote peacefulness but cowardice.

- (1) *Kedže sme **holubičím národom** – s perím a jemnými zobákmi, s pazúrikmi len tak akurát, hrkútame ako hrdličky – po svojom sme sa pustili do boja. Nie tak naozaj, len takým tým holubičím spôsobom, prostredníctvom symbolov. Aktom odporu bolo všetko, aj to, keď ste išli ráno na záchod. Čo z toho, že vás nikto nevidel.*

‘Since we are a **dove-like nation** – with feathers and delicate beaks, with claws just enough, cooing like turtle doves – we entered the fight in our own way. Not for real, just in that dove-like manner, through symbols. Everything was an act of resistance, even going to the bathroom in the morning. What did it matter if no one saw you.’

Today, Slovak stereotypes and myths are subject to intense analysis and increasing criticism. Some intellectuals call for overcoming romantic myths, including the myth of the dove-like nation. In his essay *O slovenskej eseji*, Rudolf Chmel writes: “The Hlasist words about the need to overcome romantic notions and

<sup>2</sup> In Vajtauer’s book *Český mythus. Co nám lhaly dějiny* ‘The Czech Myth: What History Lied to Us About’, the author also mentions the myth of the *dove-like nation*; however, it is not as widespread among Czechs as it is among Slovaks.

legends regarding the ideal **dove-like nature** of the ‘humble Slovak child of God’, the ‘martyrdom struggle of the Slovaks’ in the past century, and so on, still do not seem to resonate much.”<sup>3</sup>

The discussion on the national feature of the dove-like nation is also evident in journalism and the press. This is reflected in various semantic shifts within the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha*, which will be analysed in the subsequent parts of the article.

### 3. THE LEXICOGRAPHICAL MEANINGS OF THE ADJECTIVE *HOLUBIČÍ* AND THE COLLOCATIONS *HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD*, *HOLUBIČIA POVAHA/NÁтура*

Slovak dictionaries distinguish two fundamental definitions of the adjective *holubičí*. The first one refers to the direct meaning. In this sense, the adjective *holubičí* denotes *vzťahujúci sa na holubicu* – ‘relating to a dove’, *patriaci, vlastný holubici* – ‘belonging to a dove’. Examples illustrating this meaning include *holubičie hniezdo* ‘dove’s nest’ and *holubičie pierko* ‘dove’s feather’ (SSSJ 2011).

However, the meaning of interest here is the figurative one, which derives from the symbolic association of the dove as a bird of peace. In this context, *holubičí* is defined as *mierny* ‘moderate’, *tichý* ‘quiet’, *nebojovný* ‘non-combative, non-fighter-like’, and *mierumilovný* ‘peaceful’ (SSS). The phrase *holubičí národ* is further described as *národ, ktorý nie je výbojný, mierumilovný, znášanlivý národ* – ‘a nation that is not conquering, expansionist, aggressive, a nation that is peaceful, and tolerant.’ Similarly, expressions such as *holubičia povaha* and *holubičia náтура* are defined as *mierna* ‘moderate’, *nevýbojná* (‘not conquering, expansionist, or aggressive’), and *zmierlivá povaha* ‘conciliatory nature’; SSSJ 2011).

The dictionary definitions point to a national character associated with qualities widely regarded as positive in moral terms. However, the words used in these definitions, particularly in the phrases *holubičí národ*, *holubičí povaha/náтура*, are inherently polysemous. Depending on the context, they can modify not only the meaning of the entire phrase but also its evaluative interpretation, which may range from positive to negative.

An illustrative example is the lexeme *mierny*, listed in the *Synonymický slovník slovenčiny* as one of the synonyms of *holubičí*. In its primary sense, *mierny* is defined as *ktorý zachováva mieru v prejavovaní citov, nálad* – ‘the one who maintains moderation in expressing emotions and moods’, or *jemný – vyznačujúci sa jemnosťou; op. drsný* ‘gentle, delicate, as opposed to rough’ (SSSJ 2011, 2015). However, the

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<sup>3</sup> Org.: Ešte stále akoby dosť nerezonovali hlasistické slová o potrebe prekonávania romantických názorov a legiend o ideálnej holubičej povahe, pokorného slovenského dieťaťa božieho, o ‘mučeníckom boji Slovače’ v minulom storočí atď.

word *mierny* can also be interpreted negatively, as evidenced by its synonym *nebojovný*. This term may be perceived in two ways: either as someone who refrains from fighting due to moral reasons or as someone who is afraid to fight or lacks the ability to do so. Such interpretations carry negative connotations, suggesting cowardice or weakness.

The lexeme *mierny* also allows for alternative interpretations through its additional meanings, which may not always be viewed positively. For instance, *mierny* can mean *ktorý nepresahuje strednú mieru, hodnotu, intenzitu* – ‘the one who does not exceed the average measure, value, or intensity’ (SSSJ 2015). This can evoke associations with mediocrity or a lack of ambition.

Similar ambiguities arise with the adjective *tichý*, which can also be evaluated positively or negatively depending on the context. According to KSSJ, *tichý* is defined as *kt. má miernu povahu, málovravný* – ‘the one who has a moderate nature, is reserved, and speaks little’; *t., skromný človek* – ‘a modest, humble person’; but also, in a colloquial sense, *t. blázon – neškodný* – ‘a harmless fool’. In some contexts, *tichý* may evoke negative connotations, such as describing someone who is unable to stand up for themselves or react appropriately, linking to ideas of cowardice. It may also suggest unpredictability, as in the saying *tichá voda brehy podmýva/ myje* – ‘still waters run deep (literally: quiet water washes away the shores)’.

Particular attention should be given to the words used in the definitions that refer to combat – or rather, the lack of combat (*nebojovný* ‘non-combative, non-fighter-like’, and *mierumilovný*<sup>4</sup> ‘peaceful’, *nevýbojný* ‘not conquering, expansionist, aggressive’). From these, the metaphor of the *non-warrior* (the *dove-like nation* – a nation that does not fight) reveals. Depending on its framing, this concept can carry both positive and negative connotations. The meanings of the collocations *holubičí národ*, *holubičia povaha/nátura* may evolve along a spectrum: on one end, the nation is perceived positively (it does not fight because it chooses not to, as it is non-aggressive, peace-oriented, and virtuous); on the other, it is viewed negatively, categorized as cowardly (it does not fight because it is afraid) or as incompetent and weak (it does not fight because it lacks the necessary skills or resources).

In summary, based on dictionary definitions and paradigmatic lexical relations, the adjective *holubičí*, whether in phrases like *holubičí národ*, *holubičia povaha/nátura*, can shift in meaning. Furthermore, the evaluative interpretation of these expressions oscillates between positive and negative connotations, creating a space for diverse interpretations.

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<sup>4</sup> The lexeme *mier/pokoj*, which means ‘a state without war’, is one of the word-formation bases of the word *mierumilovný* or *pokojamilovný* (‘peaceful’).

#### 4. THE COLLOCATIONS *HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD* AND *HOLUBIČIA POVAHA/NÁтура* IN CONTEMPORARY SLOVAK JOURNALISM AND PRESS BASED ON CORPUS EVIDENCE

The study of press and journalistic texts was conducted based on the material collected in the National Corpus of the Slovak Language.

In the corpus, the collocations *holubičí národ*, *holubičia povaha/nátura* were identified based on the extraction of collocates of the adjective *holubičí*. Their overall frequency is not high (cf. Table 1). The highest frequency was recorded for the collocation *holubičí národ*, followed by *holubičia povaha*, while *holubičia nátura* has only a few occurrences. These collocations occur in journalism, specialized literature, and fiction, with journalism being the dominant genre. It should be added that not all occurrences of *holubičia povaha* and *holubičia nátura* refer to the Slovak nation.

Table 1: The frequency of the collocates *holubičí národ*, *holubičia povaha/nátura* in genres<sup>5</sup>

The collocate	Journalism	Specialized literature	Fiction	All prim-10.0-public-sane
<i>holubičí národ</i>	0,13 ipm. (215)	0,03 ipm. (42)	0,03 ipm. (47)	0,19 ipm. (315)
<i>holubičia povaha</i>	0,03 ipm. (48)	0,01 ipm. (16)	0,01 ipm. (12)	0,05 ipm. (77)
<i>holubičia nátura</i>	0 ipm. (4)	0 ipm. (0)	0 ipm. (4)	0 ipm. (8)

The textual profile of the phrases we are interested in demonstrates the familiarity and rootedness of the studied collocations: they appear in all types of texts, ranging from fictional to scientific and journalistic and the vast majority of texts containing these phrases are written in Slovak.

#### 5. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CORPUS OCCURRENCES OF COLLOCATES *HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD* AND *HOLUBIČIA POVAHA/NÁтура*

The meanings of the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičí povaha/nátura* extracted from the subcorpus of journalistic and press texts of the Slovak National Corpus correlate with the meanings identified based on the above-conducted lexicographic analysis. Therefore, the fundamental metaphor emerging from the occurrences should be recognized as the **non-warrior** metaphor, which we will paraphrase here as **a nation that does not fight**.

Depending on the type of evaluation (positive or negative), the narrowing or broadening of meaning, and the profiling<sup>6</sup> of a specific characteristic contained

<sup>5</sup> ipm. – instances per million; values in brackets – absolute frequency.

<sup>6</sup> By *profiling*, Bartmiński – Niebrzegowska (1998, p. 212) refer to a subjective (i.e., having a subject) linguistic-conceptual operation that consists in shaping the image of an object in a specific

within the meaning, we derive the following meanings of the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura*:

- a. a nation that does not fight because its members are peaceful, in a broader sense, are **good** (with goodness understood in moral terms) – evaluated positively;
- b. a nation/people who do not fight because they are not conquering, expansionist, aggressive – they become **victims of others** – evaluated either negatively or positively depending on the context;
- c. a nation that is **not good** (with goodness understood in moral terms) – evaluated negatively;
- d. a nation that does not fight because it is afraid. Its members are **cowards** – evaluated negatively.

From the above meanings, the following meanings are derived:

- e. A nation that **does not resist**, is excessively humble – evaluated negatively;
- f. A nation that **does not fight for its rights** and cannot showcase its skills – evaluated negatively;
- g. A nation that does not fight because it has nothing to fight with and lacks achievements to present is considered **a failure** – evaluated negatively.

Other metaphors evident in occurrences containing the collocations of interest include **spatial metaphors** such as *non-front* (standing still or moving backward) and *down*, which carry negative connotations (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 2010, p. 41) and are associated with lack of success, backwardness, weakness, and illness.

### 5.1. *HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD, HOLUBIČIA POVAHA/NÁTURA* – A NATION THAT DOES NOT FIGHT BECAUSE ITS MEMBERS ARE PEACEFUL, IN A BROADER SENSE, ARE GOOD (WITH GOODNESS UNDERSTOOD IN MORAL TERMS).

Although the dictionary meaning of the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura* is limited to describing a nation that is *not conquering, expansionist, or aggressive* (it means also it does not fight), but rather *peaceful and tolerant*, occurred usages reveal an expanded meaning, encompassing the broader moral category of *goodness*. These collocations, therefore, refer to a nation characterized by high moral values, drawing on the positive connotations associated with the dove as a symbol. Thus, in occurrences containing the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura*, lexemes related to kindness and love stand out.

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way by presenting it in certain aspects (subcategories, facets), such as origin, characteristics, appearance, functions, events, experiences, etc., within a particular type of knowledge and in accordance with the requirements of a specific point of view.



The discourse includes words that continue the Proto-Slavic roots *milъ* and *dobrъ*, which denote goodness, benevolence, and compassion<sup>7</sup>, and in some cases, even courage<sup>8</sup>. Examples include *dobrosrdečnosť* ‘kind-heartedness,’ (literally ‘good-heartedness’), *dobré srdce* ‘good heart’, *milosrdenstvo* ‘compassion’, and *dobrý ľud* ‘good people’.

Other positive attributes, such as diligence and humility, also fall within this semantic field. In selected occurrences, the ideas of Pan-Slavism and mythological narratives regarding the origins of the state reemerge as well.

- (2) *Slovania sa vyznačovali holubičou povahou, dobrosrdečnosťou. Z toho ešte stále čosi v nás pretrváva. To je istý dar vkladu do pokladnice Európskej únie, pretože národov, ktoré majú široké a dobré srdce ako Slováci, Slovania.* (MY Liptovské noviny 2007/14)

‘The Slavs were characterized by a **dove-like nature** and **kind-heartedness** (literally: **good-heartedness**). Some of that still persists within us today. This is a certain contribution to the treasure trove of the European Union because there are few nations with as broad and **good a heart as the Slovaks**, the Slavs.’

- (3) *Moje aktivity chcú byť akýmsi zrkadlom skutkov mnohých ľudí, ktorí nezištne pomáhajú iným. Som osobne rád, že so Slovákmi a slovenským národom sa často spájajú slová o milosrdenstve a holubičej povahe našich ľudí a že tieto vlastnosti sa nevytratili ani v súčasnosti. Na odkaze princípov vzájomnej lásky a milosrdenstva sme založili štátnosť, tak prečo by sme podľa nich nemali aj žiť?* (MY Turčianske noviny 2005/33)

‘My activities aim to serve as a kind of mirror reflecting the deeds of many people who selflessly help others. I am personally pleased that Slovaks and the Slovak nation are often associated with words such as **mercy** and the **dove-like nature** of our people, and that these qualities have not disappeared even today. We founded our statehood on the legacy of the principles of **mutual love and mercy**, so why shouldn’t we also live according to them?’

In certain instances, the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura* appear as a nation that does not fight because its members are not conquering,

<sup>7</sup> In Slavic languages, the meaning of the word *milý* ‘dear, kind’ has been original since ancient times; however, in certain contexts, it has acquired a nuance of loving compassion toward someone poor or sinful. This is precisely what differentiates it from *ľub* or *libý* ‘pleasant’, and *ľubiti* ‘to love’, where this nuance is absent. (ESCS 1957, p. 296).

<sup>8</sup> Compare with the word *dobrodruh* – *pův. odvážný, statečný druh*, originally meaning ‘brave, courageous companion’ (ESCS 1957, p. 90).



expansionist, aggressive, so they become victims of others. In this context the Slovak nation is portrayed as a victim of violence, an oppressed and defenceless community. In this way, they contribute to another component of the Slovak self-stereotype: Slovak as a victim (cf. Krekovič – Mannová – Krekovičová 2005, pp. 77 – 79), especially of Hungarian and Czechs. Depending on the context, the myth is either reinforced or challenged.

- (4) *Dinka pristupuje k problému na základe osvedčenej schémy holubičieho národa (a jeho najväčšieho bohatstva - jazyka), proti ktorému stoja neprajníci, ktorých jediným cieľom je tento národ a jeho reč zničiť. Slovenčina v Dinkovom podaní bola tisíc rokov gniavená, potláčaná, čelila „presile klamstiev a cielených dezinformácií“ a až v roku 1995 „prijatím zákona o štátnom jazyku vyhrala... svoju rozhodujúcu bitku. (Týždeň 2010/15)*

‘Dinka approaches the issue based on the **established narrative of a dove-like nation** (and its greatest treasure – its language), opposed by adversaries whose sole aim is to destroy this nation and its speech. In Dinka’s interpretation, the Slovak language was oppressed and suppressed for a thousand years, facing an “overpowering force of lies and deliberate disinformation,” and only in 1995, with the adoption of the State Language Act, did it “win... its decisive battle.”’

- (5) *Často sa o nás Slovákoch hovorí, že sme nejaký ubitý holubičí národ. Ja sa tak necítim a nikdy som tak nebol vychovávaný. (Týždeň 2012/39)*

‘It is often said about us Slovaks that we are a **beaten, dove-like nation**. I don’t feel that way, and I was never raised to think so. (Týždeň 2012/39)

There is no shortage of references to historical events, among which the contrast between the gentle dove, symbolizing the Slovaks, and the predatory mythical bird Turul – the emblem of the Hungarians, stereotypically perceived as the eternal enemies of the Slovaks – is particularly intriguing.

- (6) *Napriek bedákaniu nad stáročiami, ktoré holubičí národ prežil pod krídlami vtáka Turula, bolo to až rakúsko-maďarské vyrovnanie z roku 1867, ktorým sa začalo skutočné delenie obyvateľstva a násilná maďarizácia. (Hospodárske noviny 2006/09)*

‘Despite lamenting the centuries that **the dove-like nation** spent under the wings of the **Turul** bird, it was the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 that initiated the real division of the population and forced Magyarization.’

In contemporary Slovak press and journalism, occurrences portraying Slovaks as a *holubičí národ* in a positive sense are relatively scarce. More frequently, there is an observable distancing from or outright rejection of this term as a component of

the Slovak autostereotype. This distancing manifests in several ways. Firstly, the expressions *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura* are often deemed untrue and are juxtaposed with lexemes such as *mýtus*<sup>9</sup> ‘myth’ or *kecy*<sup>10</sup> ‘nonsense’.

- (7) *Reči o holubičom národe sú obyčajné kecy.* (SME 1999/07)  
 ‘Talk of a **dove-like nation** is nothing but **nonsense**.’
- (8) (...) *pre Slovákov, ktorí sa síce držia romantického mýtu o holubičom národe, ale keď ide o Maďarov, sú ochotní hnať ich ešte aj po tisícsto rokoch za Dunaj.* (Domino Fórum 1999/37)  
 ‘(...) for Slovaks who, while clinging to the **romantic myth** of being a **dove-like nation**, are still willing to push the Hungarians back across the Danube even after eleven hundred years.’

Another form of negating this autostereotype involves rhetorical questions such as “Kde je ten národ holubičí?” (“Where is that dove-like nation?”) or statements that, through negation, challenge the historical existence of this trait in the Slovak people. In certain instances, Slovaks are even depicted in opposition to the values conveyed by the collocation *holubičí národ* – as aggressive, prone to violence, or even criminal.

- (9) *Kde je ten národ holubičí, ktorý nikomu neublíži? Ved’ tento národ má na čele ľudí schopných všetkého – podľa slov pána ministra – aj rozpútať bratovražedný boj.* (SME 1993/3)  
 ‘**Where is that dove-like nation that harms no one?** After all, according to the minister, this nation is led by people capable of anything – even inciting fratricidal conflict.’
- (10) *Z bájneho holubičieho a nepriebojného národa nezostalo takmer nič.* (Hospodárske noviny 2003/11)  
 ‘Almost nothing remains of the mythical **dove-like** and **non-fighter-like nation**.’

In some occurrences, the collocation *holubičí národ* is used to highlight increasing aggression within society:

- (11) *„Tento svet a žiaľ, aj náš národ potichu a nenápadne prerastá agresivitou, až ma to desí. Nie sme ani zďaleka ‘holubičí národ’. Kriminalita začína klíčiť už vo veľmi mladom veku.“* (MY Turčianske noviny 2008/46)

<sup>9</sup> 1. tradíciou prenášaná predstava ľudí o vzniku sveta ‘a traditionally transmitted idea of people about the creation of the world’ 2. *expr.* výmysel podávaný ako pravda ‘*expr.*, a fabrication presented as truth’ (KSSJ 2003).

<sup>10</sup> *Kecy*: prázdne, neužitočné reči, táraniny, hlúposti ‘empty, useless talk, babble, foolishness’ (SSSJ 2011).

‘This world, and unfortunately, also our nation, is quietly and inconspicuously growing in **aggression**, which frightens me. **We are far from being a ‘dove-like’ nation. Criminality** begins to sprout at a very young age.’

In summary, the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura* in Slovak press and public discourse refer to the trait of Slovaks, sometimes to Slavs. While their original positive meaning encompasses a broad category of goodness, in most contemporary texts, there is a noticeable distance from or negation of this self-stereotype.

## 5.2. *HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD, HOLUBIČIA POVAHA/NÁTURA* – A NATION IS NOT GOOD (WITH GOODNESS UNDERSTOOD IN MORAL TERMS) – EVALUATED NEGATIVELY

A distinct type of occurrences involves the ironic use of the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura*. In such cases, the originally positive connotation of these expressions undergoes a shift toward negative evaluation. Consequently, the entire statement portrays Slovaks in a pejorative manner, depicting them as people filled with hatred and envy.

- (12) *Musíte do toho všetkého primiešať trochu stredoeurópskej komótnosti, kvapku slovenského zápečníctva a ozdobiť to holubičou povahou s veľkou porciou závistlivosti.* (SME 1999/09)

‘You must mix in a bit of Central European narrow-mindedness, add a drop of Slovak **provincialism**, and garnish it with **a dove-like nature** enriched with a generous portion of **envy**.’

- (13) *Aj Tiso by povedal, že on nebol strojom holokaustu, Židov sa chcel náš holubičí národ zbaviť sám, a keď z Nemecka prišla ponuka, ktorá sa neodmieta, dal tomu len voľný priebeh.* (SME 2018/06)

‘Even Tiso would say that he was not the architect of the Holocaust; **our dove-like nation wanted to rid itself of the Jews on its own**, and when an offer came from Germany – one that could not be refused – he simply allowed it to proceed.’

In some occurrences, the metaphor of a warrior is present, but it is not evaluated positively. Slovaks are depicted as an aggressive nation, fighting among themselves. These occurrences draw a comparison to the aggressive behaviour of doves, which can be observed, for example, when they fight over food.

- (14) *História nás učí, že pravý opak je pravda – my sme boli celé stáročia diskriminovaní. Samozrejme, že to nie je pravda, ako to dosvedčujú historici, ktorí popisujú vcelku pokojný rozvoj slovenského etnika do polovice 19. storočia. Podobne padá aj slovný výraz o holubičom národe, čo dosvedčia*

*zasa etológovia, ktorí popisujú holuby ako značne agresívne vtáky v bitke o potravu.* (SME 2002/08)

‘History teaches us that the exact opposite is true – we were discriminated against for centuries. Of course, this is not true, as historians testify, describing the relatively peaceful development of the Slovak ethnic group until the mid-19th century. Similarly, the phrase about the dove-like nation collapses, as ethologists confirm that pigeons are actually quite aggressive birds when fighting over food.’

In the above occurrences, we can observe that the collocations *holubičí národ*, *holubičia povaha/nátura* take on meanings opposite to their original sense. They thus contribute to the reassessment of the self-stereotype of the dove-like nation.

### 5.3. *HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD, HOLUBIČÍ POVAHA/NÁTURA* – A NATION THAT DOES NOT FIGHT BECAUSE IT IS AFRAID. ITS MEMBERS ARE COWARDS

The adjective *holubičí*, in the expressions *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura*, appears with a meaning that can be paraphrased as “one who does not fight out of fear”. This meaning is often evaluated negatively, as it implies a lack of courage, cowardice, and an inability to engage in combat.

At the linguistic level, this meaning is expressed both lexically and grammatically. There is a negation of the phrases *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura* as attributes referring to Slovaks or their ancestors. Frequently, the syntactic structure involves compound sentences with adversative coordination, most commonly using the conjunction *ale* ‘but’, which is recognized in linguistic literature as a typical structure for the so-called *but-test* (cf. Bartmiński 2012).

At the lexical level, this meaning is conveyed through words associated with wars, battles, and particularly with warriors, victories, and specific historical events. Many of these lexical items carry positive connotations related to warrior-like qualities. The following example illustrates a sentence in which the collocation *holubičí národ* is contrasted with lexemes referring to Slovak ancestors (*naši predkovia*), further characterized as brave warriors and victors: *tvrdí bojovníci, víťazi*. The syntax of this utterance is also notable, featuring negation and adversative coordination.

- (15) *Ťažko sa orientovať v kapitolkách o bojoch Slovanov s Avarmi, jednoznačné je však vyhlásenie D. Hudeca, že naši predkovia neboli nijakým holubičím národom, ale „tvrdí bojovníci, víťazi, ktorí celú túto oblasť dobyli, kolonizovali a plných 1500 rokov prežili všetkých agresorov, všetky vojny... a sedia tu pevne dodnes...”* (SME 1996/05)

‘It is difficult to navigate the chapters about the battles between the Slavs and the Avars, but one statement by D. Hudec is clear: **our ancestors were by no means a dove-like nation** but rather “**tough warriors, victors** who conquered and colonized this entire region, survived all aggressors and all wars for a full 1,500 years... and remain firmly seated here to this day...”’

A similar effect is observed in constructions where the negation of *holubičí národ* or *holubičí povaha/nátura* appears in the context of words referring to liberation (*oslobodenie*) and national pride (*hrdost*). The selection of historical events used as arguments is crucial in this regard. The Slovak National Uprising (*Slovenské národné povstanie*) is frequently cited in this context.

- (16) (...) *Povedal, že v SNP Slováci ukázali svoju hrdosť a to, že **nie sú holubičím národom***. (Hospodárske noviny 2008/08)

‘He stated that during the **Slovak National Uprising** (SNP), Slovaks demonstrated their pride and proved that they are **not a dove-like nation**.’

- (17) *A keď už siahame k historickým príkladom: Slovenské národné povstanie v roku 1944 tiež **nebolo dielom holubičích pováh**. V tej historickej situácii však nádej na oslobodenie nebola ilúziou*. (SME 2010/09)

‘And when we look at historical examples: **the Slovak National Uprising** in 1944 was also **not the work of dove-like characters**. In that historical context, however, the hope for liberation was not an illusion.’

The negation of the characteristic verbalized as *holubičí* can also occur lexically without syntactic negation, through words implying falsehood, such as *kecy* ‘nonsense’, *vymyslieť* ‘to invent’, or *mýtus* ‘myth’, while simultaneously providing arguments based on historical events that depict Slovaks as a nation of warriors (*vedeli sme bojovať*, *bojovník*).

- (18) *Spojenie **holubičí národ** vymysleli naši romantici. **Vedeli sme bojovať** tak ako iné národy so všetkými krutosťami vtedajšej doby, mali sme **operatívnu, pohyblivú armádu bojovníkov** so širokými opaskami*. (Extra plus 2008/06)

‘The phrase **dove-like nation** was coined by our romantics. We were capable of fighting, just like other nations, against all the cruelties of that era. We had a **nimble, mobile army of warriors** with wide belts.’

The meaning of the phrases *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura* has evolved from a non-fighting nation to a cowardly nation and has been rejected by part of Slovak society. They also fit into the historical debate, in which historians are also involved.

#### 5.4. HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD, HOLUBIČIA POVAHA/NÁTURA – A NATION THAT DOES NOT RESIST, IS EXCESSIVELY HUMBLE

Another meaning of the adjective *holubičí*, within the context of describing a nation or members of Slovak society who do not engage in struggle, can be paraphrased as “one who is incapable of opposing or resisting”. In this context, the expressions *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura* frequently co-occur with terms suggesting profound humility and passive submission to fate.

In the following statements, particular occurrence is drawn to the expressions *drevo rúbať*<sup>11</sup>, *aj na ňom rúbe, piluje, vrta*, which convey the idea of enduring everything with humility, struggling to form one’s own opinion, failing to take a stance, and being unable to stand against something.

- (19) *Slovensko navyše zdanlivo chráni akási povest’ holubičieho národa. Zrejme je štatisticky dokázané, a ukazuje to aj každodenná politická prax, že na priemernom Slovákovi možno i drevo rúbať. A tak sa aj na ňom rúbe, piluje, vrta... Ale pozor! Nie každý z nás je priemerný Slovák.* (Hospodárske noviny 2003/09)

‘Slovakia is additionally seemingly protected by the reputation of being **a dove-like nation**. It is probably statistically proven, and daily political practice also shows, that the **average Slovak can tolerate almost anything (literally: The average Slovak can even have wood chopped on them)**. And so, **they endure (literally: being chopped, sawed, drilled)**... But beware! Not every one of us is an average Slovak.’

- (20) *Náš holubičí národ má však odveký problém vytvoriť si vlastný názor, zaujať postoj, postaviť sa proti niečomu.* (SME 2008/02)

‘Our **dove-like nation**, however, has an age-old **problem of forming its own opinion, taking a stance, or standing up against something**.’

In the political context, occurrences of the term refer to stereotypically recognized adversaries of Slovaks: Czechs and Hungarians.

- (21) *Ale národ holubičí a veruže aj bratov Čechov, sa zblbnúť nechal. Opäť sme raz boli československy za jedno.* (KOR2001/05)

‘But the **dove-like nation**, as well as **our brothers, the Czechs, indeed allowed themselves to be deceived**. Once again, we stood united in the Czechoslovak spirit.’

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<sup>11</sup> Definitions of the *drevo rúbať*: pokorne znášať všetko ‘humbly endure everything’. (KSSJ)

### 5.5. HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD, HOLUBIČIA POVAHA/NÁтура – A NATION THAT DOES NOT FIGHT FOR ITS RIGHTS AND CANNOT SHOWCASE ITS SKILLS

The adjective *holubičí* refers to a nation that is unable to fight in metaphorical meaning: a nation that is unable to effectively fight for its own interests. It refers also to a nation lacks the ability to present its potential in a way that leads to success.

The members of the nation characterized as *holubičí* are not fighter-like, fighter-driven. They struggle to assert themselves, to break through with their ideas/get their ideas across successfully. In a broader sense, the term may also imply a general absence of ambition.

The adjective *holubičí* is commonly contrasted with the Slovak terms *priebojný* ‘fighter-like, fighter-driven, assertive, go-getting’ and *ctížiadostivý* or *dravý* ‘ambitious, predatory’. Notably, it stands in opposition to the metaphor of the warrior inherent in the word *priebojný*<sup>12</sup> or the image of a predatory animal suggested by the word *dravý*<sup>13</sup>. Whereas these latter terms connote an individual who is combative, energetic, and determined to achieve their goals at any cost, the adjective *holubičí* implies an inability to fight – not in a literal sense, but rather as a metaphorical incapacity to break through obstacles and attain success.

Furthermore, an interesting semantic contrast arises between lexeme *holubičí* and its antonyms in terms of spatial orientation metaphors (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 2010, p. 41). Unlike the aforementioned antonyms, which are metaphorically associated with forward movement<sup>14</sup> – linked to progress and success – *holubičí* lacks this directional connotation. Instead, it may suggest stagnation or even a backward orientation, symbolizing withdrawal, lack of development, or failure to achieve success.

In this context, the term *holubičí* frequently appears in discourse among individuals who have achieved success, often highlighting perceived differences between the Slovak mentality and the career-driven approach prevalent in Western societies.

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<sup>12</sup> The lexeme *priebojný* contains the morpheme *boj* referring to the ‘battle’, ‘to fight’. Moreover, its definitions include a participle derived from the verb *bojovať* ‘fight’, e.g., *bojujúci za nové myšlienky, smery* ‘fighting for new ideas, trends’ (SSS), *prebojujúci nové myšlienky, smery, metódy* ‘breaking through with (literally: fighting for) new ideas, trends, methods’.

<sup>13</sup> The adjective *dravý* in Slovak language dictionaries originally refers to animals: 1. (*o zvieratách*) kt. získava potravu napádaním iných zvierat ‘one that obtains food by attacking other animals’: *d. vták* dravec; *d-á ryba*, e.g., *dravý vták* ‘predatory bird’, *dravá ryba* ‘predatory fish’ (KSSJ). It is also used metaphorically in reference to humans: (*o človeku*) (*bezohľadne*) derúci sa dopredu, tvrdo sledujúci svoj cieľ ‘(ruthlessly) pushing forward, relentlessly pursuing one’s goal’, e.g., *dravé podnikateľské kruhy* ‘ruthless business circles’, *dravý hráč* ‘aggressive player’. The adjective *priebojný* is listed as a synonym.

<sup>14</sup> The word *priebojný* is also paraphrased as *idúci dopredu* ‘moving forward’ (SSS). The definition of the word *dravý* (regarding a person) is ‘(bezohľadne) derúci sa dopredu’ ‘(ruthlessly) pushing forward’ (KSSJ).



(22) [...] *Aký je jeho recept na úspech? „Pravdaže, s povahou holubičieho národa naši mladí ďaleko nezájdu. V Amerike musia byť **priebojní**, vedieť sa primerane predať a vytvoriť si dobré zázemie z ľudí, ktorí ich môžu odporučiť.* (Hospodárske noviny 2011/10)

‘What is his recipe for success? “Of course, with the **nature of a dove-like nation**, our young people won’t get far. In America, they must be **fighters-like**, know how to present themselves appropriately, and build a strong network of people who can recommend them.’

(23) *Slováci by sa mali zbaviť povesti **holubičieho národa**, ak chcú niečo vo svete dokázať. „Aby sa človek presadil, musí byť **dravec, predátor**,“ tvrdí Karol Piovarcsy.* (Hospodárske noviny 2009/07)

‘Slovaks should rid themselves of the reputation of being a **dove-like nation** if they want to achieve something in the world. ‘To succeed, one must be a **predator**,’ says Karol Piovarcsy.’

In summary, in these occurrences, the adjective *holubičí* represents the antithesis of fighting for one’s ideas, of strength, and of the energy associated with a warrior or a predatory animal. Consequently, it is not only associated with an inability to break through with one’s skills but also conveys connotations of weakness, lack of energy, and being left behind.

#### 5.6. *HOLUBIČÍ NÁROD, HOLUBIČÍ POVAHA/NÁTURA* – A NATION THAT DOES NOT FIGHT BECAUSE IT HAS NOTHING TO FIGHT WITH AND LACKS ACHIEVEMENTS TO PRESENT IS CONSIDERED A FAILURE

The inability to achieve success leads to an additional association: the one who fails to succeed is not only someone incapable of effectively presenting their accomplishments but also someone who has no achievements to present – an individual with poor results. This interpretation is supported by a lexical analysis of the adjective *holubičí*, based on its synonyms and antonyms. The term *holubičí* stands in direct opposition to the word *priebojný* ‘assertive, go-getting’ and the word *ambiciózny* ‘ambitious’, suggesting not only a lack of assertiveness and ambition but also weakness and a deficiency of energy.

This connotation becomes particularly evident when *holubičí* is used in conjunction with the adjective *úbohý*, as in the phrase *úbohý holubičí národ* ‘a pitiable, weak-spirited nation’. The word *úbohý*, beyond its meaning *poľutovaniahodný* ‘worthy of pity’, also signifies *nedostatočný, slabý, mizerný* ‘insufficient, weak, miserable’, as seen in phrases like *úbohé oblečenie* ‘poor clothing’ or *úbohý výsledok* ‘poor result’, according to the dictionary KSSJ. In this

context, *úbohý* further reinforces the aspect of weakness inherently embedded in the meaning of the adjective *holubičí*.

- (24) *Patrím k pokoleniu, ktoré už čosi zažilo! Ste úbohý holubičí národ! Vždy ste boli, a ja vám to budem opakovať až do mojej smrti! Všetci vaši národní hrdinovia boli niktoši, Jánošík bol zlodej, viem to, aj keď som vtedy ešte nežil, mýtus o tisícročnom útlaku a utrpení Slovákov, sa nedá doložiť.* (SME blog 2005)

‘I belong to a generation that has experienced quite a bit! You are a **pathetic/miserable, dove-like nation**! You always have been, and I will keep repeating it until the day I die! **All your national heroes were nobodies** – Jánošík was a thief, I know it, even though I wasn’t alive back then. The myth of a thousand years of oppression and suffering of Slovaks cannot be substantiated.’

The above examples, like most of those cited in this article, contribute to the reassessment of the self-stereotype of *holubičí národ* in its original meaning.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The use of the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičí povaha/nátura* in Slovak journalism and public discourse indicates an ongoing intense debate concerning the auto-stereotypical characteristic of Slovaks, encapsulated in the concept of *holubičí národ*. Instances in which Slovaks are explicitly referred to as a dove-like nation in its original sense are relatively rare; instead, the predominant contexts involve a critical reassessment of this characteristic or even its deconstruction as a national myth.

This process is evident in the semantic shift of the term from its originally positive connotation. Initially, it denoted a nation characterized by peacefulness, tolerance, and moral integrity. Over time, however, it has acquired negative connotations, implying cowardice, an inability to stand up for oneself, and a lack of significant achievements. These semantic transformations align with the metaphor of the “non-warrior,” which emerges both from corpora occurrences and from an analysis of the definition and paradigmatic relations of the adjective *holubičí*, as well as the collocations *holubičí národ* and *holubičia povaha/nátura*.

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## Kolokácia *holubičí národ* a *holubičia povaha/nátura* v súčasnej slovenskej žurnalistike

### Resumé

Štúdiá skúma jazykový výraz *holubičí národ* a súvisiace kolokácie *holubičia povaha/nátura*. Výskumný materiál pochádza zo Slovenského národného korpusu, *prim-10.0-public-sane* (publicistický subkorpus), ako aj zo všeobecných slovníkov slovenského jazyka. Používanie kolokácií *holubičí národ* a *holubičia povaha/nátura* v slovenskej žurnalistike a verejnom diskurze poukazuje na prebiehajúcu intenzívnu diskusiu o autostereotypnej charakteristike Slovákov, ktorá je zachytená v koncepte *holubičí národ*. Prípady, keď sú Slováci výslovne označovaní ako *holubičí národ* v pôvodnom zmysle tohto spojenia, sú pomerne zriedkavé; namiesto toho prevažujú kontexty, ktoré zahŕňajú kritické prehodnocovanie tejto charakteristiky alebo dokonca jej dekonštrukciu ako národného mýtu. Tento proces je evidentný v sémantickom posune tohto termínu od jeho pôvodne pozitívnej konotácie. Spočiatku označoval národ charakterizovaný mierumilovnosťou, tolerantnosťou a morálnou integritou. Postupom času však nadobudol negatívne konotácie, naznačujúce zbabelosť, neschopnosť postaviť sa za seba a nedostatok významných úspechov. Tieto sémantické transformácie korešpondujú s metaforou „nebojovníka“, ktorá sa vynára tak z výskytu v jazykových korpusoch, ako aj z analýzy definície a paradigmatických vzťahov adjektíva *holubičí* a kolokácií *holubičí národ* a *holubičia povaha/nátura*.

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