

[Between the Mastery of the Environment and the Culture of Fear: Shifting American Values in a Slovak Context]

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[Abstract] *Since the start of the new millennium, the American way of thinking about nature and the human relationship with the natural environment has undergone a marked shift, with increasingly influential civic and political environmental movements finding new ways of confronting the public, representatives of industries and political actors with the direct and the anticipated consequences of the heedless exploitation of non-renewable natural resources. The generations born in the first decades of the 21st century demonstrate a strong affiliation with these new environmentalist movements and are drifting towards more radical – sometimes even destructive – acts of environmental activism. This growing movement is international in scope and has also begun to make itself felt in Slovakia. This study discusses the extent to which the new generations of Slovak teenagers and young adults follow and identify with the American view of environmental radicalism. The research examines the process of Americanization and anti-Americanism among young Slovaks, applying methodologies used in the social sciences to determine whether the culture of fear is influencing the new generations' way of thinking.*

[Keyword]: *anti-Americanism; environment; culture of fear; Slovak attitudes*

[1] Introduction

The objective of this paper is to investigate the opinions and perceptions of young Slovaks regarding the USA. The research developed as part of a larger project that is underway at the Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, registered under the code vvgs-2022-2435 and titled *Perception of the USA at Secondary and Higher Education Institutions in the Eastern Slovak Region through Local and Global Media*. The project focuses on the cultural perception of the contemporary USA among students at English bilingual secondary schools in Eastern Slovakia and at the Department of British and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice. This paper belongs within one subsection of the research project, which investigates the topic of environmental issues, primarily the question of how environmental anxiety is viewed by young Slovaks.

As the US dominates the global—and in numerous aspects even the local—media (Khattak et al. 37) and plays a substantial role in the formation of contemporary narratives, it could be assumed that this influence can also be discerned among young Slovaks in the 13-25 age bracket. It is likely that the most prominent environmental narratives, and the way in which these narratives develop in debates on the natural environment, have a measurable effect on young people (Schwartz et al. 167) and can influence how Slovaks in this age cohort think about the US. The purpose of this research is to identify whether the US is seen by young Slovaks as a negative or positive actor in environmental narratives.

A further aim of the study is to determine whether environmental anxiety is perceptible among young Slovaks and to what extent it is a result of the spread of the culture of fear described by Glassner in *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things* (2000) or analysed by Furedy in *Culture of Fear: Risk-taking and the Morality of Low Expectation* (2003).

This research is interdisciplinary, as it encompasses three fields of study. Primarily, social research methods in data collection are used in the form of an online survey in order to understand how members of the target group of young Slovaks in the 13-25 age cohort think about the US. The survey also addresses participants' general assumptions about the US in relation to environmental issues by investigating current narratives in global and local media platforms. Finally, the concept of environmental anxiety is contrasted with media narratives and analysed in relation to the results of the survey.

[2] Theoretical framework

This section discusses three aspects of the research. The nature of anti-Americanism is investigated first, followed by an overview of the changing concept of American environmental attitudes. Lastly, the culture of fear and the aspect of environmental anxiety is examined in more detail.

In 2016, the English-language newspaper *The Slovak Spectator* published an article by the staff writer Roman Cuprik titled *Survey: anti-Americanism is still strong* and noting

the ambiguous attitudes of Slovaks towards the US. While expecting unconditional cooperation and partnership in organizations such as NATO or the EU and reaping the benefits of the close economic and political ties between Slovakia and the US, Slovaks also expressed mixed views about the US and the above-mentioned supranational organizations. Cuprik cites Grigorij Mesežnikov of the Institute for Public Affairs, who states that “Slovaks see the United States as an expansive great power” (qtd. in Cuprik). These views are particularly perceptible in politically sensitive periods such as election campaigns. For example, in a 2016 survey, Milo, it was found that more than 60 percent of Slovak respondents believed that the United States used NATO to control countries like Slovakia, with 48 percent holding that the United States was responsible for the escalation of the Ukraine crisis (Globsec Trends). It should be noted that the survey was conducted long before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. A further Globsec report published by Milo, Klingová, and Hajdu in 2019 showed a slight shift towards a more positive view of the US, noting that “41% of Slovaks think that the US is a threat to their country, by far the most in the whole region” (11). Anti-American sentiments manifest themselves on a broad spectrum, ranging from openly anti-American public protests to heated debates in pubs and covering topics from the fields of politics, trade, war, culture, movies, or sports. The continuing debates prove that there is a strong American influence on everyday topics in Slovakia in each and every age group.

This study focuses on one specific aspect of anti-Americanism, the environmental aspect, and it investigates how American leadership in both causing global environmental problems and combating the impact of environmental pollution are viewed among young Slovaks. As Lichtman points out, the US remains, in essence, a Protestant country, and the American attitude towards nature and the natural environment is deeply rooted in the Biblical world view (453). Neal and Youngelson-Neal explain this attitude in the opening section of their chapter on the mastery of the environment by citing Genesis 1:26

And God said,

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (151)

In this line of thinking, mankind is *not* part of the natural world, but its master or, in a less aggressive interpretation, the caretaker of God’s creation. When taken literally, the Protestant world view can be used to justify the unrestrained exploitation of all the planet’s resources. The American Protestant view of nature is more than just an anthropomorphic trope; it is a white Anglo-Saxon attitude which has been the dominant mode of thought in the world throughout the history of the US, and the political, military, commercial, and cultural hegemony of the USA has enabled this philosophy to become a global phenomenon. The transformation of the landscape has thus not only been an effort to make the land cultivated, but rather to make the landscape as much Anglo-Saxon-like as possible. Neal and Youngelson-Neal note that “Our ancestors cut the trees east of the Mississippi in order to transform the terrain into an English landscape” (151). The need (or possibly the perceived

divine obligation) to master the environment and reconstruct the world according to the requirements of humans has long been considered a God-given right by many Americans.

It is fair to note that efforts to transform and conquer the natural world have never been an exclusively American phenomenon, but rather a manifestation of the spirit of the 1950s. A similar attitude can be traced in the US's Cold War rival the USSR, when, as Prishchepov, Petrick, and Müller recall, "On the instructions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CCCPSU), in spring 1954 tractors began ploughing up untouched steppe land in order to sow wheat to supply the growing Soviet population" (42). The 1950s and 1960s witnessed an escalation in the rivalry between the two nuclear superpowers, and mastery of nature became synonymous with technological advances and development. The atomic age saw nature as a seemingly unlimited storehouse of natural resources. Hyper-industrialism and consumerism in the West created and re-emphasized the world view that infinite economic growth is both possible and desirable. Boyer describes the spirit of the atomic age in a contradictory dichotomy, stating that "While some thinkers worried about mass leisure, other speculated that the emergence of a highly technocratic economy based on atomic energy would inevitably give rise to massive concentrations of economic and political power, with a corresponding threat to the integrity of the individual" (142). It is interesting to consider that the seemingly diametrically opposed social systems of *laissez-faire* capitalism and the communist planned economy arrived at the same conclusion regarding man's hegemony over the natural world, with both seeing nature as a force which must be subdued, conquered, and exploited.

According to Neal and Youngelson-Neal, "Environmental perceptions are ways of giving human meaning to the physical world" (154). The physical world has an independent existence beyond the human psyche, but it is the human intellect that defines its existence through an ongoing interaction with nature. Nineteenth-century Romanticism directed humans' attention to the beauty of the natural environment in works which sought heavenly perfection in the physical world, such as in Emerson's *Nature* (1836) or Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855). One century later, in 1949, the British historian of science F. Sherwood Taylor still glorified the triumph of human effort over Nature (with a capital N), which he described as a desirable yet unachievable goal.

By the conquest of Nature we mean the process of causing the totality of things to function precisely as man desires; and by putting the matter in this brief way we may see that the total conquest of Nature is excessively improbable, and indeed has scarcely begun. (7)

In Taylor's view, humans lie outside of nature on account of their intellect and ethical conduct, and they are only connected with nature through their primitive bodily functions and instincts. Echoing Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), Taylor believed that unconquered nature offers a life which is "simply nasty, brutish and short" (9).

Almost contemporaneously with Taylor, however, the emerging Beat Generation's call for a return to nature represented a radical challenge to white Anglo-Saxon Protestant values and the dream of nature tamed and subdued. The direct connection between the transcendentalists and the Beat Generation is well-known. Caitlin

concludes that “Ideas about nature, spirituality, and the self are prominently represented in American Transcendentalism and Beat literature. [...] Concomitant analysis of works from both movements reveals significant parallels between the Beats’ and the Transcendentalists’ impressions of society, as well as their conceptions of the individual” (43). There is also consensus that Thoreau’s *Walden* (1855) greatly influenced the emergence of the hippie subculture. As Lawlor notes “Transcendental provocations such as Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Nature* (1836) and Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* (1855) set a standard of religious dissent from which another group of writers later drew inspiration” (299). The hippies, however, did not follow the transcendentalist path. For them, nature remained distant, a place to which they longed to return to escape their sense of alienation from human society, but ultimately the fulfilment of these yearnings left them bored and disillusioned. A prototype of such attitudes towards nature is represented by Jack Kerouac in *Big Sur* (1962). The dominant ideal that resonated in the hippie culture in connection with nature was absolute freedom and uncontrolled anarchism rather than the peaceful contemplation of the beauty of the natural world. Alienation dominated the narratives of the 1960s and gradually gave way to the culture of fear.

[3] Environmental anxiety and the culture of fear

Natural disasters remind us that our belief in our mastery of the natural world has foundations built in sand. We have made progress in predicting and calculating some natural disasters, but we have no means of influencing or controlling them (Chen et al. 2). This awareness of our helplessness generates a sense of frustration and fear which contrasts sharply with our hope that some still-undiscovered future technological advance will enable us to control such events as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or droughts. If anthropogenic activities are the primary drivers of climate change and the associated significant increases in global average temperatures, it is plausible that alternative human interventions could be engineered to mitigate or potentially reverse the extensive changes to the Earth’s climate and ecosystems. In contrast with the past, when humans practiced religious rituals to avoid catastrophes, in contemporary times our society places its trust in scientists, and we make huge financial sacrifices in the hope of placating the elementary forces of our planet and avoiding natural disasters (cf. Glenn).

Our fear of the rich array of potential extinction events, including nuclear war, meteor impacts, solar flares and shifting magnetic poles to mention but a few, has inspired countless novels and Hollywood films. Day after day, the news confronts us with images of natural disasters that effectively remind us that our existence is disconcertingly transient, and this perpetual awareness of our vulnerability and that of our natural environment evokes a kind of paranoia in the human psyche. In Berman’s words, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (1983) in modernity, challenging faith in the supernatural. The postmodern further widens the gap between realities and suggests that everything is relative. We

have been left alone to deal with our fears without the hope to seek refuge in divine powers and witnessing that “not only orthodox religion but even the more general concept of ‘value’ appears to have reached a critical impasse within a cultural and economic climate where traditional modes of both knowledge and exchange are being rapidly superseded” (Berry 169).

Apocalyptic discourses and narratives are ubiquitous in Western media, and as Rozario sees it, “The culture of calamity reveals a general psychological addiction to images and stories of disaster in our [American] society, though this varies in significant ways across registers of class, gender, and race” (2). Surprisingly, Rozario sees disasters as a form of opportunity and explains that from the earliest days of US history, disasters have been interpreted as messages from God that can bring about a new beginning. For many, this eternal optimism, the ability to rise from the ashes, is one of the more endearing of American characteristics.

The avalanche of catastrophe and calamity narratives that have overwhelmed the media in recent decades serve to reinforce the viewer’s paranoia. As is well known, bad news sells, and little or no effort is made to adhere to a moderate interpretation of such events in which fact-based reporting is dominant. As Furedy has noted, “The language we use reflects our unprecedented preoccupation with risk. Take the term ‘at risk’. A search of UK newspapers indicates that the term was used 2037 times in 1994. Six years later, in 2000, the usage of this term had increased almost nine-fold” (xii). Contemporary language overemphasizes the use of words with catastrophic connotations. Expressions such as *pandemic*, *plague*, *contamination*, *extinction* and *global catastrophe* are used interchangeably and without appropriate consideration, and this creates an overwhelmingly depressing impression of the future of humanity. As Furedy explains, “The message is that it is payback time, nature is threatening to take its revenge on an arrogant species” (xiii). This creates an atmosphere in contemporary societies which suggests that everything that is connected with human existence is a somewhat risky business; the general perception is that it is not just germs that threaten to ruin our lives, but even romantic love and joint bank accounts. The popularity of dramatized reenactments of police investigations creates and reinforces the feeling that any of the fellow humans we come across on an average day could be deranged serial killers or violent monsters. Furedy criticizes the culture of fear and claims that “[it] estranges people from one another. It breeds an atmosphere of suspicion that distracts people from facing up to the challenges confronting society” (xvi).

An especially problematic topic in this respect is that of global warming, an issue that has long been divisive and which has stoked the formation of extremist groups at both ends of the spectrum: so-called “environmental terrorists” on one side and climate-change deniers on the other. Neal and Youngelson-Neal underline that

Today our vision of the apocalypse has become more secular in character. Visions of the end are more typically directed toward the disastrous consequences for the environment created by our technological and consumer-oriented lifestyles. If so, the more

serious human sins were not the violations of a moral code, but the economic and technological accomplishments vision associated with the doctrine of progress. (159)

The average American believes that threats to public health have increased in recent decades (cf. Ho, Brossard and Scheufele), and there is a general belief that a series of still-unidentified effects could dramatically influence or even completely destroy nature and biological life on Earth (cf. Akreiof, DeBono and Berry). Ecological concerns ranging from the thinning of the ozone layer, acid rain or the greenhouse effect to the accelerating mass extinction of animal and plant life have come to dominate some sectors of public discourse in recent decades. The issue of global warming first gained public prominence in 2006 when Al Gore and Davis Guggenheim released their documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. The idea has since penetrated public discourse, and every American administration to date has taken some steps to tackle the issue in one or another way. There is a consensus in the scientific community that the burning of fossil fuels is contributing to the climatic changes which are now unavoidably apparent (cf. Wuebbles). At the same time, a powerful community of think tanks and business lobbyists continues to invest considerable amounts of time and energy in order to convince the public that current climate models do not reflect the actual situation and cannot predict changes reliably (Poortinga, Spence and Whitmarsh). The undeniable fact that temperature records continue to be broken year after year, with the summer of 2024 being the hottest on record so far, can divide people and lead to social tensions. Immensely powerful industries, such as petroleum and heavy engineering, are at loggerheads with both radical and moderate environmentalists, and tempers inevitably flare. Neal and Youngleson-Neal note that

In the obligation to inform a society about itself, the news media thrive on disaster, sensationalism, and promoting fear in the general population (Siegel, 2005). In addition to their efforts to discredit the “liberal” news media, attempts are made to discredit the environmental consequences of as the validity of scientific claims on modern lifestyles and industrial practices. (163)

This tension inevitably adds to the growth of anxiety and uncertainty and stokes the culture of fear—which, however politically useful it may be for various interested groups, is undoubtedly having a destructive impact on social cohesion.

[4] Methodology and limitations

This section of the study will examine the extent to which this psychological and social impact can be measured.

Like young people throughout the world, young Slovaks have virtually unlimited access to US media platforms. In 2020, the international streaming service Netflix reported a subscriber base of around 87,500 active accounts in Slovakia. American cable and satellite news channels have flooded the Slovak market, and any gaps in the market are soon filled by social media platforms and the internet. Slovaks can

follow American sports events in real time, while business news, political analyses, and breaking news from all the significant players on the US and global markets are only a click away. On the one hand, this situation offers media consumers a hitherto unprecedented range of viewing options, but on the other hand it also means that Slovaks are exposed to the same media discourse as the American audience, with all the negative consequences outlined in the previous section of this paper. Despite the range of viewpoints and opinions currently on offer, however, Slovak attitudes are often pre-determined and restricted by the various prejudices which many Slovaks continue to harbour.

This paper seeks to measure the effect that selected independent variables have on anti-American sentiments among young Slovaks at bilingual secondary schools and at the Department of British and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, with a particular focus on the issue of environmental anxiety. The paper examines the following factors: (1) general attitudes towards the US, (2) the connection between the idea of environmental protection and the image of the US, (3) the US as a global actor and the responsibilities that are connected with this role, (4) the dominance of certain American values such as individualism and American cultural products, particularly music and film, (5) attitudes towards American and Slovak traditions, and (6) the acceptance of conspiracy theories.

The primary topics of this research are general attitudes towards the US, the connection between the idea of environmental protection and the image of the US, the US as a global actor and the responsibilities that are associated with this role.

A separate series of questions in the survey tested respondents' attitudes towards the role of the US in environmental discourses. Respondents were asked to state the degree to which they agreed with the following statements:

- (8) The USA is able to solve environmental problems because it is technologically advanced.
- (9) The USA manipulates people and therefore generates environmental anxiety.
- (10) Global warming is a scientifically proven fact.
- (11) I am concerned that the food I eat, the water I drink, and the air I breathe are contaminated.
- (12) We are NOT able to avoid the collapse of human society and a global catastrophe.
- (13) Americans live harmoniously with the natural environment.
- (14) We can trust American companies to do everything possible to adapt their technologies to become environmentally friendly.

The respondents were offered a seven-level differential scale on which they were asked to express the degree of their agreement or disagreement with the statements provided, ranging from complete disagreement to complete agreement.

Prior to conducting the survey, the following hypotheses were proposed:

1. There will be a positive relationship between general pro-American or anti-American sentiments and the acceptance/rejection of American efforts to deal with environmental issues.
2. Beyond the simple linear relationship represented by Hypothesis 1, it was also hypothesized that a pro-American orientation relates to an awareness of contemporary environmental narratives regarding environmental anxiety.
3. Lastly, it was hypothesized that young Slovaks in the 13-25 age cohort consider the US to be a role model, which is expressed by the level of trust in American attitudes towards global environmental problems.

There were certain limitations associated with the research project that had the potential to distort the results, and therefore these factors must be taken into consideration when discussing the results. This project worked with a relatively small sample group of respondents in a limited age cohort that ranged from age 13 to age 25, and this means that the potential for extrapolating the results to the national or supranational level is somewhat limited. The range of questions and the characteristics of the dependent variables incorporated into the survey are also restricted in their scope, and they reflect the specific focus of the project on the region of East Slovakia. The language used in the survey was simplified to a level which the research team estimated would allow the participants to understand and interpret the subject matter; nonetheless, no specific tools were implemented into the survey process to check coherence in interpretation. Finally, the survey focused on mapping feelings and attitudes rather than fact-based decision making in the target group, and this factor can fluctuate greatly in relation to the discourses which are currently prevalent in either Slovak or international media platforms. As the survey was carried out during the run-up to the 2023 Slovak general election, the political discourses which were predominating in this period may have had a marked influence on the opinions of the respondents.

[5] Discussions

A total of 449 respondents completed the survey over a two-week period in September 2023. The demographic data shows that the largest group of respondents were in the 16–18-year-old age cohort with 187 respondents, representing roughly 42% of the total number of participants. The second most populous group consisted of 121 respondents from the 13-15 age cohort, while 108 respondents belonged to the 19-21 age cohort. Only 42 respondents were older than 22 years old, with this group constituting 9.4% of all respondents. Therefore, approximately two thirds of respondents, 68% of the total participants, fell within the target group of adolescents.

An analysis of the socio-cultural make-up of the respondents showed that approximately 49% of the respondents lived in a large city with a population of between 10,000 and 100,000. A total of 52% of participants came from smaller Slovak settlements with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants.

The first part of the survey tested general attitudes towards the US and was intended to determine whether anti-American sentiments were prevalent among young Slovaks.

On the specific issue of the perception of US attitudes to environmental issues, the survey solicited the respondents' views on the following topics:

- 8. The USA is able to solve environmental problems because it is technologically advanced.

This statement investigated the respondents' trust in American technological prowess and aimed to reveal what young Slovaks expect from the American leadership in efforts to resolve environmental issues. Roughly 44% of the respondents indicated that they saw the US as a capable and technologically advanced power which would be able to provide adequate answers to environmental challenges. In contrast, however, a total of 37% saw the US at the opposite end of the spectrum, which may indicate a lack of trust in American technological hegemony. This does not necessarily mean that young Slovaks do not believe in the strength of American innovation and technological dominance; it may instead indicate that they do not believe that future technological breakthroughs will relate to the resolution of environmental issues.

- 9. The USA manipulates people and therefore generates environmental anxiety.

Statement 9 revealed that 53% of the young Slovak respondents believed that the US deliberately invokes environmental anxiety and manipulates populations. However, 114 respondents, 25% of the sample group, provided a neutral answer to this statement, with a further 20% indicating that they did not believe in the veracity of this manipulation. This result correlates with the results showing distrust in Americans indicated in Question 4/6, which also revealed a relatively large degree of distrust towards Americans.

Statement 10 is not directly connected with the concept of anti-Americanism but was intended to examine the general belief in fake news and conspiracy theories. Given that young Slovaks are increasingly exposed to conspiracies through social media platforms, we considered this question to be a key indicator of trust in global media outlets, many of which are which are clearly dominated by American conglomerates.

- 10. Global warming is a fact and is scientifically proven.

The findings revealed that young Slovaks are overwhelmingly accepting of the scientific evidence that global warming is a real phenomenon, with 373 of the 449 respondents strongly agreeing or rather agreeing with this statement. This result is slightly at odds with the results obtained in Statement 9, in which respondents indicated their belief that environmental anxiety is the result of mass manipulation, and this discrepancy perhaps reveals the impact of misinformation on public perceptions of environmental issues.

Statement 11 mapped the extent to which young Slovaks share health concerns connected with the environmental crisis and the degradation of the quality of life with the American public. As Neal and Youngelson-Neal have noted in *Core Values in American*

Lives (2014), many Americans are concerned about their natural environment and are afraid of the direct consequences of the environmental crisis (154).

- 11. I am concerned that the food I eat, the water I drink, and the air I breathe are contaminated.

The results found that 51% of the young Slovak respondents share these concerns with Americans, with only 29% showing scepticism or reluctance towards the issue.

Statement 12 also revealed a somewhat similar distribution of responses.

- 12. We are NOT able to avoid the collapse of human society and a global catastrophe.

While 35% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, 40% of the respondents indicated disagreement. This correlates with the results of Statement 8, which examined levels of trust in American technological advancements to tackle and manage environmental changes.

- 13. We can trust American companies that they will do everything to change their technologies to be environmentally friendly.

52% of the respondents emphasized that American companies are not doing enough to protect the environment, a result which, once again, correlates with the findings from other questions and statements and suggests that while young Slovaks look up to the US as a leading economic, military and cultural power, they do not believe that Americans do enough for the world and consequently consider Americans to be distrustful and selfish.

Statement 13 investigated how young Slovaks see Americans' relationship with the natural environment.

- 14. Americans live harmoniously with the natural environment.

The results showed that an overwhelming majority of respondents refuted this suggestion, with 79% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement. This finding clearly indicates that young Slovaks see Americans as destroyers of natural environments rather than their protectors. Statement 14 underlined this result, as a slight majority of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

[6] Conclusion

The majority of young Slovaks consider the US to be a rich country. They expect more solidarity and support from America. Despite some negative perceptions, the results of the survey indicate that young Slovaks still look up to the US as a role model. The findings of this research demonstrate that anti-American sentiments are present among young Slovaks in the 13-25 age cohort. While these sentiments are not extreme-

ly marked, there are certain variables indicating that young Slovaks harbour somewhat mixed opinions on the US; almost 70% of the respondents considered themselves to be neutral towards the US, with only 17% of the respondents indicating a positive bias and 26% espousing a clear anti-American stance.

When further independent variables were closely analysed, the research revealed that respondents viewed the US as rather dangerous, self-centred, untrustworthy and corrupt. This indicates that young Slovaks see the US as a domineering superpower that does not hesitate to sacrifice relationships with its partners if it can benefit from doing so. Based on the results, it is possible to conclude that while young Slovaks are not overtly hostile towards the US and there are only limited anti-American feelings in the 13-25 age cohort, they expect a greater degree of American involvement in solving global environmental issues. The US is still overwhelmingly considered to be a democratic role model, but the respondents believe that this positive aspect should relate to the provision of support and solidarity with the rest of the world and not the ruthless enforcement of American interests. The analysis of the data has revealed that Hypothesis 1 was only partially proven.

1. There will be a positive relationship between general pro-American or anti-American sentiments and the acceptance/rejection of American efforts to deal with environmental issues.

While pro-American sentiments were found to exceed anti-Americanism in the 13-22 age cohort of Slovaks, young Slovaks expressed their dissatisfaction with the limited scale of American involvement in resolving environmental issues, suggesting that the US, as a dominant leading superpower and democratic role model, could and should do more. The environmental anxiety that characterizes American society is also partially perceptible among young Slovaks, but it is not marked and does not influence the Slovak view about the US in the 13-25 age cohort.

The findings also revealed that Hypothesis 2 was invalid.

2. Beyond the simple linear relationship represented by Hypothesis 1, it was also hypothesized that a pro-American orientation relates to an awareness of contemporary environmental narratives regarding environmental anxiety.

It is not possible to state beyond doubt that pro-Americanism or anti-Americanism are somehow connected with a wider knowledge of contemporary environmental narratives. Although they have access to American sources, young Slovaks do not connect environmental issues with anti-Americanism. They rather consider the US to be a self-centred and untrustworthy actor because it fails to fulfil certain latent obligations to do more and be more active in global environmental questions. This aspect was also a factor in the case of the Hypothesis 3.

3. Lastly, it was hypothesized that young Slovaks in the 13-25 age cohort consider the US to be a role model, which is expressed by the level of trust in American attitudes towards global environmental problems.

In conclusion, the results of this research show that young Slovaks in the 13-25 age cohort have a balanced and realistic opinion about the US as a leading economic and cultural power in the world and generally look up to the US as a role model. However, this age cohort expects more proactive engagement from the US in the case of global issues, and much of their mild anti-Americanism springs from their dissatisfaction with and distrust of the US as a country as well as the American companies who symbolize American dominance in the global system. Young Slovaks display more of a pro-American attitude, but they do not see Americans as living in harmony with nature, believing instead that there is an American tendency to exploit natural resources selfishly and a willingness to abandon global partners if an opportunity for short term gains materializes.

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