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Patriotic Education and Constitutional Patriotism in Central Europe: Comparative Perspectives on Modern State Resilience

EDUKACJA PATRIOTYCZNA I PATRIOTYZM KONSTITUCYJNY W EUROPIE ŚRODKOWEJ.
PERSPEKTYWY PORÓWNAWCZE DOTYCZĄCE ODPORNOŚCI WSPÓŁCZESNYCH PAŃSTW

Summary

This paper examines patriotic education as a tool for strengthening state resilience in Central Europe, drawing on the region's shared republican tradition and its transition from communist rule. By comparing five global models (Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, South Korea, and Italy), this research offers a framework for building public allegiance to constitutional values as a foundation for institutional trust, free from ideological extremes. These models were compared with the methods employed within the Visegrád Group (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia), where the focus of patriotic education has traditionally been on national history, solidarity, the rule of law, and, currently, on their relationship with the European Union. Based on these experiences, the author proposes a regional concept called "constitutional patriotism based on identity," which unifies regional memory of events with international norms (such as the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation). The research demonstrates that patriotic education grounded in experience and context can increase state legitimacy, national security, and the level of interstate cooperation.

Keywords: patriotic education; constitutional patriotism; international law; Central Europe; Visegrád Group; democratic resilience; rule of law; national identity; civic education

Streszczenie

Artykuł poddaje analizie koncepcję edukacji patriotycznej jako dostępnego i skutecznego mechanizmu wzmacniania odporności państw Europy Środkowej, odwołując się do wspólnego

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dziedzictwa republikańskiego i ich transformacji po upadku systemu komunistycznego. Porównawcze studium pięciu modeli globalnych (Japonia, Stany Zjednoczone, Wielka Brytania, Korea Południowa, Włochy) pokazuje, jak lojalność obywatelska wobec wartości konstytucyjnych buduje zaufanie instytucjonalne bez nadmiaru ideologicznego. Modele globalne zestawia się z państwami Grupy Wyszehradzkiej (Polska, Czechy, Węgry, Słowacja), gdzie edukacja patriotyczna często akcentuje historię narodową i dumę z niej, solidarność oraz rządy prawa, w tym w kontekście napięć z UE. Proponowane ramy „patriotyzmu konstytucyjnego zakorzenionego w tożsamości” harmonizują pamięć historyczną z normami uniwersalnymi (m.in. Kartą Narodów Zjednoczonych, Powszechną Deklaracją Praw Człowieka, Rekomendacją UNESCO 1974). Doświadczenia państw Europy Środkowej potwierdzają, że zakorzeniona edukacja patriotyczna wzmacnia legitymizację państwa, bezpieczeństwo i współpracę międzynarodową.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja patriotyczna; patriotyzm konstytucyjny; prawo międzynarodowe; Europa Środkowa; Grupa Wyszehradzka; odporność demokratyczna; rządy prawa; tożsamość narodowa; edukacja obywatelska

Introduction

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, a historic convergence of forces is occurring across democratic countries. These include: (1) the increasing disintegration of global interdependence as it relates to both political and economic dimensions; (2) an escalating competition for influence and power among the principal actors in international relations; (3) a rising number of ongoing conflicts and unstable conditions in many regions of the globe; and (4) significant stressors on the structural frameworks that define the operational parameters of democracy itself.

These trends are being further intensified by accelerating technological disruption of the public sphere, including the unprecedented pace of artificial intelligence (AI) development, increasing social dislocation, and the reassertion of national sovereignty over multilateral frameworks and their associated norms and practices. The combined impact of these factors has resulted in declining public confidence in modern institutions' capacity to create democratic stability, as well as concerns regarding a trend toward democratic backsliding or an authoritarian shift.¹ In the context of these trends, this research identifies patriotic education as an important means of promoting democratic resilience while fostering a thoughtful and constructive sense of national identity.

Education of this type can promote civic loyalty to constitutional democracy, awareness of one's own and others' historical experiences, and shared allegiance to

1 World Economic Forum, *The Global Risks Report 2026* (World Economic Forum, 2026), <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2026/>.

the principles of the modern state, the rule of law, and human dignity – all of which could foster a sense of institutional trust, moral obligation, and social solidarity that would enhance the democratic system's capacity to resist both internal and external threats to its legitimacy and stability.

Although an expanding number of studies focus on the development of constitutional patriotism and the role of civic education generally, this research area remains underdeveloped at present, particularly with respect to comparative analyses that show how the content of patriotic education can be aligned with national history and identity, while also remaining compatible with universal democratic values (particularly in post-communist Central Europe). In addition to providing a comparative framework for assessing how selected regional republican traditions relate to specific global models, this research also provides a comparative conceptualization of the regional, identity-based model of constitutional patriotism. Therefore, it serves a dual function in refining theory as well as developing a set of practical policy recommendations for the Visegrád Fo countries.

This paper compares and evaluates patriotic education within a normative framework, using Central Europe as a case study because of the similarities among the post-communist republics, the shared republican traditions of these countries, and the ongoing negotiations regarding the European Union (EU) membership in the region. The Visegrád Group (V4) countries represent the complex relationships between national identity formation and compliance with universal democratic norms.² Five global models are used to evaluate global alternatives for developing civic loyalty to constitutional norms that avoid extreme ideologies of contemporary authoritarian states.

These global models provide examples of how national traditions and constitutional loyalty can be balanced in terms of civic responsibility and democratic order, e.g., the voluntarily and rights-protected patriotism of the United States; the participatory pluralism of the United Kingdom; and the solidarity-based civic ethos of South Korea. They are used as interpretive tools rather than as direct prescriptions. The international models of patriotic education are offered as interpretive mirrors that reveal possible strengths and weaknesses of V4 practices.³

The relevance of these observations for Central Europe, particularly for Poland, is considerable. Poland's republican tradition – articulated in the free royal elections on

2 "About the Visegrad Group," <https://www.visegradgroup.eu/home>.

3 Richard Butterwick, *The Constitution of 3 May 1791: Testament of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* (Polish History Museum, 2021), 9; Robert I. Frost, *The Making of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, 1385–1569*, vol. 1 of *The Oxford History of Poland-Lithuania* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 489–512.

the fields of Wola (1575–1764) and in Europe’s first modern written constitution of May 3, 1791 – is among the earliest articulations of power derived from the people (the citizenry), rather than divine right or force. After being suppressed during the partitions and communist rule, this heritage now provides a rich normative base for current education policy. Given Poland’s deep heritage of legitimate authority derived from citizens, the global models provide normative resources for designing civic education that equates national pride with international obligations, pursuant to the UN Charter,⁴ the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁵ and the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation, Peace, and Human Rights.⁶

The main hypothesis of this article can be summarized as a simple normative equation linking historical experience to both legal and pedagogical practice: *Love of Country + Respect for One’s Own History = Strengthened Democratic State Resilience*.⁷ Such constitutionally grounded patriotism does not conflict with the international legal order; rather, it reinforces it by fostering citizens who internalize and are prepared to defend the shared principles that unite free states – human dignity, the rule of law, and peaceful cooperation. The article uses a comparative-normative and interpretative methodology, drawing on public international law, constitutional theory, security studies, and the sociology of education. The analysis is built upon the conceptual models developed in the companion article, “Patriotism Rooted in Constitutional Identity: A Legal Theory of Democratic State Resilience.”⁸ The study defined and theoretically elaborated on the concept of “constitutional patriotism rooted in identity” as a bridge between national heritage and universal norms.⁹ The companion article

4 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, adopted June 26, 1945, entered into force October 24, 1945, 1 UNTS XVI.

5 United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNGA Res 217A (III), December 10, 1948, UN Doc A/RES/217(III).

6 UNESCO, Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted November 19, 1974, adopted November 19, 1974, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/162037>, and UNESCO. General Conference, Consolidated Report on the Implementation of the 1974 Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 37 C/27 (2013), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000224137?posInSet=4%5C&queryId=52ed8d55-e712-4be4-a440-96ebaf06cfa9>.

7 Paweł Maciąg, “Patriotism Rooted in Constitutional Identity: A Legal Theory of Democratic State Resilience,” *Facta Simonidis* 18, no. 2 (2025): 309–323, <https://doi.org/10.56583/fs.2995>.

8 Maciąg, 309–323.

9 Maciąg, 309–323.

was primarily concerned with the conceptual elaboration of this idea and with using Polish republicanism as precedent. The current study applies this system through a detailed comparative analysis of the global models and their potential for V4 policy making.

Although there is a wealth of research that addresses both constitutional patriotism and civic education as they relate to one another, there are no studies that systematically compare and contrast various approaches to patriotic education grounded within national historical identities, yet still grounded in universal democratic values, especially in post-communist Central Europe. The purpose of this study is to develop a normative comparative framework connecting regional republican traditions to some models from around the world; additionally, it proposes a conceptualization of constitutional patriotism rooted specifically in the identity of the region. Therefore, this study contributes to both theoretical development and provides concrete policy options for all four Visegrád Group countries.

1. Theoretical and Legal Framework

Constitutional patriotism involves a commitment to civic engagement and the belief that national identity can be defined through allegiance to democratic values as stated in the country's constitution. The theory unites a person's past sense of identification (national identity) with the legal obligations of international law. This creates trust, engagement, and resilience. This research project applies the concept of constitutional patriotism to education. Patriotic education can transmit constitutional values to future generations and strengthen democratic resilience.

When patriotic education is built upon the Constitution, it is a normative process. It promotes a reasonable connection to law, dignity, and cooperation. Also, it ties a country's pride to its international obligations, helping reduce the likelihood of an authoritarianism.

Europe today shows signs of growing centralization and strains on democracy.¹⁰ In Central Europe, where the legacy of post-communist transformation continues to influence public life and political discourse, these developments carry particular

10 U.S. Department of State, Secretary Marco Rubio, "Remarks at the Munich Security Conference," February 14, 2026, YouTube, 29:23, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLL3pwlO2rE>. Freedom.gov (<https://www.freedom.gov>) is a U.S. government initiative announced in February 2026 and intended to protect civil liberties, including freedom of speech as a human right to free expression and promote transparent and accountable governance, reflecting broader policy attention to democratic resilience in Europe and globally.

resonance. The V4 group shares a republican constitutional tradition disrupted by communist rule. Patriotic education in Central Europe should reconcile historical traumas with firm adherence to the constitutional order, pride in a rich national history, the rule of law, and national sovereignty.

This study applies an interpretive-normative approach. It examines international treaties, laws, and educational policy documents that demonstrate how patriotic education has been translated into constitutional patriotism. It utilizes global examples to find transferable elements; however, the scope is confined to Central Europe because the countries share similar post-1945 and post-1989 transition processes, a similar constitutional tradition of republicanism, and a tension between their individual national sovereignty and their obligations under supranational law.

The methodological novelty lies in treating history as an integral part of constitutional patriotism (as opposed to a distinct or potentially controversial element) and therefore creating a practical linkage between nation-state identity and universally applicable values, earlier research usually treated with reference to theory and abstraction.

2. Comparative Global Models of Patriotic Education

This comparative analysis examines the models of patriotic education in five democracies through both a normative approach (i.e., how do governments promote civic loyalty to their constitutions?) and a historical perspective (how have governments historically used historical memory to support democratic resilience?). In each example, the mechanisms by which the government fosters loyalty to the constitution and love of country, employs historical memory, and utilizes these mechanisms to support democratic resilience will be demonstrated.

Given that the five countries' cultural backgrounds, laws, and geopolitical positions vary significantly, they provide an array of different contexts, but all comply with international norms, such as UNESCO's 1974 Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation, and Peace, and Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, the selected countries can serve as examples of interpretive frameworks for Central Europe, offering possible means to strengthen constitutional patriotism grounded in identity in the context of post-communism and European integration.

2.1. Japan: Moral Harmony, Community, and Love of Country

The structure of Japan's patriotic education system is based on the mandatory "Moral Education" program (*dōtoku kyōiku*), which is taught weekly to every student in Japan from elementary school through junior high school. It fosters in students a sense of harmony (*wa*), gratitude (*kansha*), duty (*giri*), an appreciation and respect for traditional ways, a sense of social responsibility, and a profound appreciation for their national culture. This is a mandatory course that every child in Japan must take from the age of six to sixteen. Every week, this class teaches the students fundamental values, including thankfulness, loyalty to one's duties, a love for history, and a sense of community and social responsibility.¹¹

The Fundamental Law of Education (*Kyōiku kihon-hō*, revised in 2006 and amended in 2025–2027 to update the curriculum) mandates that schools promote a "love of country" (*aikokushin*) alongside respect for human rights, international cooperation, the environment, and moral character.¹²

Schools in Japan teach the moral education program primarily through ethical dilemmas, family and community relationships, and an appreciation of Japan's cultural heritage (festivals, art, and literature) and national symbols (the *Hinomaru* national flag, the *Kimigayo* national anthem, and historic sites). There are special units on postwar reconstruction, peace education (the legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), and the humanitarian role of the Self Defense Force in domestic disaster relief and international peacekeeping operations, all of which are conducted within the bounds of constitutional pacifism. The new Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology guidelines continue to emphasize critical thinking about national security (regional threats and defense policy) while stressing peaceful defense and world harmony.¹³

Assessments of the academic literature confirm that since 2018, the status of moral education in Japan has been elevated from an ancillary to a central component of education, framing patriotism as loyalty to the greater good of society, trust in institutions, and collective responsibility. Studies by researchers affiliated with UNESCO and

11 Japan. Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Basic Act on Education (*Kyōiku kihon-hō*), effective May 3, 1947, Law No. 120, December 22, 2006, revised from 1947 version, accessed April 3, 2026, <https://www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/education/lawandplan/tile01/detail01/1373798.htm?utm>.

12 Japan. MEXT, art. 2(5): "... respect for tradition and culture and love of the country and regions that have nurtured us ..."

13 Kazuya Fukuoka and Sachiko Takita-Ishii, "Teaching How to Love Your Country in Schools? A Study of Japanese Youth Narratives on Patriotic Education," *National Identities* 24, no. 3 (2021): 247–270, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2021.1931084>.

Japanese scholars agree that the model is entirely consistent with international norms; specifically the model promotes peace-oriented patriotism through civic morality and historical reflections on the wartime past without ideological indoctrination¹⁴.

Japan has utilized this system based on Article 1 of the 1947 Constitution, which shifted a citizen's loyalty from the Emperor to the people. Article 9 of the same constitution¹⁵ prohibits war as a national right. The revised 2006 version of the Fundamental Law of Education states that schools should instill in students a love of country (*aikokushin*) while also encouraging them to respect other nations' cultures, promote international cooperation, protect the environment, and develop strong moral character.¹⁶ The Japanese model could serve as an example for Central European countries on how to blend the concepts of moral harmony and community-based patriotism while maintaining objective historical consideration. Additionally, it offers a non-militaristic, constitutional approach to curricula.

2.2. United States: Constitutional Loyalty and Symbols of Patriotism

Patriotic education in the United States is centered around voluntary allegiance to the country's constitutional principles and symbols – a concept derived from the republicanism expressed in the Preamble (“We the People”) to the 1787 Constitution and protected by the judiciary's safeguard of individual conscience.¹⁷ The Supreme Court decision in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* (1943) held that a state could not require students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, placing freedom of conscience above compulsory patriotism.¹⁸

While daily and ceremonial patriotic activities (recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, singing the national anthem, etc.) take place in public schools, civics classes in most states typically focus on the founding documents (the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights) and major events in the country's history (the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement). However, there is considerable variation among states in terms of the emphasis on civic education. In 2025–2026, the United States has intensified efforts to strengthen

14 UNESCO, Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding.

15 Japan, Constitution of Japan, effective May 3, 1947, November 3, 1946, arts. 1 and 9, promulgated November 3, 1946 (official English translation via the Prime Minister's Office and Japanese Law Translation databases).

16 Japan. MEXT, Basic Act on Education.

17 *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 1943.

18 U.S. Department of Education, Secretary's Supplemental Priority on Promoting Patriotic Education, September 17, 2025, Federal Register.

love of country through the America 250 Semiquincentennial (the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026). President Donald J. Trump's Executive Order Celebrating America's 250th Birthday and subsequent White House directives have made patriotic education a national priority.¹⁹

The federal approach has defined patriotic education as an accurate, honest, unifying, and inspiring portrayal of America's founding principles, constitutional development, historical achievements, and the nation's exceptional contributions, including its role in global freedom.²⁰ The re-established 1776 Commission and the America 250 Civics Coalition (which involves more than 40 partner organizations) seek to revitalize civic education in advance of the 2026 Semiquincentennial and counteract the perceived ideological distortions that exist in current curricula.²¹ Supporters of this initiative believe it will help create a unifying body of knowledge intended to encourage informed patriotism. The model is consistent with international human rights standards because it emphasizes voluntary participation, critical thinking, and the protection of conscience rather than coercion.²² For the V4 group, the U.S. model of incorporating symbolic acts of patriotism and constitutional history in schools, along with robust protections of rights, may offer a strong way for post-communist, pluralistic societies to promote loyalty to the constitution and love of country without any coercive mechanisms.

19 "Celebrating America's 250th Birthday," The White House, January 29, 2025, accessed April 3, 2026, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/celebrating-americas-250th-birthday/>.

20 "U.S. Department of Education Releases Secretary McMahon's Patriotic Education Supplemental Priority," September 17, 2025, <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-releases-secretary-mcmahons-patriotic-education-supplemental-priority>.

21 "U.S. Department of Education, AFPI, TPUSA, Hillsdale College, and Over 40 National and State Organizations Launch America 250 Civics Coalition," September 17, 2025, <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-afpi-tpusa-hillsdale-college-and-over-40-national-and-state-organizations-launch-america-250-civics-coalition>.

22 "Know America: Love America," America 250 Civics Education Coalition, accessed April 3, 2026, <https://america250civics.com/>; The President's Advisory 1776 Commission, *The 1776 Report*, January 2021, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Présidents-Advisory-1776-Commission-Final-Report.pdf>; U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, "Inspiring the American Spirit: Report to the President," December 31, 2019, <https://america250.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Inspiring-the-American-Spirit-Report-to-the-President-1.pdf>; U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, "America's 250th Anniversary," America250, <https://america250.org>.

2.3. United Kingdom: Participatory Pluralism and Fundamental British Values

The United Kingdom supports patriotic education through participatory citizenship and the Framework for Fundamental British Values (FBV) adopted in 2014: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, respect for others, and acceptance of different religions and belief systems.²³ FBV is now an integral element of the Education Act 2002 and is also considered a core element of spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) development.²⁴

While there is no single “Patriotic Education” subject in the curriculum, FBV is reflected in many subjects (debates, mock elections, community service projects, and active citizenship programs), as well as through discussions of shared democratic traditions (the Magna Carta, common law, and Parliamentary Sovereignty). The monarchy serves as a symbol of constitutional continuity within the parameters of Parliament. Multiculturalism is promoted in policy and practice in the UK.

2.4. South Korea: Solidarity, Humanitarian Security, and Civic Constitutional Ethos

South Korea’s model of patriotic education has evolved from the country’s post-Korean War reconstruction and democratization (1987 Constitution), placing an emphasis on solidarity, humanitarian values, and constitutional loyalty during ongoing external security threats.²⁵ The revised national curriculum in South Korea (introduced from 2022 and phased in through 2027) integrates character and moral education into citizenship education. This includes learning about rights and duties, national identity and symbols, and the responsibilities individuals have toward their communities and humanity as a whole. Additionally, South Korea is introducing new programs, including civil defense training, volunteering opportunities, and initiatives that promote peaceful reunification and international cooperation.

In recent years (from 2025–2026), South Korea has continued to address demographic change by developing a new form of multicultural education and using artificial intelligence to develop and improve programs for the development of the Korean language for international students; at the same time, the state continues

23 UK Department for Education, *Promoting Fundamental British Values as Part of SMSC in Schools: Departmental Advice for Maintained Schools*, November 2014, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a758c9540f0b6397f35f469/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf.

24 United Kingdom, Education Act 2002, c. 32, 78–80 (SMSC requirements and FBV guidance).

25 Nuffield Foundation, “Evaluating the Fundamental British Values initiative of the DfE,” Nuffield Foundation, <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/evaluating-the-fundamental-british-values-initiative-of-the-dfe>.

to emphasize its civic ethos and the unity of the Korean people. The approach also supports the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by promoting peace-oriented sense of responsibility and the ability to live together with others with respect and tolerance.²⁶

2.5. Italy: Constitutional Community and Civic-Patriotic Ethics

Italy's model of patriotic education is moderate and constitutional in nature, as evidenced by the 1948 Constitution of Italy, which established a republic based on labor and emphasized solidarity and human dignity.²⁷ *Educazione civica* was mandated in 2019 (Law 92/2019) and focuses on constitutional principles, sustainable development, digital citizenship, ethical values, and civic responsibility.²⁸

Recent guidelines (2024–2026) recommend that Italian schools maintain a respect for national history and values within the context of European identity. National celebrations, foster civic awareness through school ceremonies, the commemoration of the past, and student-led projects on the Italian Resistance and post-war democratic reconstruction. The Ministry of Education and Merit issued new *Linee guida per l'insegnamento dell'educazione civica*²⁹ which require schools to teach students to respect national symbols (the flag and the anthem), historical memory, and the values of the Italian Republic – including patriotism toward the unification of Italy (the *Risorgimento*)³⁰ and Italy's role in Europe.³¹ In addition to fostering an attachment to the Republic, the decree emphasizes that schools should encourage respect for national symbols and traditions. The decree also emphasizes knowledge of national history and identity as fundamental objectives in civic education, tying them to the recognition of Italy's historical achievements and constitutional system. Schools can

26 United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted November 20, 1989, entered into force September 2, 1990, 1577 UNTS 3, art. 29.

27 Italy, Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana, effective January 1, 1948, Gazzetta Ufficiale, 298, December 27, 1947, arts. 1–4, 2, and 3.

28 Italy, Legge 20 agosto 2019, n. 92: Introduzione dell'insegnamento scolastico dell'educazione civica, Gazzetta Ufficiale, 195, August 21, 2019; Italy. Ministro dell'Istruzione, Linee guida per l'insegnamento dell'educazione civica, ai sensi dell'articolo 3 della legge 20 agosto 2019, n. 92, *Decreto Ministeriale n. 35*, June 22, 2020, <https://www.mim.gov.it/documents/20182/2432359/Decreto+Ministeriale+n.+35+del+22+giugno+2020.pdf>.

29 Italy. Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito, Adozione delle Linee guida per l'insegnamento dell'educazione civica, Decreto Ministeriale n. 183, September 7, 2024, accessed April 3, 2026, [https://www.mim.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Decreto+\(1\).pdf/4a35f2a3-4b53-6e9d-a0eb-a3d6ad4c9134](https://www.mim.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Decreto+(1).pdf/4a35f2a3-4b53-6e9d-a0eb-a3d6ad4c9134).

30 The 19th-century political and social movement that unified fragmented Italian states into the Kingdom of Italy.

31 Italy. Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito.

use national holidays to implement the decree. Schools are encouraged to organize flag-raising ceremonies, commemorative events, and educational projects on the topic of resistance, post-war reconstruction, and loyalty to the constitution. The government sees these events as ways to promote national pride and unity. In public statements, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Minister of Education and Merit Giuseppe Valditara have emphasized the importance of national pride and the flag as symbols of the identity and unity of the nation, an expression of common memory, and the values enshrined in the Constitution.³² The Meloni government has repeatedly called for the flag to be respected and honored in all schools as part of national identity.

3. Patriotic Education in Central Europe: Practices in the Visegrád Group

The V4 group countries constitute a distinct geographic area of focus when studying the effects of patriotic education on the emergence of democratic societies. Each of these four nations shares a similar path of development: early modern constitutional republicanism (notably exemplified by the Polish model), successive occupations and totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century (German and Soviet occupations), the democratic transition after 1989, and entry into the EU in 2004. This analysis looks at how each country is currently practicing patriotic education, including: the legal foundation of patriotic education in each nation, curriculum content, policy developments, relationship to identity-based constitutional patriotism, and contribution to democratic resilience in each country.³³ Although there are differences in practice (Poland and Hungary prioritize national historic narratives and pride, the Czech Republic emphasizes secular pluralism, and Slovakia emphasizes solidarity), all of these countries operate under democratic constitutional frameworks.

3.1. Poland – Civic Attitudes Rooted in Republican Heritage and Pride in Polish History

In Poland, elements of patriotic education are already anchored in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (preamble: sovereignty of the nation, common good, and the

32 Giorgia Meloni, “Messaggio per la Festa della Repubblica: alazzo Chigi – Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri,” June 2, 2025, <https://www.governo.it/it/media/il-presidente-meloni-alle-celebrazioni-la-festa-della-repubblica/28881>.

33 Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, Official Journal of the European Union, C 202, June 7, 2016, art. 2, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:C:2016:202:FULL>; UNESCO, Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding; United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 29.

duty to defend the Republic; Article 6 on the common good; Article 83 on the duty to defend the Fatherland)³⁴ and the Education Law of December 14, 2016.³⁵ The legislation explicitly states that schools have an obligation to encourage students to develop civic attitudes, instill respect for the nation's traditions, foster an understanding of history, and encourage an attachment to the Republic, with a particular emphasis on fostering a sense of pride in Polish history (*duma z polskiej historii*). Minister of Science and Education Przemysław Czarnek (2020–2023) launched a number of initiatives that significantly expanded the scope of patriotic education, tying it directly to a sense of pride in Poland's past accomplishments and its republican heritage. These initiatives included:

- Instytut Rozwoju Języka Polskiego im. św. Maksymiliana Kolbego³⁶: A ministerial initiative to promote patriotic and civic education rooted in Christian values, national heroes (especially St. Maximilian Kolbe as a symbol of sacrifice and resistance), historical pride, and anti-totalitarian education. It received direct funding and support from the Ministry, with programs implemented in Polish schools around the world to foster pride and republican heritage.
- Program “Szkoła liderów” and “Patriotyzm jutra” (2021–2023): Projects funding school commemorations of key historical dates (May 3 Constitution Day, November 11 Independence Day, and August 15 Victory in the Battle of Warsaw 1920), with grants for patriotic ceremonies, flag-raising, historical reenactments, and projects on Polish resistance and independence struggles.³⁷
- “Historia i terażniejszość” (introduced in 2022): A compulsory history and civics course for secondary schools, emphasizing pride in Polish history, republican heritage (e.g., free royal democratic elections and the May 3 Constitution), and national heroes (e.g., Saint John Paul II, Captain Pilecki, the Cursed Soldiers, St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe). The curriculum highlights Poland's role in the struggle for European freedom and anti-totalitarian resistance.³⁸

34 Poland, The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997, Dz.U. 78, 1997, item 483, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/konse.htm>.

35 Poland, Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. – Prawo oświatowe, Dz.U. 2017, item 59, as amended, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdm20170000059>.

36 “Instytut Rozwoju Języka Polskiego,” <https://www.gov.pl/web/irjp>.

37 “Patriotyzm Jutra: O programie,” Muzeum Historii Polski, accessed April 3, 2026, <https://muzhp.pl/patriotyzm-jutra/o-programie>.

38 Poland, Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji i Nauki z dnia 8 marca 2022 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego dla liceum ogólnokształcącego, technikum oraz branżowej szkoły II stopnia, Dz.U. 2022, item poz. 622, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20220000622/O/D20220622.pdf>.

- “Godzina patriotyczna” (Patriotic Hour): A ministerial recommendation (2021) for schools to dedicate time to national symbols, anthem singing, flag-raising, and the discussion of Polish historical achievements and constitutional values.
- “Kształtowanie postaw patriotycznych i obywatelskich” (2020–2023 guidelines): Minister Czarnek’s directives required schools to promote pride in Polish history, constitutional tradition, and the defense of sovereignty, with funding for museums and visits to historical sites (e.g., the Wola election fields, Monte Cassino, and Westerplatte), and patriotic competitions.

These projects under Minister Czarnek were explicitly designed to instill pride in Polish history as a source of national identity and fortitude, linking love of country to the constitutional order and defense duties.

3.2. Hungary – National Pride, Historical Continuity, and Community Values

Hungarian patriotic education promotes a sense of national pride, the continuation of a common past, and the values of a community. This education draws its foundation from the Fundamental Law of Hungary (the country’s constitution), adopted on April 25, 2011, and amended subsequently. It anchors national pride, moral values, and responsibility in the Preamble and key provisions.³⁹ In the preface of the document, there is a reference to the “Christian heritage” of Hungary, the “self-determination of the nation,” and “centuries of the fight for freedom.” This clearly indicates that students should take pride in their history. In addition, students learn about national upbringing (*nemzeti nevelés*) in history, ethics, and civics courses. The main topics of these courses include the Revolution of 1848–1849 and the War of Independence, the Uprising of 1956 – when Hungarians rose up against Soviet rule – and the democratic transition after 1989, when Hungary regained its sovereignty. Schools use national symbols (such as the flag, the anthem, and the Holy Crown) and national days⁴⁰ in all school ceremonies and projects. As such, the curriculum emphasizes the importance of taking pride in Hungarian historical achievements and resistance.

Following the election of Viktor Orbán’s government in 2010, successive Orbán administrations increased patriotic education in Hungarian schools through additional legislation, including the mandatory teaching of Hungarian national history, an emphasis on cultural heritage, and additional school commemorations. Following

39 Hungary, Magyarország Alaptörvénye [Fundamental Law of Hungary], April 25, 2011, as amended, <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1100425.atv>.

40 March 15th National Day, August 20th State Foundation Day, and October 23rd Revolution and Freedom Fight Day.

new policies (2025–2026), the focus is placed on sovereignty, the family, and community solidarity.

3.3. Czech Republic – Secular Pluralism, Modernization, Compulsory English

Czech education is secular, pluralistic, and oriented toward European democratic values, based on the 1993 Constitution and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms.⁴¹ In terms of civic education (*občanská výchova*), the emphasis is on critical thinking, tolerance, active citizenship, and European identity rather than on the use of symbolic representations of nationalism. The curriculum includes the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938) as a democratic tradition, the transition from communist dictatorship to democracy via the Velvet Revolution (1989), human rights, and EU institutions. There is no specific “patriotic” subject in the curriculum, however, students learn about these values through project-based learning, debates, and involvement in civic activities. More recently, there has been a shift toward developing the European values, digital citizenship, and democratic competence (Strategy for Education 2025–2030). This model of patriotism develops resilience by promoting tolerance and critical engagement and by aligning with EU and international standards within a pluralist society. The current government (as of 2026) under the Minister of Education⁴² has focused on curriculum modernization, compulsory English from the first grade, and streamlining foreign language options (German, French, and Spanish from the seventh grade). The emphasis remains on practical skills, digital literacy, and European integration.

3.4. Slovakia – Solidarity, Constitutional Loyalty, and Community Responsibility

Slovak education for national pride focuses on solidarity, commitment to the constitution, and community responsibility. The emphasis is placed on the Slovak Republic’s Constitution (September 1, 1992; revised with an emphasis on sovereignty, democracy, and human rights).⁴³ The subjects of moral and civic education include the Slovak National Uprising (1944) as a symbol of anti-fascist resistance, as well as independence and Velvet Divorce. Educational programs are being developed to help build a common, constitutional culture and to develop a sense of shared responsi-

41 Czech Republic, Listina základních práv a svobod [Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms], 1991, <https://www.psp.cz/docs/laws/listina.html>.

42 Mikuláš Bek (STAN party).

43 Slovakia, *Ústava Slovenskej republiky*, as amended.

bility among all members of society. Under the conservative government of Prime Minister Robert Fico, the focus of education policy has been on reinforcing national sovereignty and traditional values, and on resisting “progressive” influences. Although there are no new subjects specifically titled “Patriotic Education,” the government has implemented some other changes to reinforce national identity and constitutional loyalty. In 2025, Fico’s coalition passed constitutional amendments that define the family as being composed of a male and female, limit adoptions to heterosexual couples, and assert Slovakia’s sovereignty in matters of culture and ethics, while also stating that the country will resist supranational (EU) influence over these matters. The amendments establish an explicit link between education and constitutional values, requiring all school curricula to respect the cultural and ethical positions established in the Constitution.⁴⁴

The government has also emphasized the funding for schools that support traditional values and national identity, focusing on students’ respect for Slovak history (e.g., the 1944 Slovak National Uprising) and the constitutional order. Prime Minister Fico has stated that education serves as a way to prevent progressivism and protect national sovereignty.⁴⁵

4. Discussion, Policy Recommendations, and Regional Framework

Global models share several common features: a comparison of how patriotism is taught in those countries and the models of the V4 reveals common bases for patriotic education but different emphases regarding a viable model for Central Europe. The five country models show that patriotic education succeeds as long as constitutional values provide a strong foundation, historical memory remains undistorted, and active citizenship is encouraged.

In Central Europe, given the combination of ongoing political pressure on the states and the long-standing presence of historical trauma (the partitions, the occupations, and the communist era), education that links a person’s love of country to the

44 Slovakia, Ústavný zákon č. 255/2025 Z.z., ktorým sa mení a dopĺňa Ústava Slovenskej republiky č. 460/1992 Zb. v znení neskorších predpisov, effective May 3, 1947, promulgated November 3, 1946, accessed April 15, 2026, <https://www.aspi.sk/products/lawText/1/104688/112/2/ustavny-zakon-c-255-2025-zz-ktorym-sa-meni-a-doplna-ustava-slovenskej-republiky-c-460-1992-zb-v-zneni-neskor-sich-predpisov/ustavny-zakon-c-255-2025-zz-ktorym-sa-meni-a-doplna-ustava-slovenskej-republiky-c-460-1992-zb-v-zneni-neskorsich-predpisov>.

45 “Novoročný príhovor predsedu vlády SR Roberta Fica,” TASR, accessed April 3, 2026, www.teraz.sk/spravy/cele-znenie-novorocny-prihovor-pred/930703-clanok.html.

country's constitutional framework fosters citizens who are able to defend the nation's integrity and security.

The equation remains valid: *A nation's love for itself plus an understanding and respect for its own history (the healthy core of patriotism) = A stronger state resilience and its security.* The study proposes a regional constitutional framework for Central Europe through the lens of constitutional patriotism and a focus on identity. Constitutional patriotism can build upon Poland's republican heritage, the collective experience of all countries in the V4 region, and global examples, because patriotism involves loyal allegiance to a set of constitutional precepts, national historical self-identification, and the protection of sovereignty. Core elements of the concept are as follows: (1) Love of country: deep affection, identification, and readiness to act for the nation's good. (2) Constitutional anchor: allegiance to the rule of law, the common good, and democratic institutions. (3) Pride in history: the nation's past (resistance and constitutional tradition) as a source of strength. (4) Civic obligations: participation in social activities, social solidarity, and defense obligations. (5) Compatibility with international standards. Love of country (Homeland) constitutes a parabola in which it acts as the fuel, the following four elements are the engine that directs this fuel productively. Without love, the engine has no power. People will not defend institutions, honor history, or sacrifice for the common good if they feel indifferent toward or ashamed of their nation. Love makes obedience to law voluntary, pride genuine, obligations meaningful, and international compatibility honest instead of servile. In constitutional patriotism traditions, attachment remains to a particular political community and its history, even when grounded in universal principles. The love of country stays particular: this constitution, this tradition of resistance, this people.

5. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research primarily uses primary sources, including publicly accessible policy and legal documents, as well as secondary sources such as published research articles. There are no primary empirical data from surveys of either teachers or students regarding the impact of these patriotic education programs. While this study includes a wide scope for comparison among the five international models and the V4 group, it cannot be assumed that its findings will translate to all other geographic areas. Therefore, future research would likely benefit from utilizing qualitative/quantitative/mixed evaluations of the effectiveness of the proposed "constitutional patriotism based on identity" framework, longitudinal research examining changes over time in civic

engagement, as well as expanding the number of post-communist democratizing states or smaller democratizing nations included in comparisons.

Conclusions

Patriotic education grounded in constitutional values and historical pride strengthens democratic resilience in Central Europe. By drawing on its republican past and carefully selected international experiences, the V4 can model a form of patriotic education that secures state security, peace, and cooperation in the twenty-first century. Recommendations for building this type of resilience in the future include: incorporating educational components from Japan's "moral harmony" approach (such as group harmony and cooperation) to foster a greater sense of community cohesion in both school and society, utilizing the active and participatory approaches used by the United Kingdom to increase civic engagement in schools and communities, and adapting elements of the U.S. system of voluntary symbols of constitutional loyalty to promote commitment to the respective V4 constitutions. The recommendations should be tailored to fit the unique cultural, social, political, and economic characteristics of each respective V4 country.

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