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National and ethnic minority issues in Europe

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Katalin Szabó, Ömer Bilal Almak, Csilla Morauszki, András Lőrincz, Tamás Matyi, Eszter Balogh, Sándor Földvári, Zuzana Balcová, Taylor Helene Matevich

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ICRP Geopolitika Kft
45 Gyongyosi utca, Budapest 1031 – Hungary
<http://culturalrelations.org>

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Islam or Euro-Islam in Europe?

Katalin Szabó

Abstract: This study's objective is to examine the current debate on the presence of Islam in Europe. The German-Syrian scholar, Bassam Tibi's Euro-Islam conception served as a basis for the research who described the peaceful coexistence as a bilateral process that needs cooperation and changes from both European and Muslim side. Identity theories of Volkan and Schöpflin also supported the results, giving a deeper understanding on group cohesion. As an essential part of the issue, the complexity of Islam is also discussed, claiming that in the policy-making process Islam cannot be treated only as a religion, but as a religious-ethnic system, and as a historical and cultural heritage. In finding the proper solutions Muslim organisations are essential, even though some of them still do not work as they are supposed to in promoting pluralism. The study's conclusion indicates that the conception of Euro-Islam is an insightful academic initiative that can have a vital role in further cooperation and in creating Europe's unity. Still, for achieving all of its aims, bigger support is needed from the side of the Muslim community.

Keywords: Islam, Europe, Euro-Islam, Muslim, Islamism, cooperation, identity

Introduction

In this essay I am going to give an outline of the current debate on the presence of Islam in Europe. The core concept of my essay is Euro-Islam as introduced by the Syrian-German scholar Bassam Tibi in 1992. (Tibi, 1992, Les Conditions d'Euro-Islam) Tibi describes Euro-Islam as a bilateral process, in which Europeans as well as Muslims need to change in order to achieve a more peaceful coexistence. Along with Tibi's proposal I am basing my analysis on the assumption that multiculturalism as a state doctrine is less preferable to integration

theories, which are not equivalent to assimilation.¹ Identity theories (Volkan, Schöpflin) will provide me with an understanding of group cohesion among Muslims in Europe. Nevertheless, I also argue that Muslims are not a homogenous group and therefore, a dialogue with Muslims as a whole is not possible. Finally, I am going to assess the effectiveness of Turkish/Muslim organizations in promoting the integration of the Muslim population.

Islam is more than a religion

Before going into details about Tibi's concept, my first point is to underline the significance of Islamic tradition which has its valuable impact around the world. With this I emphasize that Islam generally, cannot only be dealt with only as a religion. Islam is a *religious-ethical system*, a *historical heritage* "that provides its followers with a transnational religious and national cultural identity" (Sachedina, 2001, p.15) and a *civilization*. The historical and cultural heritage of Islamic civilization and teachings are unfortunately undervalued and confused with Islamism. Therefore, efforts should be made in order to emphasize the distinction between this heritage and a minority within. By political Islam or Islamism I mean the following: "Islamism implies support for an Islamic state." (...) "Some Muslim fundamentalist groups have explicit political aims, and seek to use the electoral process to gain an "Islamic" government." (Ali, 2008, p.41) I assume in this essay that negating the existence of Islamists in Europe can do harm to the Muslim population as well, because their approach is not compatible with Europe and its values, thereby hindering their integration. This becomes reality in terms of Islamic education, in which young Muslims can be educated in the "wrong way" about their religion, in case an Islamist group takes over their religious education.

My next point is that given the fact that Islam "provides its followers with a transnational, religious and cultural identity", as cited above, it can result in very different concepts around the world. The differences emerging from different cultural backgrounds cannot be negated either but the conflictive elements should be dealt with and transformed. What do we mean

¹ Multiculturalism emphasizes on the differences, rather than focusing on the similarities between different groups of society. Tibi urges for the recognition that multiculturalism is not equal to cultural pluralism. He criticizes the cultural relativist positions because highlighting differences instead of similarities would end up in creating "ghettos", also referred to as parallel societies. Cultural relativism negates common values and contradicts cultural pluralism. The European society ought not to negate its own culture, which does not exclusively consist of genocide, racism and dominance. According to him, multiculturalism is about transforming the ancient universalism to cultural relativism. He describes these positions as "philo-Islamism", as opposed to "anti-Islamism", where he concludes that there should be a middle way. (Tibi, 2003, pp.74–75)

when we say Muslims? As Roy writes, I assume that it is complicated to talk about ‘Islam’ and ‘Muslims’ as cohesive entities, given their inner diversity.

Who do we call Muslim? A mosque-goer, the child of Muslim parents, somebody with a specific ethnic background (an Arab, a Pakistani), or one who shares with another a specific culture? What is Islam? A set of beliefs based on a revealed book, a culture linked to historical civilization? A set of norms and values that can be adapted to different cultures? An inherited legacy based on a common origin? (Roy, 2004, p.21)

What happens when it is taken out of the original context, “the Muslim world”? Even the terms “Islam and the West” or “Islam in the West” has been subjects of profound discussions. As Amir Hussain suggests, it is preferable to use the phrase “Islam in the West”. Ten years ago, however, Kelsay still suggested that “Muslim immigration is growing to such an extent that soon we cannot speak about Islam and the West, but Islam in the West.” (Kelsay, 1993) Nowadays there is quite a strong consensus on the usage of the term “Islam in the West”. First of all, the expression acknowledges the reality of Muslims living in the West and who are in many cases already European citizens. He warns from using the term “Islam and the West” due to the interconnectedness of the two, historically as well as in terms of religious connections. He also mentions the philosophical, literary impact of Muslim scholars on the “Western world”. Ibn Rushd and Ibn Sina (Avicenna), among others were read by and had an influence on European philosophers. Many education fields, such as mathematics or medicine have gained from the contribution of Muslim scientists. (Hussain, 2007, pp.139–140)

With the idea of interconnectedness and mutual influence in mind, which can be perceived as basic tools when regulating conflicts, I will move on to the connection between Islam and European values, such as Western democracy and secularization. In today’s controversial news coverage, the former Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi’s words should be followed. “Speak out against militant extremism or share the world’s misunderstanding of Islam.” (Tibi, 2008, p.xv) In this essay I try to make my contribution and to demonstrate that Islam is truly “salaam”, meaning peace.

Euro Islam

Particularities in Islam

In this section I will stress on some of the major particularities in Islamic tradition and legal custom compared to European legal tradition. The first particularity is the absence of a central church. As Harris rightly puts it,

Islam is not concerned with distinction between “church” and “state”. There is scarcely any such entity as an Islamic church, and an Islamic state has always been a controversial institution. (Harris, 2007, p.108)

The fact that secularization in the Western sense does not exist in Islam, has been categorized as problematic and one of the major concerns that faces Muslim communities in Europe. Sachedina at the same time seems to embrace an opposite opinion as the one of the supporters of Euro-Islam, when he adds:

“The secular culture tends toward a negative characterization of anything religious as soon as it crosses the boundary from the private to the public sphere. The religious culture, on the contrary, holds that religious values are a valuable resource in combating social and political injustices.” (Sachedina, 2001, p.3)

In this sense, “Islamic societies”, in which religious obligation is a key element can manage social problems and sustain a sense of community. Even though it sounds controversial from a Western perspective, it can provide a just society due to the ethical orientations. Here comes the question again, if this can “be outsourced” to a secular political culture and if it may be problematic, for example regarding the freedom of religion. With other words, even though some scholars defend the idea of Islam and state connection as a natural way of providing social policies, the idea of Islam and state cannot work in Europe. Historically, Muslim societies, in their original historical journey developed their own kind of structures *on the basis of the main Islamic sources*. – as Pacaci adds it. (Pacaci, 2013, p.368) But as we discussed in class, every culture has the potential for peace, its own tradition and finding it can be a mission. Islam is a wonderful example. Islam undoubtedly has the potential for democratic pluralism:

“Islamic revelation presents a theology that resonates with the modern pluralistic belief that other faiths are not merely inferior manifestation of religiosity, but variant forms of

individual and communal responses to the presence of the transcendent in human life.”

(Sachedina, 2001, p.14)

The tradition of pluralism is there, the one with which the individual as part of the collective can identify. Therefore, it is important to state that Islam is not an exclusivist religion originally. The concept of *dhimmi* in Muslim society means “religious minority”. In the early history of Islam, *dhimmi* status was provided for those of different religions. Although non-Muslims had to pay the *jyza*, the poll tax but “*dhimmis* owned and cultivated fields and vineyards next to Muslims’ lands as well as their living side by side. Muslims and *dhimmis* lived in the same neighbourhood and there was no isolation from one another and no ghettos in 17th-century Kayseri.” (Pacaci, 2013, p.368)

The power of ijtihad as opposed to taqlid

The Interpretation of Islamic sources in Islamic jurisprudence is a key factor. This is an important tool for believers to perceive their reality with the help of Quranic teaching. In Islamic tradition the word “*al-ijtihad*” refers to a traditionally pluralistic “culture of argument” which is based on personal interpretation of the Islamic legal sources. It gives space for further reconsideration of Quranic teachings, therefore making a way of building a bridge between current world affairs and traditional interpretations. Its aim is to “make religion more relevant to the modern generation”. (Ali, 2008, p.111) Such independent reasoning needs to be embraced given the contemporary social and political contexts. Herein the main objective is to rethink the writings in a way that connects to the communities’ reality more efficiently. It is a possibility of weakening political unity and promoting pluralism. In no way does it seek to destroy already existing traditions. “*Taqlid*” basically means following past interpretations, thereby not giving space for the independent evolution of religion. The initial Islamic message was in many cases combined with local traditions and “misinterpreted”, therefore the original message should be rediscovered by believers. (Ramadan, 2001, 65) Sayyid Qutb and the Muslim Brotherhood provides an antipluralistic way of interpreting the Koran, which is not the right way. (Sachedina, 2001, p.40) Therefore, jurists and Quranic interpreters or imams speaking to European Muslims, should share the idea of *ijtihad*.

Germany and Islam

In the past few decades Germany has experienced a significant amount of immigration that the country had not seen before 1960. As Max Frisch a Swiss writer puts it “We asked for work force and human beings came.” –, referring to the controversy that defined German policy towards immigration. Given the fact that immigration was a considerably new phenomenon, Germany realized too late that it had become a country of immigration, which needed a new perception and new strategies from policymakers, the population itself, “immigrants” and “*Einheimische*”² in order to achieve a peaceful society. The overwhelming majority of “immigrants”³ have been Muslims. Although the importance of religion in public life depends on the country of origin of Muslim, it is a significant factor in every country of the Muslim world. As Sachedina puts it, “in the Muslim world, where religion permeates the national culture, Islamic tradition maintains an active interest in issues of national politics and social justice.” (Sachedina, 2001, p.4) This is the reason why religion has also become part of the debate. Among the religious communities the Islamic has become the second largest community. (Sen, 2002, 7) Although at this point I have to stress out that it is quite inaccurate to refer to Muslims as a homogenous religious group due to their inner diversity. Even though believers are part of the *ummah*, which is the community of people of Islamic faith, internally they are fragmented ethnically, culturally. (Moxon-Brown, 2004, p.139) They are culturally diverse groups who share a religious idea.

It was Tibi’s concept that proposed an “*aurea mediocritas*” while providing a golden middle way for changing attitudes in German society from both sides. His first assumption is that Europe and the Muslims world are two different civilizations, which had hostility and friendship as well, but the negation of problems arising from the two does not solve any problems. According to his opinion the integration of Muslims into German society is a bilateral process, in which Europeans have to give up their idea of ethnic thinking, whereas Muslims need to embrace democratic, secular values. (Tibi, 2008, p.xiii.)

According to Tibi we have to overcome the Islamophobia present in the West but the demonization of the West that some people practice is not the solution. He criticizes the cultural relativist voices which he considers can lead to victimization, reproaches and self-negation. A possible answer can be the des-ethnicisation of Europe and Euro-Islam for it is as

² “*Einheimische*” is a German expression for “native population”, mostly referring to ethnically Germans.

³ The word “immigrant” is not correct in many cases because nowadays the third generation of past “*Gastarbeiter*” has grown up Germany, meaning that they ought not to be dealt with as immigrants any more. The denomination of people with “foreign” parents is mostly “Germans with immigration background”.

wrong to see the essence of Europe as rooted in racism, genocide as it is with dealing with Islam from a phobic position. Due to the lack of spokesmen of the communities, those people who speak in their names are not coming from the immigrant world and therefore disown their necessities. In many cases imams educating young Muslims are attached to political Islamic organizations. To avoid it, if Afroislam or Indoislam can exist, why would Euro-Islam not be a solution to arising problems? Da'wa, hijra and shari'a has to be given up by Muslims.

He proposes the emphasis on a liberal variety of Islam which can be accepted by Muslims and Europeans as well. (Tibi, 2002, pp.76–79) It would be an Islamic religion adapted to the culture of modernity. Meer argues as well, that Muslims in Europe, in spite of coming from different cultures, share a collective sense of self, evidenced by empirically observable Muslim identities at local, national and supra-national level. (Meer, 2012, p.179) He adds that there are three positions in which “Muslims” are interpreted. According to the first one Europe's Muslims are redefining Islam as European Muslims, this is the option that Tibi is proposing. Herein they consider Europe as their home but their lives are guided by Islamic principles. The second interpretation fears that due to demographic, cultural and political weakness of Europe, “pre-modern Islam will beat post-modern Christianity” (Steyn, 2006b). The third one supposes that accommodating Muslims will be more difficult because Islam refuses to be privatized and “advances into the public realm of politics in collective and exceptional ways.” (Meer, 2012, p.180) Independent from any position, it has to be underlined that young Muslims cannot be considered as temporal citizens any more. They ought to be considered as equal citizens with Muslim faith, where the “ius sanguinis” way of thinking is manifested.

Euro-Islamic asabiyya? Muslim identity?

The presupposition about identities is that they are not static, thereby capable of movement. As Schöpflin suggests, each and every group of the society should have a voice, a space for expression. The recognition of the moral value of each entity is essential. Once they are constructed, and there are attempts to change it, an intensified protective mechanism will emerge. (Schöpflin, 2004, pp45–46) The aforementioned “collective sense of self” is understandable when we see that collective identity, such as being a Muslim means a sense of security that gives significance to the world. (Schöpflin, 2004, p.35)

According to Tibi, the emergence of a „European asabiyya” is needed. Asabiyya is the expression of belonging to the homeland. Originally it is an Arabic expression deriving from the time before Islam. It suggests a common identity. It is desirable among Europeans Muslims who develop a sense of “European togetherness”. He assumes that Muslims, although culturally diverse, share a “civilisational unity”. (Tibi, 2000, p.131) The core of the problem is that Islam has a universal world view and „the West” too. This is why one of them has to leave the idea of the universal thinking, this is why Euro-Islam is needed to be further developed. One tool can be education. According to the German constitution, „religious education is regular curriculum (...) the religious education is based on the core principles of the religious community.” (German Constitution, 7; 3) This is becoming complicated when there is no unified religious community. In this case who will determine the material of the education?

Sen and Ramadan emphasize that those who confess Islam as their religion but never attends public prayers should be taken into account when analysing. They call these believers “cultural Muslim”. (Ramadan, 2001, p.143; Sen, p.43.)

Muslim organizations as promoters of pluralism?

Germany has made efforts to ensure that all groups have a voice in society, in an organizational level. Milli Görüş or DITIB are organizations, which are aimed to foster the integration of Muslim immigrant, German citizens with Turkish backgrounds. DITIB can be criticized primarily because it is a branch of the Turkish state that runs all public religious affairs. The organization is directly linked to the Turkish Prime Ministry. A religious attaché is appointed to the organization coming from Turkey and imams are sent to Germany and funded by the Turkish state. One of the imams summed up the problem as “they are foreigners here (and in Turkey)”. (Yükeleyen and Yuldakur, 2011, p.70)

The German Supreme Court gave the possibility of determining the material of the Islamic religious education to an organization called Islamic Federation. Member of the Federation is Milli Görüş as well, which seeks political Islam in its rhetoric. In Nordrhein-Westphalia land they planned public Islamic education throughout the Land. The different Islamic wings argued about choosing inappropriate members in the Coordination Committee who now have the power to choose what students will learn. They criticized them for being undemocratic.

Finally, the concept of Euro-Islam is a good and insightful academic initiative and since its emergence, many scholars dealt with it and continued with further research. This is the reason why I believe that it is a meaningful step towards overcoming problems. At the same time the public support from the side of the Muslim population is considerably low. In an article of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Muslims still believe that “Muslim education should remain in the hands the Muslim population (Preuß, 2010). The intervention of the German state would mean an attack for their cultural identity.

I share the opinion that the key should be “Those who believe in the unity of humankind, and those who believe in the unity of God, should be prepared therefore to discover a unity of humankind’s religious history”, as Hussain quotes from Wilfred Cantwell Smith. (Hussain, 2007, p.140)

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The Dönmeḥ: Sabbataist legacy in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey

Ömer Bilal Almak – Csilla Morauszki

András Lőrincz – Zuzana Balcová

Abstract: The aim of the article is to introduce to the foundation and the history of the Sabbataist community in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. The article is focusing on a relatively small number of Jewish descendants in the mid-17th century whose community could survive and their members managed to reach high societal and administrative positions by the late 19th century. The Dönmeḥs later played a key role in reform movements which led to a political transition in the 1920s. This paper analyses the relation of the Dönmeḥ's identities and the community's preferences regarding the form of government.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Turkey, Tanzimat, Judaism, Dönmeḥ, Sabbataists

Introduction

The Jewish religion, Judaism, which is considered one of the oldest religions of human civilization, has been marked by several historical milestones during its existence. Some of them influenced Judaism positively and led to its theological enrichment, some of them, on the other side, had far reaching negative effects on the faith's preservation. Sabbatai Sevi¹ was one of those who contributed momentarily to the evolution of Judaism and even nowadays,

¹ The name of Sabbatai Sevi is spelled in various forms in different publications. Sabatay Sevi and Sabetay Sevi (in modern Turkish), Sabbatai Sevi (Cengiz Sisman), Sabbatai Tsevi (Pawel Maciejko), Sabbatai Zevi (in some English references) and – following more genuine way in pronunciation – Shabtai Tzvi (Marc Baer) or Shabtai Zvi (Dovid Rossoff).

his name has an influential meaning in the history of the Jewish faith, particularly with regard to modern-day Turkey. Sabbatai Sevi was a Sephardic Rabbi who proclaimed himself a Jewish messiah and thus started the Sabbatian Jewish messianic movement in the 17th century in the Ottoman Empire. Despite the fact that at the beginning, the Jewish community and religious authorities were suspicious of his real intentions, Sabbatai gradually managed to gain his supporters. He started to be followed by many believers who were enthusiastically eager to join their theological leader on the way to the Promised Land, Israel, in order to achieve the desired salvation. The Sabbatian movement was however ended nearly 20 years after its beginning by the unexpected step of Sabbatai, who decided to convert to Islam. Some of his followers supported him by also accepting a new belief. Since that time, these newly converted Muslims were considered crypto-Jews and called “Dönme”, the ones that betrayed their own God. Sabbatai was actually forced to convert to Islam by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV and he and his followers continued to maintain Jewish traditions. This community of “Dönme” was not latent, but publicly known and was gradually getting its own specific shapes and features. “After the death of the ‘converted Messiah’ in 1676, some of his believers developed a sectarian life and apocalyptic theology mixed with Jewish, Christian and Islamic beliefs and rituals.” (Sisman, 2007, p.38). The Sabbatian community co-lived and was assimilated with other “societies” and during decades, it was transformed into the Ottoman Islamic Sabbatian culture.

The life of Sabbatai Sevi

The founder of the Jewish Sabbatean movement, Sabbatai Sevi was not only a Sephardic Rabbi and Kabbalist but also the 17th century’s most often mentioned and most widely known messiah claimant. Although there is no consensus about his birth and death date, some sources claim that he was born in Smyrna (Izmir, Turkey) on the ninth of Av (August, 1626) and died in Ulcinj (Montenegro) on 17 September, 1676. Another interesting thing is that – allegedly – he was exiled by the Turks to Ulcinj on the Day of Atonement. These dates are of

great importance² to the Jewish community which might confirm Sevi's "messiah-story" today and might have confirmed it centuries ago, back then his time.

Sabbatai's family roots led back to the Romaniotes, a Jewish group living in the territory of today's Greece. His father, Mordecai Sevi was a poultry dealer who grew into a successful merchant after Smyrna became the centre of the Levantine trade.

In accordance with the prevailing custom of Oriental Jews of the time, Sabbatai was destined to study the Talmud. However, it turned out very soon that he got fascinated by the mysticism and the teachings of Kabbalah that proved to be his real passion. Sabbatai – rather than learning from a master in Kabbalistic knowledge – was entirely self-taught which means that he often isolated himself while studying and practicing asceticism.

From 1648, Sabbatai increasingly showed signs of a mental illness (Gershom, 1973, p.130), probably manic-depressive disorder which symptoms provided convenient framework to proclaim himself the Messiah. Sometimes, he was able to go for days without sleep than he stayed in bed for two weeks at a time. Since people at that time did not know or understand how manic depression works, they agreed that Sabbatai Sevi must have been meditating or communicating with God. The movement forming around him gained legitimacy in 1665 when a young Kabbalist, Nathan of Gaza verified his story, after recognising the truth of his mandate in one of his visions. (Maciejko, 2010, pp.361–378; p. 362) He became Sabbatai's "publicity agent" proclaiming that the Messiah arrived and Jews are ready to go back to Israel. However, the Turkish Sultan, Mehmed IV was not about to give up the land of Israel to the Jewish community nor was he ready to accept Sevi's claim of being the Messiah.

Worried by the rise of Jewish religious enthusiasm, the Sultan had soon captured and imprisoned him which move brought a turn into Sevi's life as well as to the history of the Sabbatean movement. Allegedly, Mehmed IV made him choose between his life and his faith and – unexpectedly and shocking to most of his followers – Sevi decided to convert out of the faith and became a Muslim.

² The ninth of Av is traditionally the date of the Jewish annual fast that commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. Also, according to ancient rabbinic tradition, the Jewish Messiah will be born on this day. Likewise important is the day of his exile: the Day of Atonement – also known as Yom Kippur – is the holiest day of the year for Jewish people.

Sabbatai Sevi, who was exiled by the Sultan in 1673, died three years later in Ulcinj. Similarly to his life, his death is also clouded in mysteries, however most historians agree that he died of natural causes.

The history of Dönmeh

The Dönmeh in the Ottoman Empire

The Jews influenced by Sabbatai Sevi were mainly from the descendants of those who had been expelled from Spain, Portugal, South Italy and Sicily between 1492 and 1537. (Güteryüz, 2013) Around 40,000 Jews had to emigrate from Spain (Kamen, 1999, pp.29–31) and tens of thousands from adjacent Southern European monarchies. Sultan Beyazid II. offered refuge to the sufferers of the Spanish Inquisition and the Sephardi Jews were allowed to settle in the wealthier cities of the empire (Istanbul, Sarajevo, Salonica, Bursa, Tokat, Jerusalem, Damascus and later Izmir). These Jews fulfilled various needs in the Ottoman Empire: the Muslim Turks were largely uninterested in business enterprises and accordingly left commercial occupations to members of minority religions. (Inalcik, 2001)

The status of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire can be described as fair due to the tolerance they enjoyed under the *millet system*³ which granted autonomous position for the Jewish religious community within the empire. The Ottoman Jews enjoyed similar privileges to those of the Orthodox and Armenian Christians. They were represented by the *Hakham Bashi*, the Chief Rabbi. They were also considered as people of the Book and protected by the Sharia Law of Islam.

During the Classical Ottoman period (1300–1600), the Jews, together with most other communities of the empire, enjoyed a certain level of prosperity. The only problem was the conflict between the Arab and Jewish communities in the Middle Eastern *eyalets* (provinces)⁴ along with the lack of unity among the Jews themselves. The Jews came to the Ottoman Empire from different places and bore their own cultural characteristics thus they founded

³ Millet is a term for the confessional communities in the Ottoman Empire. It refers to the separate legal courts pertaining to “personal law” under which communities (Muslim Sharia, Christian Canon law and Jewish Halakha law abiding) were allowed to rule themselves under their own system. After the Ottoman Tanzimât (1839–76) reforms, the term was used for legally protected religious minority groups, similar to the way other countries use the word nation. (Sachedina, 2007)

⁴ “Long before the culmination of Sabbatai’s mad career, Safed had been destroyed by the Arabs and the Jews had suffered severely” (Mendelssohn, 2008, p.241)

separate congregations. In 1665 Sabbatai Sevi became the leader of the Jewish community of Smyrna.⁵ His fame soon extended far and wide.⁶ His messianic movement had centres in Italy, Germany (Hamburg) and the Netherlands (Amsterdam). (Kohler and Malter, 1906) There had been concerns that his followers posed a threat to the Islamic characteristics of the Ottoman Empire, thus he was forced to either convert or become a martyr. He chose the former option. 300 Sephardic Jewish families from his followers – regardless of his efforts or their willingness to follow Sabbatai’s step – decided to convert to Islam. This group was later known as the Dönme (also spelled Dönme), convert. (Kirsch, 2010) There was a shock⁷ in the Jewish community after Sabbatai Sevi’s conversion, because of the so called Jewish Messiah was converted out of the faith and became a Muslim. Soon after that the mass basis of the Sabbatai’s entire messianic movement fell apart. Despite the disintegration of the movement there were a few “true believers” – mostly Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire – who remain loyal to the ideas. They were committed to believe – no matter what happens. Nathan of Gaza exploited these believers to say that the conversion is the true moment of test: only those who believe now, will be privileged to be part of the messianic movement. So there remained a small core of Sabbateans in the Ottoman Empire which soon emerged in abroad as well.

The Dönme itself was also divided into several branches after Sabbatai’s death. The original sect of Smyrna was called *İzmirli*, referring to Sabbatai’s hometown. The first schism happened after Jacob Querido – a relative of Sabbatai Sevi⁸ – claimed that he was the reincarnation of the self-proclaimed Jewish messiah. He was followed by many of the Sabbateans who were called as *Yakubiler* after his Islam name, Yakup. (Shaw, 1991) Soon after the death of Sabbatai, a Kabbalist rabbi claimed that the true reincarnation was Berechiah Russo (known in Turkish as Osman Baba), which caused the second split from the İzmirli group. Osman Baba’s followers were later called *Karakaş* (Blackbrowed). The

⁵ Sabbatai’s views gained more popularity among the Jews of Palestine during his visit in Jerusalem. However, he had to leave the Holy Land in 1665 because “the rabbis of Jerusalem viewed Sabbatai’s movement with great suspicion, and threatened its followers with excommunication.” (Kohler and Malter, 1906)

⁶ It is important to realise that the entire Jewish world of 1665-66 believed that Sabbatai Sevi was no mere “prophet” or “teacher” but the Promised Messiah and a living incarnation of God. “It was the only messianic movement to engulf the whole of Jewry; from England to Persia, from Germany to Morocco, from Poland to the Yemen.” (Testimonies of Jewish Converts to Islam, p.44)

⁷ Baer (2010, p.3) argues that Sabbatai’s decision was not that shocking for Ottoman Jews because they traced their origins in Portuguese and Spanish Jews “who had either converted or faced the choice of converting”.

⁸ Jacob Querido (ca. 1650–1690) was the son of Joseph the Philosopher and brother of Jochebed, Shabbatai Sevi’s last wife.

Karakaş group was many times larger than the Yakubiler and became more eclectic sect as it had also links to the Bektaşî Sufî order. (Baer, 2010, p.9)

After the Second Battle of Mohács (1687) and during the following decades the Ottoman Empire lost considerable territories and its regional power status weakened simultaneously with the internal cohesion. The influence and power of Ottoman Jews continuously declined throughout the 18th century as they lost their influential positions in trade mainly to the Greeks. (Gerber, 1999) The process of breaking down the Jewish social structure began in the last decades of the 18th century when many families were forced to leave Smyrna (the then centre of Ottoman Jewish community) due to a fire that destructed their synagogues which were the homes of their original congregates. “In addition to the destruction of the synagogues, the breaking down of the Jewish social structure was exacerbated by the growing gap between the rich and poor.” (Jewish Virtual Library, n.a.)

By the mid-19th century the formation of Jewish communities were changed significantly and social divisions based on class began to develop. Throughout the 1860-70s Jews founded their own institutions: schools, hospitals, newspapers and the community began to modernise. The Dönme community of Salonica even founded a university as a part of Feyziye Schools Foundation. The era produced a novel Jewish leadership which members were in favour of modernisation and had pro-Western attitudes. Parallel to these changes a reform period started in the Ottoman Empire marked by the modernising Young Ottomans and the nationalist Young Turks. In such political environment the Ottoman Jews held a variety of views on the role of Jews in the Ottoman Empire, from loyal Ottomanism to Zionism. (Campos, 2005, pp.461–463.) In the era the Dönme played an enormous role on the Young Turk movement, a group of modernist revolutionaries who later brought down the Ottoman Empire. (Kirsch, 2010)

However, until the second half of the 19th century the inter-communal relations in the Ottoman Empire were merely sound and positive.⁹ In most cities residential pattern showed that different communities (i.e. Muslim, Christian, Jewish, etc.) lived separated, however the quarters of the three communities were scattered about in the cities (Quatert, 2005, pp.179–186) which fact indicates mutual understanding in a relatively harmonious milieu.

⁹ The status of the Jews in the late 19th century is probably well demonstrated in a statement sent by the Jewish community of Salonica to a Parisian Jewish journal, the *Bulletin* in 1893: “There are but few countries, even among those which are considered the most enlightened and the most civilized, where Jews enjoy a more complete equality than in Turkey [the Ottoman Empire]. H. M. the sultan and the government of the Porte display towards Jews a spirit of largest toleration and liberalism.” (Dumont, 1982, p.221)

In this societal atmosphere the Young Turk movement – which had its origins in secret societies (Demonian, 1996, p.11) – was favouring to foster radical changes. Its ideology was based on contemporary Western political philosophy infiltrated through the newly founded schools: liberalism, materialism, positivism and nationalism. This nationalist movement was later the driving force of the revolution in 1908 (which resulted the gradual creation of a new governing elite and the replacement of the ruling elite in the religious communities) and also had a key role in the Armenian genocide. The Jewish members of the Young Turk movement worked for the cooperation of various Jewish organizations in Turkey, and many of them insisted that Turkish Jews were Turks first and Jews second. Prominent Jewish Young Turks included Emmanuel Carasso (a Sephardic Jewish lawyer from Salonica who pioneered the masonic movement within the Ottoman Empire), Mehmet Cavit (a Sabbatean economist, who became minister of finance in 1909) and Marcel Samuel Raphael Cohen (known as Munis Tekinalp, who became one of the founding fathers of Turkish nationalism and an ideologue of Pan-Turkism, then of Kemalism, after 1923).

The Dönme in the Republic of Turkey

The proclamation of the republic and the adaptation of Western institutions could have brought relative benefits for the Jewish minority in Turkey due to the Kemalist principles¹⁰ and the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne¹¹. However the nation-building process meant social homogenisation in the same time: all who lived within the new Republic, were regarded as Turkish citizens “possessing equal rights, regardless of language, religion, and race; at the same time, they expected the various non-Turkish and non-Muslim inhabitants to wholeheartedly adopt Turkish customs, language, religion, and culture.” (Bali, 2011) Consequently the Jews were subjected to heavy pressures toward assimilation (Turkification). Soon the relative failure of Turkish Jewry to fully “Turkify” themselves led much of the country’s elite to view them as an ungrateful minority. (Bali, 2011) Another reason of that was the economic and political success of Jewish elites. The conflict coupled with increasing external intervention during the Great Depression. In the mid-1930s the English, Germans and Russians transformed Turkey into a vast stage for propaganda and espionage. The Nazi

¹⁰ The six principles of Kemalism are: republicanism, populism, secularism, reformism, etatism and nationalism.

¹¹ The Treaty of Lausanne was a peace treaty that officially ended the state of war between Turkey and the Entente Powers since the onset of the World War I. The Treaty of Lausanne covered a broad range of general issues, but Articles 37–45 specifically regulated the status and rights of non-Muslims – the Armenians, Greeks and Jews – living in Turkey. (Toktas, 2005, p.398)

propaganda machine was also stressing the “Judeo-Masonic danger.” (mason.org.tr website, n.a.) Many of the former Jewish leaders of the Young Turks lost favour of Atatürk and even his close associates were exiled or assassinated. Certain communities of the Dönme were also blamed by Dönme themselves: in 1924 Mehmet Karakaşzade Rüştü (a Karakaş Jew) accused Dönme of lacking patriotism and not having been assimilated. Soon discussions spread into newspapers including the ones owned by Dönme: Ahmet Emin Yalman, in the newspaper (Vatan) he owned, accepted the existence of such groups. (Nefes, 2013, pp.247–264)

As a consequence a debate emerged about the role of Sabbatean newspaper owners and media moguls in Turkey. This debate then was re-emerging in the 1950s and also in the 1970s in the case of Abdi İpekçi, who was the editor of the leading Turkish daily Milliyet, and his relative, İsmail Cem (İpekçi), the editor of the newspaper Politika. (Bali, 2001, pp.414–415) Since the early 1920s conspiracy theories and accusations were generally in connection with Sabbateans in Turkey. As a matter of fact, many Dönme managed to keep their positions during the 1960–1990s. Members of the Sabbatean community could hold high positions in the society – which were often regarded as disproportionately high compared to their number.

Even nowadays, there can be found contemporary followers of Sabbatai Sevi in Turkey. However, only little information is provided about this community. Even estimates of numbers of Sabbateans still living on the Turkish territory differ widely. Regarding the more pessimistic probability, according to some resources, there are only about 100,000 followers of Sabbatai Sevi in modern-day Turkey. Some of the resources speak about several hundred thousands. In general, Jewish society is accepted by Turkish Muslims, but only if they do not claim to be Muslims even if they are clearly not. Sabbateans still have good positions in Turkish society. It is generally known that most of the Sabbateans have left-wing preferences and are part of the Turkish cultural elite.

In comparison with the rest of Turkish society, the Dönme’s level of education and culture gives them the appearance of an elite group that has risen above the masses. The Dönme, who along with the non-Muslim sectors of Turkey’s population dominated the country’s economic life in the first years of the Republic’s founding, were viewed as powerful competitors by others who desired a greater share of the economic pie. They were also seen as an interest group that collaborated with the Jews, with the two communities looking out for one another. (Bali, 2001, p.430)

The ideology of the Dönme

The ideology of the Dönme was evolved by the millenarian ideas of the approach of the messianic time¹² – which ideas were quite popular around 1666. It was also formed by Kabbalistic traditions during the second half of the 17th century and revolved primarily around the Eighteen Precepts, an abridged version of the Ten Commandments.¹³ After the conversion to Islam, the Sabbatian believers were careful in complying with Islamic rules and regulations.¹⁴ (Sisman, 2007, p.41)

Despite their conversion to Islam, the Sabbateans secretly remained close to Judaism and continued to practice Jewish rituals covertly. They recognized Sabbatai Sevi as the Jewish Messiah, observed certain commandments with similarities to those in Judaism, and prayed in Hebrew and later in Ladino. They also observed rituals celebrating important events in Sevi's life and interpreted Sevi's conversion in a Kabbalistic way. Much of Dönme ritual is a combination of various elements of Kabbalah, Sabbateanism, Jewish traditional law, and Sufism. (Baer, n.a.)

Baer claims (see Doğan, 2011) that their syncretistic religion, along with a rigorously maintained, distinct ethnic identity, meant that they were neither Jews nor orthodox Muslims. Since the convert of the first Dönme, "Jews did not consider them Jews. They did not consider themselves Jews. According to Islamic and secular Ottoman law, they were not Jews because their ancestors had converted to Islam." (Doğan, 2011) As a matter of fact, they cannot identify themselves as Jews openly because of some reason. This reason could relate to their aim of not losing current positions and keeping the opportunities for existence in the future. As formerly mentioned, Jews had a declining role in the 17–18th century Ottoman Empire. In the same period the Dönme maintained the former urban character of the Ottoman Jewry with important centres in Istanbul and Salonica – which fact could later play a role in forming the political thought of the Dönme.

¹² The readiness of the Jews to believe the messianic claims of Sabbatai Sevi may largely be explained by the desperate state of European Jewry in the mid-17th century. The bloody pogroms of Bohdan Khmelnytsky had wiped out one third of Europe's Jewish population and destroyed many centres of Jewish learning and communal life (Cohen, 1948). There is no doubt that for most of the Jews of Europe there could not have been a more propitious moment for the messiah to deliver salvation than the moment Sabbatai Sevi made his appearance.

¹³ The additional commandments were concerned with interactions that may occur between the Dönme and the Jewish and Muslim communities. Their aim was to avoid marriage between these groups.

¹⁴ "Outwardly Muslims and secretly Jewish Sabbateans, the Dönme observed traditional Muslim holidays like Ramadan but also kept the Jewish Sabbath and major holidays." (Yardeni, 2009)

Being eclectic the Dönmehe itself since the beginning of the Sabbatean movement, the 19th century brought more serious cleavages within the entire Jewish community. The Dönmehe's social structure was also challenged by new social and financial divisions. The most numerous Jewish communities has transformed or dissolved due to several accidents.¹⁵ The societal transformations, the new possibilities to leave the declining Empire as well as the narrowing chances for getting ahead were together the factors which have fostered the changes. As a consequence, Dönmehe got further from Judaism and become more cosmopolitan. In this period Salonica became the centre for crypto-Jews instead of Smyrna.

The mid-19th century brought differentiation in Jewish communities. Jews originally handled the towns' commerce, but they were gradually replaced by the Armenians and Greeks who used more up-to-date methods and mastered the foreign languages required for the export-import trade. As a result of this, many of the Jewish communities scattered. Large number of them impoverished and became frustrated thus disappointed with the existing establishment. Those who belonged to the wealthier could reach better education (even in abroad) and later turned from commerce towards politics during the Tanzimât reforms and the First Constitutional Era. Some of them welcomed the political reforms, which was also true in the case of the Jewry of the big cities due to the large number of minorities who supported Ottomanism¹⁶.

During the 19th century the relations between the Dönmehe and the European Jewry became tighter due to the great number of wealthy Dönmehe, who went to European schools. Their identity was at that time questioned by the nationalist Turks, who regarded their growing influence as a national security risk. Their fears were increasing as the Jewish immigration started after the establishment of the Israel in 1948. The dual-loyalty accusations were intensifying in Turkey as many of the Dönmehe made close relations with Israeli organisations.

¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, in 1772 a huge fire broke out in Smyrna (Izmir) and all of the synagogues were destroyed. The synagogue in Bursa was burned in 1851, in Edessa (today Urfa) Jews survived a big fire in 1880, in Edirne all the 13 synagogues were burned to the ground in the great fire of 1905. In Istanbul there had been several fires in the 18th century (in 1704, 1715, 1729, 1740, 1751, and 1756) devastating the Jewish quarters. Fires broke out during the 19th century in 1872, 1874, 1883, 1890, 1891, 1894, and 1896. Further fires broke out in various quarters in the years 1900; 1905, 1908, 1909, 1911, 1912, 1915, 1918, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, and 1941. (Jewish Virtual Library, n.a.)

¹⁶ Ottomanism promoted the equality among the millets. The idea originated amongst the Young Ottomans in areas such as the acceptance of all separate ethnicities in the Empire – regardless of their religion – to Ottomans and to equal their civil rights. (Shaw, 1977, pp.55–171)

It is generally known that still nowadays most of the Sabbateans have left-wing preferences and are part of the Turkish cultural elite. (One reason for that is right-wing parties and Islamists were usually regarded them as enemies of the nation or the religion. Another reason is the Dönme's close ties with secularism, left-wing political thought and liberal Western ideas.)

Proving that Sabbatean views are still presented in our modern time, some thoughts should be marked about a neo-Sabbatean group called Donmeh West. The organisation was founded in California in 1972 under the leadership of Reb Yakov Leib HaKohain who is a descendant of Turkish Sabbateans. Donmeh West has almost 1000 members and – according to its official webpage¹⁷ – the group is still growing. Its main goal is to disseminate and practice the more than 300 year-old Kabbalistic transmission.

Conclusion

The story of the Dönme is the chronicle of a relatively small community emerging in the 17th century which members later managed to play a key role in the history of Turkey. The community could survive due to their concealed identity for a long time. However this fact caused fragmentation within the Dönme and in the same time it caused aversion of the Turks towards Jews. The members of the Dönme found themselves in a situation during the 20th century that they are members of hostile group in the eye of the nationalist Turks whose number was continuously growing for decades. Besides that the identity of the Dönme's was not clear either. As the Dönme's role in the formation of the republic is inevitable, they were also regarded as “agents of some external interests”. Their role in establishing the modern-day secular republic shall not be disregarded; however it would be misleading to state that the current political system is exclusively shaped by the then influential Dönme's of the late 19th and early 20th century. What is certain is that the Dönme's would preferably be a part of a community in which national and religious identity is overshadowed while secular values and civil rights are more displayed.

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¹⁷ Besides the webpage, the private foundation is also operating a Facebook, a Twitter and a Google+ page which shows well how active it is in the social media. (donmeh-west.org)

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Life in the Village Cut in Two

Tamás Matyi

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to examine the particular case of Nagyszelmenc and Kisszelmenc, the twin cities that were separated due to the changes of history in the 20th century. The main aim is to present the social and economic consequences of the arbitrary border pulling that made these two cities the part of Slovakia and Ukraine. The problem is analysed in the frames of cross border relations which uses multiple perspectives and interdisciplinary indicators. The conclusion of the study indicates that the border pulling caused huge damages both economically and politically and had consequences on the twin cities' social relations as well because of the separated families. The paper also raises the question of the current visa problem that means an obstacle for effective relations and draws the attention to further economic problems.

Keywords: border pulling, twin villages, separated families, shopping tourism, visa

Introduction

For the topic of this paper I have selected my village called Nagyszelmenc (*Velké Slemence*), a small but nowadays well-known settlement in Eastern Slovakia. The Slovak Nagyszelmenc is the twin village of Kisszelmenc (*Mali Selmenci*), which is currently located in Subcarpathia, in Western Ukraine. Both villages were part of the Hungarian Kingdom in Ung County until the end of the World War I, which also led to the conclusion of the Treaty of Paris in 1920. After the peace talks near Paris in 1920, Ung County together with the detached North Eastern counties was attached to Czechoslovakia, which was created at the end of the World War I and unravelled on 1 January, 1993. The twin villages returned back to Hungary after the First Vienna Award of 2 November, 1938, hereupon, they have belonged again to the motherland for 6 years until the end of 1944. Towards the end of the World War II the

Czechoslovak authorities returned back to this area, but they were driven away by the Soviet Union, who was pushing its borders to the West, thus it annexed the Eastern Kisszelmenc, the smaller part of the twin villages. The Soviet Union drew a new border between the houses in the village. This border was shifted back and forth within the village for a short time, and it remained there where it still stands nowadays. Soon, an Iron Curtain was built inside Szelmenc, which in fact hermetically blocked the Soviet Union from the other countries. After the new regime, the Czechoslovak-Soviet border became a Slovak-Ukraine border, and later it stood for the Eastern border of the European Union. Currently, a Schengen border lies in the place of Stalin's Iron Curtain. Due to the long struggles, on 23 December, 2005 an international pedestrian-cyclist border was opened between the twin villages – open from 8 am to 8 pm – , which resulted in the fall of Europe's last Iron Curtain.

Although, it is relevant to mention that the two villages have never entirely been one administrative unit, thus both villages had their own separate self-governments. The incorrect denomination that the twin villages were one village in the past comes from the fact that the inhabitants of Nagyszelmenc and Kisszelmenc used the community institutions jointly; over time, the houses coalesced, too, and the two villages gradually merged together. Nevertheless, the villages have never become united legally. Apart from this, I think that it is completely understandable that the inhabitants of the twin villages treat the half cut village as one settlement, and despite their separate municipalities they lived the joys and sorrows of everyday life together as one community, one village.

In this paper I attempt to discover in what extent did the Soviet-Czechoslovak border, arbitrarily drawn in 1944, influence the life of the twin villagers – Nagyszelmenc and Kisszelmenc –, how did they face the difficulties of life forced upon them by the central power; moreover, I try to find out whether it was worth opening the border between the two settlements.

Methodology

The relations formed in border zones or border regions are called cross border relations by the social and cultural studies. The professionals are examining settlements or communities, which are located near borders, or the inhabitants' lifestyle which changed greatly or completely due to the border lines drawn over their heads. The examination is always

complex, thus the experts try to investigate the problem from multiple perspectives. In order to understand the nature of cross border relations, firstly, the notion of border has to be understood: “The state border is an imaginary line that separates the area of states and the non-sovereign states from each other”- (Rechnitzer). Throughout the history, these borders many times and continually alter as a result of great power interests. However, besides the artificial boundaries natural boundaries can be formed, too, which are usually created next to some kind of natural phenomenon. Over the years, the majority of border sections have become permanent, and thus cross border relations have been established between the neighbouring countries and the people who live there. These relations were primarily economic in nature, and were especially influenced by the political situation of the neighbouring country. An appropriate example can be the influence of Capitalism on the border regions after the World War II; thus with the help of the free market the border regions developed rapidly, while any development can be detected in the countries of the Soviet Union. The closed nature of the Soviet Union, its inward politics manifested mostly in the strengthening of borders and the neglect of border regions, which in many cases resulted in their conscious deconstruction. The best example can be the Western border of the Soviet Union, where the Soviet soldiers often used grenades and electrical signalling system in order to hermetically block East and West from each other. “Only the villagers and the people with permission could enter the wide border zone (...) Until the mid-sixties both personal and official relationships were neglected, the mined border really divided two worlds”- (Hardi). A change was brought by the new regime. By the disintegration of the Soviet Union its external borders also flew down. In the once underdeveloped Western Hungarian border regions a recovery began. Due to Austria’s EU membership, these regions could also join the INTERREG development programs, which contributed to their current status as the most developed regions in Hungary. However, the improvement of economic relations led to better personal relationships, too. It was found during research, that the people of different ages in the border regions experienced the closed nature of the border differently. The survey reveals that those people who are now older than 60 mostly felt a sense of confinement. On the other hand, the younger generation responded to the border with humour, and this feeling began to be gradually replaced by familiarity- (Hardi). This is understandable, as the years passed the border restrictions were also in decline. Along the border and the people living in border regions evolved a sort of notion regarding the other side of the border. This is natural, since in the almost hermetically blocked border lines people did not know anything about the people

on the other side. So certain stereotypes begun to emerge in the people. “The stereotypes are generally valid, based on exaggeration, and are the result of the specific cognitive ability which leads to simplified images. The basis of their foundation can be an unrealistic information heard from other people when far-reaching conclusions are drawn from isolated cases, but it may occur that existing, small differences are exaggerated- (Bindorffer)”. These stereotypes are largely connected with the Mental Map evolved in humans, which is one of the ways of the study of cross border relations. The essence of it is that the people know mostly the environment, the place where they live. Getting away from their living space, they are less capable of creating a realistic picture of their environment. “Thus we feel a settlement which is beyond a border, river or mountain more distant than the one that is in the same distance, but on our side. This mental distance changes when the border becomes permeable, thus a bridge is built on the river” (Hardi). This is mostly true when a certain border section, where the individual lives, is completely closed, so its crossing is prevented both in time and space. People living in a well-protected and strict border region know very little about the people living on the other side of their settlements. “The closed nature of the border prevented, made almost impossible the contact, cooperation, the cultivation of personal relationships and the creation of new ones with the outside territories”- (Nárai). At the end of her study Márta Nárai concludes that because of this the inhabitants know very little about the settlements on the other side of the border, which leads to the creation of certain stereotypes and associations.

To summarise the cross border relations, it can be examined from multiple perspectives, such as the intensity of economic relations, or the intensity of social relations in the cross border regions. These relations – mostly the social relationships – are highly dependent on the closed nature of the border. A strong border can have an impact on the micro world of the cross border community, and even negatively influence their life. In contrast, a relatively freely permeable border can positively affect the people’s living space, as the new social and economic relations can improve the quality of people’s life living there, and thereby develop the region.

Nagyszelmenc, the Half Cut Village

Nagyszelmenc had a troubled fate in the entire 20th century. It resembles a bit to a stepchild who was not wished by anyone. The twin village, which has its first written record from 1332,

belonged to Hungary till the conclusion of the Treaty of Paris in 1920. However, in 1920 it was attached to Czechoslovakia as a result of the highland's annexation from the motherland. After 18 years, when the village began to resign with its fate, the First Vienna Award of 1938 re-annexed the tiny village to Hungary. Nevertheless, this only lasted for 7 years due to the village's annexation to Czechoslovakia in 1945. After the World War II the Soviet Union drew the new border in the middle of the twin village. The major part of the twin villages remained on the Slovak side with its school, nursery, cemetery, Greek Catholic and Protestant Churches, while the smaller part was left on the Ukrainian side with the Roman Catholic Church. The cemetery's division was also among the plans, but eventually the final border line left the cemetery untouched. The village which remained on the Slovak side was still called Nagyszelmenc, while the Ukrainian part of the village got a name, Kisszelmenc. At first, people probably did not understand what happened, they only perceived that in a short period of time Soviet and Czechoslovak soldiers were pulling a barbed wire in the village. Soon a watchtower with the 342 milestone was laid down in the middle of the twin villages, too. According to the older people, it happened that somebody normally went to work in the fields – which were in the Slovak side – in the morning, but he was not allowed to return home in the evening because that part of the village was already part of another country. The new border line has separated many families forever; siblings, parents, children, grandparents, relatives could not see each other ever again. My grandfather's three siblings and many relatives have remained on the Ukrainian side of the village. He has never seen them, he did not even know whether they live or die. When I asked him, how many relatives I have on the Ukrainian side, he talked about the long lost loved ones for hours.

However, the border line meant not just the separation of families; it also implied continuous military presence. Shortly after the pulling of the wire fence both in Nagyszelmenc and Kisszelmenc, barracks were built for the soldiers who had to stay there and patrol along the border night and day. Such austerity had to be maintained that the inhabitants of the two villages were not allowed to see each other, and if they managed to shout something to the other side they were punished by one week labour service on the Ukrainian side. They also took care of that no one would try to pass to the other side. "Long ago, the wire fence went in two lines. The view from Nagyszelmenc: the barrier at the end of the Czech street, the Czech column, the unplanned column, the Soviet column and ploughing; this is what the soldiers watch every day in case any trace. There is a way near the ploughing where the soldiers or tractors used to go. Then the fences, every three metres a column with a wire across them,

inside barbed wire, outside plain wire, if somebody touches it, the instrument rings immediately. The apparatuses were hidden, and the grass was always collected around it... Later, three wire fences, then four. Rocket trap. At the end of the street unplanned columns had to be put down in many rows that the border would not be approached. We had to make paling, not to see the other side”- (Zelei). This quotation reveals that how strict was the separation of the two villages. In Kisszelmenc the worst situation experienced those who lived next to the border, as they had everyday visitors who wanted to shout to the other side of the border in order to get some information about their loved ones. But the inhabitants were often afraid of this step, because the soldiers constantly threatened them by retaliation. For this reason, a number of people were taken to Siberia for two or three weeks. Although, the soldiers were also keen to visit these houses. Thus for the inhabitants it was almost natural that they had to cook for at least two more people, as the soldiers liked to visit them during lunch or dinner. The villagers were afraid to disagree with them, but they also knew that it was better to be in good relationship with the soldiers - (Zelei). The inhabitants soon learned how to win the soldiers for themselves; the people realised that if they gave the soldiers a cigarette or maybe half a litre of *pálinka* they could easily agree on things. However, many people did not shrink even from the thought of escape. Those who have succeeded were generally gone to Western Europe, but who got captured were deported or shut down for several weeks. The situation was not better in Nagyszelmenc, as the soldiers were constantly patrolling there, too. Evidently, the people next to the border lived in the worst conditions. Moreover, next to the border was not even allowed to build. Initially, the people were allowed to go to Kisszelmenc, but only in a limited number. If somebody had passed the border instead of someone who was really allowed to pass it, the person who actually ought to come back was never allowed to return home. After the crossing of the border was totally eliminated, the villagers had to apply new tactics in order to see and talk to their loved ones. Hundreds of people went to the border every Sunday to shout to their beloved ones. “At least one hundred and fifty-two hundred people stood there on Sundays. The relatives from the both sides wanted to know what happens on the other side. The separation of families was still fresh. So they built the hedge so we were unable to look through that. It was made from braided branches, they cut off the top of it nicely, and it could be about two metres high. It was not enough. Our people took the ladders, climbed up onto the roof, and shouted over. For this, they built a rod fence on the border, which was at least five metres tall. From that time, they began to discipline on the Czechoslovak side, too, if people came to the border to talk

with their relatives on the other side”- (Zelei). Disorderly conducts such this were later punished by retaliation. Many people received financial penalties or even spent a week or two in a detention house, because they shouted to the other side. But people were still able to deceive the border wardens. Many people say that the human ingenuity knows no bounds; this also manifested here. At first, many sent messages to their relatives to Kisszelmenc via Péter Lizák who lived next to the border. Péter Lizák took advantage of his Hungarian mother tongue and the position of his house, which was located only a few metres from the front door of the first house on the Ukrainian side. Péter and his wife simply went to work in the garden and he started to talk to her in Hungarian. If they wanted their conversation to be heard on the Ukrainian side, they just began to talk a little louder. Since they spoke in Hungarian, both the Ukrainian and Czechoslovak border wardens thought that they were only talking to each other. Later, people drilled holes in the potatoes and stuffed their little notes to them, which were simply threw to the other side of the border. These notes did not provide sufficient place for longer messages, only for a couple of words or possibly a sentence, but they were enough to inform the relatives on the other side about deaths, marriages or births. According to the villagers, a girl remained at her grandmother on the Czechoslovak side during the drawing of the border, and she was never allowed to go home. When she got married, she went to the border wearing her white wedding dress to let her parents know about her marriage. Those who managed to cross the border were hidden by the villagers of Nagyszelmenc for several days, while they were asking for their relatives. It seems that the people mostly helped each other, and tried to deceive the established regime somehow. Surely, there were people on the both sides who officiously tried to win the Soviet or Czechoslovak police and soldiers for themselves, thus they were even capable of reporting everyone who went close to the border. Of course, these people were known by the villagers, and everybody tried to do his/her what-abouts in a way that neither the soldiers nor the informers would surmise anything.

Besides the strong austerity the people had to cope with a new problem and even a bigger austerity soon. The Sovietisation brought with itself more soldiers and a greater level of control, especially in Kisszelmenc. The border wardens stood at each end of the village, this meant that those who came from Ungvár (*Uzhhorod*) may enter the village if their passport or official documents testified the village’s name as their birthplace. People could go to work in the cross border fields with special permission. If someone’s relative had slipped through the border, that person was harassed for several months. The families were visited on a daily basis by the border wardens to ask for the wanted person. Pigeons were observed with

particular caution because the villagers were able to send messages with them across the border. Furthermore, it was also important to speak Russian. Who did not speak Russian and was not a party member or at least a Komsomol member the soldiers controlled better, and they were given less work to do or not at all- (Zelei). The Hungarian language began to be forbidden in the two villages, and the colonization of Czechoslovak and Russian families also started. The Hungarian primary school in Nagyszelmenc was transformed into a Slovak school in a few years. After the collectivisation took the remaining wealth of the people, the villagers began to gradually accept the new conditions. They started to come to terms with the soldiers, thus the Soviet Union's assimilation policy came into effect. The older people died slowly over the years and the former strong family ties loosened. Of course, the villagers still stayed in touch with the people on the other side by using various tricks. Although, the Soviet Union's policy – Khrushchev and later Gorbachev – affected this village as well. Over time, fewer soldiers were patrolling, and the border crossing was also allowed near Szobránc (*Sobrance*), 60 kilometres away. However, the Iron Curtain remained untouched in Nagyszelmenc, and still operated efficiently. The Iron Curtain was small, but strong.- (Zelei)

After the new regime in 1989, the inhabitants of Nagyszelmenc and Kisszelmenc were hoping for a change. However, the only change was that the inhabitants of the two villages were allowed to communicate with each other through the barbed wire if the patrolling soldiers were indulgent (Radical Puzzle). Since the early 1900s more and more people began to talk about the opening of the border. The first signs were felt between 1995 and 1997, when the border gate in the neighbouring village of Dobóruszka (*Ruská*) was opened for one day in the occasion of a religious feast, however, this was abolished in a short time. The first major breakthrough in this case happened in 2000, when Miklós Zelei's *A kettézárt falu* was published. Thereafter, newspaper articles appeared about the village. The news about the last Iron Curtain of Europe spread all over Europe. The villagers were slowly getting used to the journalists and TV reporters. As that time my mother was the president of the Hungarian youth organisation in Nagyszelmenc, many journalists visited our home, too. I remember that we accommodated reporters and journalists from Hungary, and also people who worked in the Hungarian Consulate in Slovakia many times. Thus the events accelerated after 2000.

The next big event in the life of the villagers happened in 18 October, 2003 with the inauguration of the half cut Székely gate along the border, that were named The Gates of Hope (Nagyszelmenc.sk). One half of the gate was placed along the border of Nagyszelmenc,

the other part in Kisszelmenc. This half cut Székely gate represented the half cut village. There was even a poem engraved into the Slovakian Székely gate written by Julianna Tóth, an inhabitant of Nagyszelmenc:

“From one Szelmenc was two created, be united by the Creator.
God bless you with quietude, and hold together with hope.
Our hope is never ending, what is torn apart will be welded.
The two Szelmences’ gate wings join our villages.”

The inauguration of the Székely gate was also a protest against the unfair decision made after the World War II. The event was attended by several public figures, such as József Komlóssy, the Counsellor of the Hungarian parliamentary delegation of the European Council, Igor Pritula, the Slovak Consul of Ukraine, Miklós Duray, the Vice President of the Party of the Hungarian Coalition, and several members of the Parliament. The most touching moment of the ceremony was when one of the inhabitants of Kisszelmenc threw a wreath over the wire fence and asked his relatives to put it on his father’s grave. At the end of the protest the participants sang the Hungarian Anthem together, and then the inhabitants of Kisszelmenc threw a piece of the barbed wire across the border with a request that József Komlóssy had to pass it to the politicians of the European Council - (Nagyszelmenc.sk).

After the inauguration of the Székely gate the journalists were still everyday occurrence, and the villagers possibly became bored with them. In 2004, the news about the two villages spread overseas as well. Lajos Tóth, the Mayor of the village could tell the sad story of his village in the Centre for American Hungarian Congressional Relations, in Washington. In March 2005, Pál Csáky, the Slovak Deputy Prime Minister visited Nagyszelmenc. During his visit he said that the Ukrainian party is prone to negotiate on the opening of the border. Lajos Tóth conveyed the request of the inhabitants, thus they wanted to gain a border crossing without a visa. Pál Csáky assured the inhabitants of doing everything in their case (Nagyszelmenc.sk). After his promise the villagers felt hope that after 60 years they would visit their almost forgotten relatives.

In August 2005, the Ukrainian border wardens finally started to remove the barbed wire between the two villages. This act was watched tearfully by the people from both sides of the border. By the removal of the barbed fence the official construction of the border crossing point started between the two villages. The constructions were completed on both sides till 18 October, 2005.

On 13 December, 2005 the day which were expected by everyone arrived. After 60 years the passage between Nagyszelmenc and Kisszelmenc was free again (Nagyszelmenc.sk). This also meant that Europe's last Iron Curtain finally felt down. The opening of the border took place in the midst of a huge ceremony, which was participated by a number of leading politicians, journalists, and almost all the villagers. However, the long-awaited joy mingled with a little wormwood, too, because after the politicians left the Ukrainian authorities allowed the crossing of the border only those people from Kisszelmenc who had a valid visa. It was a shocking experience as the old women and men were weeping and waving behind the rows of uniformed people, because they neither could visit the graves of their relatives, nor greet their long lost beloved ones. The people from Kisszelmenc were promised that their problem would be solved soon, but their situation has not changed.- (Nagyszelmenc.sk) One and a half months later, Lajos Tóth, the Mayor of Nagyszelmenc welcomed the opening of the border in an interview. According to him, his village eventually reached what they wanted the most in the last 60 years, only the visa requirement of Kisszelmenc's inhabitants remained the dark side of the story. However, the Mayor told that the village still had a lot of work to do: "We have to build a bigger car park in the village. (...) We managed to asphalt most of the side roads. The village hall is also modernised. The construction of the drinking water pipeline network has started in the village, which has to be completed this year. We want to build an outdoor stage, and so on" (Nagyszelmenc.sk). Since then, the mentioned transformations have all been built in the village. In the car park, which is next to the cemetery parking area, almost 200-300 cars turn around on a daily basis. The parking costs 1 euro for a day, which brings a nice sum of money for the village's municipality. Most of the villagers still visit their relatives, but the major part of the border traffic is consisted of people from Western Slovakia, who have to travel several hours until the Slovak-Ukraine border; as in Ukraine the consumers can buy many products cheaper than in Slovakia. For this reason, long queues are formed along the border every day. People are willing to stand 3-4 hours in a swelter in summer just to buy what they need cheaper on the other side of the border.

According to a newspaper article released three years after the opening of the border, the frontier traffic became unidirectional between the two villages. The visitors who travel from Ungvár to Kisszelmenc are surprised that Slovakia begins before Kisszelmenc, not after it; this is suggested by the Slovak labels on the shops in Kisszelmenc. Moreover, it can be seen that in the mornings and early afternoons queues are standing on the Slovak side, on the other hand in the late afternoons and evenings the Ukrainian side is more populous. Based on

statistical data, more than 377,000 people crossed the border between the two villages in 2008, but only 1-2 percent of them were Ukrainian citizens. Lajos Tóth said to the journalists that due to the border opening the elderly people can easier visit their relatives, but he also admitted that the border traffic became commercialised because many Slovak citizens go to Ukraine just to buy everyday goods cheaper. The article mentions that the inhabitants of Kisszelmenc do not complain at all because since the opening of the border they opened approximately 30 shops in their village, and this number is constantly growing.- (Felvidek.ma) I think that the border opening brought an entirely new lifestyle into the village. Before its opening hardly occurred any car in the village, but as I mentioned above now the situation is totally different; almost 200-300 cars occur in Nagyszelmenc every day. Due to the barracks built in the village the police also have multiplied their people, and they are constantly examining the cars heading outward the village in case any cigarette smuggling. The life on the Ukrainian side has also changed a lot; before the opening of the border Kisszelmenc was full of ravaged buildings and potholed roads, and nowadays the part of the village that is close to the border resembles to a small fair. It is common that people live in 1-2 rooms and the rest of the house was converted into a shop. Currently, the inhabitants of the two Szelmences can see each other easier, but the long queues on the both sides of the border, the shops in Kisszelmenc and the visa requirement of Kisszelmenc's citizens present the negative side of the border opening. Besides, the older villagers in Nagyszelmenc see the border opening as a joyful moment in their lives as they know they can freely pass the border whenever they want to.

The fate of the twin villages is unknown yet; of course, modernisations on both sides of the border are on schedule. I have learned in the course of my conversation with József Illár, the Mayor of Kisszelmenc that he is working on the opening of a new border crossing between the neighbouring villages of Palágykomoróc (*Palagy Komarivci*) and Dobóruszka (*Ruská*). He is planning to build a border for automobiles and trucks in contrast to the pedestrian border crossing between the twin villages. But to eliminate the traffic in Dobóruszka, the Mayor of Kisszelmenc suggests the building of a service road. According to him, this can be appropriate for the villages as it is 700 metres far from the Slovak-Ukraine border. As Illár states: "Well, the first steps have been made, and I hope that this process will not need 8-10 years. But I would say that 2-3 years will be enough (...) If they discover that this is beneficial for both Slovakia and Ukraine, then the progression will be started (...) The market is Russia and Ukraine".- (Illár) It is unknown what will be eventually achieved from these plans. In my

opinion, Kisszelmenc is like a little brother of Nagyszelmenc who always wants to break out from the shadows of his big brother, Nagyszelmenc, but Kisszelmenc always needs the help of his smarter and bigger sibling. One thing is certain, that the border opening brought a new way of living among the villagers. The history will tell us that this border opening will have a positive or negative impact on the fate of the two villages.

Conclusions

In my opinion, it is totally obvious that the arbitrary border pulling completely changed the life of the twin villages both economically and socially. The border separated families and relatives from each other; as a result many of the villagers could not see their beloved ones, and also the farmers who transported their goods into the centre, Ungvár lost a great part of their economic relations. Though, this border cutting was not unique in the Soviet Union and Europe, what makes the Nagyszelmenc-Kisszelmenc case special is that after the regime change most of the border crossings were opened, only the Nagyszelmenc-Kisszelmenc border was closed until 23 December, 2005. A supporting example is the research of Tamás Hardi and Márta Nárai who write about the Hungarian-Austrian border line this way: “However, during the period of Socialism this border line became an obstacle separating two great world regimes, and the strictly guarded border areas were left out from important development programs, and the earlier traditionally developed areas were in a peripheral position. After the 1989–1990 regime change, the situation in the area was revaluated again, and a significant part of the Austrian-Hungarian border has become the leading region of the country’s economic development”.- (Hardi and Nárai) It is clear that the peripheral region became one of the most developed regions of Hungary after the regime change. In contrast, neither the regime change nor the independence of Ukraine and Slovakia brought the awaited border opening. Partly owing to this, the two settlements are treated as a dead end by both of the countries as both villages are situated in the most underdeveloped regions of their country; unfortunately, this fact have not changed since the border opening. Though, the first years brought some economic recovery in both villages, it has vanished for today. Thus, it can be concluded from the area of economic relations that the border pulling caused irretrievable damages in the life of the villages’ inhabitants.

As I mentioned, the Soviet-Czechoslovak and later the Ukraine-Slovak border brought enormous changes in the field of social relations, too. The almost hermetic closure of people,

the curfews, and the constant presence of soldiers in the village was a lifetime psychic experience for the villagers. The separation unfavourably affected mainly the citizens of Kisszelmenc, as they were under the Soviet rule; this meant that they were obliged to become Soviets. Györgyi Bindorffer analyses the phenomenon of dual identity in relation to the Swabian-Hungarian interethnic relations this way: “Because of the language and cultural abandonment, and the outage from the German national development, and thus to complement the resulting loss the Swabian peasants had no choice in a new homeland but to use the nascent institutions and symbol system of the Hungarian statehood”.- (Bindorffer) After the annexation to the Soviet area, the inhabitants of Kisszelmenc had no choice like the Swabians. The previous Hungarian speaking village was soon forced to adapt to the Soviet regime, its everyday world, and of course, to learn the Russian language.

To conclude, the separation of the twin villages negatively affected the economic, personal and social relations. The former friends became strangers to one another, and many of the relatives have never seen their loved ones. Due to the division, the next generations were socialised in a totally different culture, thus the relations between the two villages gradually weakened; the voluntary population exchange in Kisszelmenc after the border opening completely decided the fate of the two villages. In my opinion, the former goal of the border opening, thus to visit the relatives has fully vanished; of course, the visa laws played a major role in this process. There is a strong but decadent shopping tourism in a long term between Nagyszelmenc and Kisszelmenc. For a long time neither party wanted to admit it but over time everybody realised that the primary purpose of the border opening has not been achieved. Consequently, the construction of the border crossings was unnecessary from a social perspective, as it does not serve the original goal for which people have fought for so many years. The youth, who were separated by the arbitrarily drawn Soviet-Czechoslovak border, were slowly growing old or many of them are already dead. Thus, such a noble aim as was the visiting of the relatives became slowly but surely forgotten. As it was mentioned, the visa issue has not been solved, and the elderly population of Kisszelmenc cannot visit Nagyszelmenc’s cemetery even now. The depopulation of the villages is in progress. The unemployment and hopelessness are instinctively driving away the youth of the twin villages. The multitude of empty houses shows that Nagyszelmenc and Kisszelmenc lies at the end of the world, just like 70 years ago. It is sad that apart from a few longing old eyes only the cars’ honking and the iron stalls’ glimmers are left in Nagyszelmenc. The Iron Curtain has

disappeared, but “Now, the border of East and West lies between Szelmenc”.- (Hosszú Utazás)

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institute@culturalrelations.org

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Background

Historical ethnic conflicts behind the Ukrainian crisis: one country, numerous identities

Eszter Balogh

The current Ukrainian crisis is interpreted in many different ways on the international political stage. It can be seen as a fight between Russia and the USA, as Ukraine's choice between Western and Eastern values or simply as a dispute over economic interests. But it is highly important to note that there are centuries-long ethnic and cultural reasons that lie behind the crisis and as long as these internal conflicts are not solved, the tensions are not likely to decrease.

Ukraine is a traditionally diverse country in the matter of languages, ethnicities and culture. Currently, there are approximately 130 nationalities living under Kiev's rule, the biggest of which is the Russian minority with 17.3 per cent. Each of the other nationalities' – like Belorussian, Moldovan or Crimean Tatar – percentage is under one per cent, making the current conflict mainly the Russians' and the Ukrainians' fight.

After having a look at Ukraine's political map it is immediately seen that the most significant division is between the Western and Eastern part of the country which can be tracked back to historical reasons. The Western part was traditionally ruled by European powers such as Poland and the Austro-Hungarian Empire with a strong influence of Catholicism. These rulers welcomed Ukrainian national movements and let different thinkers to promote romanticism and arts. In the meantime, since the 17th century, a strong Russian imperial rule prevailed in

the Eastern area, mainly with ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking Ukrainian residents. Because of the traditions, the Orthodox Church has always remained dominant here. Moreover, during the centuries these aforementioned three big empires fought over the territory of the country, creating even more socio-cultural cleavages.

Similar trends can be observed in the Crimean peninsula as well, which was a part of Russia - later the USSR – until 1954 when Nikita Khrushchev gave it to Ukraine. Currently, about 58.3 per cent of the residents is Russian, while only 24 per cent is Ukrainian and 12 Crimean Tatar – noting that around 98 per cent is native Russian speaker. During all this time, the region has not really identified itself with the central government. Mostly, the population supports the 1992 constitution, when for a brief moment the Crimea had its own president with the right for autonomous foreign policy. Moreover, this area is an essential part of the Russian national identity; the majority of Russians still criticizes Khrushchev for his step.

Considering the fact that the country as a whole was a part of the Soviet Union - creating some kind of identity unity - might be misleading. As previously mentioned, the Eastern parts belonged to Russian rule from the 17th century while some Western regions did not have similar experiences until the end of World War II and the formation of the Soviet Union. As the whole system collapsed in 1991, it did not even last even for 50 years, not giving the opportunity to these areas to adapt to the new circumstances.

During the Soviet times there were ethnic clashes, but never on the agenda as according to the Communist perception, they did not even exist. After the fall of the USSR, the conditions changed and the political decision-makers had to do something with the situation: creating a unified country and a unique Ukrainian identity from these diverse ethno-linguistic groups. In the beginning, the political leadership tried not to choose sides and treat the Ukrainian nationality as a whole. But during the years, the whole political rhetoric turned into other direction, making the society even more divided.

Basically two kinds of political rhetoric were formed: the pro-Russian Eastern and the nationalist Western one. The result of this kind of vote-seeking method can be seen in the 2010 election results as well; the Western areas almost fully voted for Timoshenko, while the Eastern for Yanukovich with Yanukovich winning. This indicates that due to this one-sided politics, the citizens voted solely according to their national identities and did not consider the candidates' possible political steps. The nationalism that was supposed to build a Ukrainian nation, just torn the society apart: all of those who lived there as an ethnic or religious

minority voted for Yanukovych, suggesting that he was the only candidate that intended to consider any other nationality in the leadership than Ukrainian.

The tensions came to the surface in the end of 2013 when Yanukovych did not sign the utmost important deal with the European Union, indicating that the country would better choose Russia and the Moscow-led Eurasian Union. The East-West division was clearly accompanied with a choice between East and West; while in the 2004–2005 Orange Revolution the whole society agreed to some point, the Euromaidan became a protest of the nationalist, pro-Europe West against the pro-Russian East.

According to many international experts, the crisis has gone so far that creating a Ukrainian nation might be simply impossible. Even the interim government that was supposed to ensure a well-balanced and representative leadership could not follow its own principles in the middle of the crisis. In the new government there were only two ministers from the Eastern part out of the total twenty, despite the fact that this area makes up the half of the whole country's population and produces a major part of the GDP. In the meantime, the Svoboda nationalist party got three key positions: the deputy ministerial, the general prosecutorial and the defense ministerial one.

As seen, even without the international conflict Ukraine has a lot to solve on its own as soon as possible. The national consensus is more important than ever as the country can be a stage of bigger international conflicts just as long as the society is torn apart by these many historical and cultural cleavages. According to international observers, the current form of the state is simply not sustainable and does not worth to fight for. The succession and the strong decentralization can both be solutions, but hard to enforce legally thorough any government which makes the future uncertain for 44 million Ukrainian citizens.

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Rusyns in the aspect of security policies

Sándor Földvári

Abstract: The Rusyn represents ethnic minorities, living in contemporary Ukraine, Slovakia, Poland, Rumania, Hungary and Serbia, and descendants of those emigrated from these countries in the late 19 c. reside in Australia, Canada, and The United States. The centre of the best reputation for researches in Rusyn culture and history has formed around Prof. Paul Robert Magocsi, chair of Dept. Ukrainian Studies at Toronto University, and lately enriched by activities of the new generation of scholars as P. Krafcik. There are three universities in Europe with departments for Rusyn studies, in Preshov (Slovakia), Nyíregyháza (Hungary) and Novi Sad (Serbia).

Rusyns constitute officially recognized ethnic minorities in almost every European countries they live in, but not Ukraine. Though inhabitants in Western Ukraine, who identify themselves Rusyn, represent the largest part of The Rusyn worldwide, according to the Ukrainian laws, there no such ethnic minority exists.

The situation in neighbouring Slovakia has become quite different since the collapse of the socialism. For the last two decades, Rusyns in Slovakia have elaborated their codified literary language (since it has been missing for centuries, thus Rusyn authors has written in Latin, Church Slavonic, then Russian, a few of them in Ukrainian, and the most in various vernaculars), they established a Department of Rusyn Studies (while in Hungary the Rusyn and Ukrainian Dept., founded by the pioneer scholar István Udvari, has significantly reduced soon after the tragic death of the “founding father”), and, last but not least, a PhD program in Rusyn studies has been accredited at Preshov University (chaired by Prof. Anna Plishková), being the unique as such in the world.

The fear in Ukraine has rooted in the history of Transcarpathia: it had not been a part of Ukraine before it became a district of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in results of the World War II. Earlier it formed a part of the Hungarian Kingdom during centuries, and after the First World War it was attached (for two decades, as the history turned) to the newly then shaped Czechoslovakia.

Consequently, efforts by some right-wing political movements in Hungary, which endeavour to reconnect the Carpathian territories to Hungary, are nowadays of extreme risk. First, Ukraine has lost and is probably losing some territories in its south and west, where the state control is quite weak over those districts are still (and hopefully remain) parts of the country. The fear for territorial instability is certainly increasing. West part of Ukraine has been the traditionally strongest bases of the stability of the Ukrainian State. Thus destabilizing any part of West Ukraine, even Transcarpathia, may result some sharpening of the threat of a new Cold War. Therefore the Rusyn question must not been only regarded in the frameworks of ethnic minorities and their rights, but in a wider sense of the international diplomacy and peace building.

Keywords: Transcarpathia, Rusyns, Ukraine, security policy

Author: Sandor Foldvari, Mr / dr, lecturer & research fellow; cell-phone +36-30-6709134. Hungary, Debrecen Univ., Baltic Studies; – Home address: H 2119 PÉCEL, P.O.B. 36. E.mail: alexfoldvari@gmail.com Publications: <http://unideb.academia.edu/SandorFoldvari/Papers>

The subject of researches in security policy is the study of perceptions, more than that of the realities, although the real situation is of enough importance as well.

The main question is not that something (a geographical place, a geopolitical situation or a social process) or somebody (a person, a political or cultural activist, or an ethnic or social group, a nationality, a political community) may be addressed as a threat (and if so, to what extent), but, and rather, to what extent can it imply a perception of fear.

As the answering acts are, at every case, consequences of the fear of the real threat or an imagined perception of being threatened.

Even the preventive aggression may be a result of the distress as being threatened in the case of no real danger. Therefore the subject of this paper is not the real threat by the Carpathian Rusyns, this very small and poor ethnic group, but the perceptions their entity may recall. Therefore the first task is to define them, describing their place and giving brief survey of their history (as arguments based on history are often main components of perceptions in security policy), then examine the possible consequences in the security policy of Ukraine, Hungary, Russia and Slovakia, even of the rest of the world.

Those who name themselves Rusyn are settled in Ukraine, mainly but not only in *Zakarpatskaya oblast* ("Transcarpathian County"), in a small number on its edge in Rumania, in the second largest number in East part of Slovakia (with their greatest cultural and science centre in Preshov), in a small number in South-Poland (those called "*Lemko*"-es), in a small number in Hungary (where the study and evaluation devoted them seems quite more than it would founded on their ratio among inhabitants, which phenomenon comes as a special consequence of the study of history of Hungary, Udvari, 1993, pp.105–138), then in significant number in Serbia (in historical districts of Báčka), last but not least, in the United States and Canada, where their word-wide recognized research centre works at the Toronto University, Ukrainian Studies, chairing by Prof. Magocsi, Paul Robert, and let us here highlight the most active colleague of him in Rusyn studies, Patricia Krafcik, not to forget about the significant number of other researchers. (Fro the study of Rusyn researches cf. Magocsi, *A Historiographical Guide...* 1974.)

The name Rusyn came from the historical term *Rus'* meant in medieval times the *varjags* (Normans) founded the East Slavic State, then it became the name of the very state (Kievan Rus'). As it is well-known, the *roth* remained in Nordic languages (Swedish *Ryska* "Russian"), but in Finno-Ugric it refers to the Scandinavian people (Finnish *ruotsi* "Swedish", Estonian *rootsi* "Swedish"), while the Kievan Rus' called in Byzantine Greek for the name of normanns, *Ρωσία*, "Kievan State", then it went to the medieval Latin as *Ruthenus*, addressing the people of Kievan State, then, after the Mongol Period, the Moscovian Rus'. (Pritsak, 1991)

The medieval chronicles in Hungary addressed "Hungarian Ruthens" the members of the guards of the dauphin in the era of the Árpád's House, who were of origin from the Kievan Rus' (therefore, East Slavs, that is Ruthens), but no relation to Carpathian Land which was almost uninhabited in Middle ages. It was a "*gyepű*", the desert territory of Medieval Hungary around the country, with purposes of defence. However, there are specialists of the opinion that this territory was not absolutely unoccupied, as the remnants of White Horvats might have stayed there, who had been followers of Christianity of Byzantine Rite since Cyril and Method's era, when the last brother baptized them. In any case, the word "*Ruthens*" in the medieval Hungarian chronicles referred to the guards of the dauphin but not the local inhabitants of East-North Hungarian Kingdom, later addressed Carpathian Ruthenia. Whether

it was settled or not, inhabitants could not be of Kievan origin in the Middle Ages. (For White Horvats and also brief survey of that was said above: Magocsi, *People from Nowhere...*, 2006, esp. pp. 29–39., “The Early History of Rusyns from 5th to 15th Centuries”)

Later, after the Anjou time, some East Slavic people immigrated into former-desert territories of East-North Hungary (i.e. East part of Upper Hungary, now East Slovakia and Carpathian Ukraine). They were step by step guided by the *kenéz*-men, who were not noble but free persons and got privileges for their activity, conducting new settlers. It was a bit similar to the process of settlements in Central and Eastern Upper Hungary, where the “*soltész*”-men conducted German settlers, therefore the *soltész*-es had got privileges and their descendants upraise to the bourgeoisie of the free towns in Upper Hungary (actually, of German Law, as the guides with their settlements took the law-traditions, too, with their German inhabitants). This process does not concern us here, unless taking into consideration the conducting-German-settlers *soltész*-es were similar but not the same group as the *kenéz*-es, were conducting Slavic settlers. Their problem has still not so well-researched as that of the German *soltész*-es. (Even the monographer of the topic, Körmendy 1995, did not pay any piece of attention for the *kenéz*-es as parallels of *soltész*-es in those or neighbouring districts she studied.) That was fact the ancestors of The Rusyn might be some local inhabitants remained here from the West Horvats, and the main source was the immigration from East Slavic territories in 14–17 cc, led by *kenéz*-es. There was a legend about the Duke of Podolia, Theodor Koriatovich, who escaped from his enemies and came to Carpathian Rus’ with his people, in a huge number. He was a real person, son of Koriat (Lithuanian Karijotas, prince of Novohradak) as, a Lithuanian prince, nephew to Kestutis, who was the rival Duke of Lithuania when his other nephew, Jogaila, was ruling as Polish-Lithuanian king. It has still not convincingly researched why son of Koriat, “the founder of Rusyns’ territory”, Theodor, has had to escape, but it has demonstrated by Hodinka that he could not “found” an entire Carpathian Rus’ as he came with far smaller people as the legends say. (Hodinka, 1909.) Thus, the remnants of those Slavs lived here before the first Millennium (if they survived the invasion of the Tatars lead by Khan Batu in 1240–1241, which is hardly believable), then the new inhabitants came during the 14–17 cc, and some addition by Theodor, Son to Koriat, formed the Slavic people of North-East Carpathian lands. Their language was not unified and has still not been. The main groups of the Rusyns were the *Lemkos* in Poland, the *Hutsuls* in Maramarosh, between them the *Dolyshniany* (Lowlanders), *Verkhovynycy* (Highlanders), and

their subgroup next to *Hutsuls* called *Boikos*. (An outdated but carefully usable depiction is given in Bonkáló, The Rusyns, [1932], 1990, pp.60–84. “Rusyn Ethnographic Groups”)

The recent situation in figures is as follows (according to Magocsi, *People from Nowhere...*, 2006, 25, table 2:

“Carpatho-Rusyn Ethnographic Groups”

<i>Group</i>	<i>Number of villages</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
WESTERN		
Rusnaks	283	27
Lemkos	179	17
TRANSITIONAL	105	10
EASTERN		
Dolyniane	401	38
Verkhovyntsi	69	6
Hutsuls	24	2
TOTAL	1061	100

Up to the 18th century, the Hungarian sources were written in Latin used the term *Ruthenus*, borrowed from the Latin name of the inhabitants of the Kievan Rus', addressing those are of Byzantine Rite and their liturgical language was the Church Slavonic. Later the sources written in Hungarian used its translation “*Magyar Oroszok*” (Hungarian Russians) or simply “*oroszok*” (Russians) for those were of Byzantine Rite, nevertheless they were already partly Hungarian-speaking population but with liturgy in Church Slavonic. In Hungarian, e.g. in the time of the resurrection led by Rákóczi, the “*orosz vallású*” (sb of Russian religion) were used for addressing those were of Byzantine rite, actually, they were the most engaged people to the Duke Franz Rákóczi, as he and citing him, the great historian of them, Anton Hodinka called “*gens fidelissima*” (Hodinak, 1937) The very Russians were named in Hungarian sources as “*muszka*” (Moscovites) up to 1848 when due to the Hungarian revolution and war for the independence the “*orosz*” became to name the very Russians (instead of “*muszka*”, Moscovian), and the “Hungarian Russian” became to be named even in the Hungarian sources as “*Rusyn, Rusnak*”. The very people, from the 18th century, when its establishment began to be shaped, used the word “*Rusyn*”. Their branch went to south part of then-Hungarian Kingdom in the 18th century, and inhabited the Bácska and Bánát regions, called itself as *Rusák* and have been calling themselves as such. These Rusyns in contemporary Serbia are not subject to treat in this paper. Summarising, the Rusyn was their own self-nomination, the “*orosz*” (Russian) meant in Hungarian those followed the Byzantine rite, and “*muszka*” (Moscovian) referred in Hungarian sources to the Russians of The Tsarist Empire. Then, from

1848, the Rusyn went to the Hungarian language, too, referring to the Carpathian Rusyns, the “*orosz*” (Russian) changed and referred to the Russians of the Tsarist Empire, and the “*muszka*” (muscovite) got out of using. (Udvari, 1994, p.16.)

Thus, the English word Carpatho-Ruthenian, Carpatho-Rusyn has borrowed from the self-nomination of the Carpathian Rusyns in former Hungarian Kingdom. The Rusyn awakeners, mainly Alexander Duchnovich in the first part of the 19th century, who lived and worked mainly in Preshov, called themselves Rusyns. Later they began to address to themselves as Russians, for in the second half of the 19th century their consciousness changed from unique Rusyn to the part-of Russian-people meaning. (Magocsi, *The Language Question...*, 1987.) As for the language, it was solidly studied by tragically early passed scholar István Udvari, the early 18th century was the time of Polish influence on the official documents issued by the bishops, then the local vernacular more and more influenced the written language of the eparchial documents, then from the turn of the 18/19 cc the newly born establishment began to write on the language of the people, however, it was not and still had not been codified. (His monograph by which he defended the grade Doctor of Academy was devoted to this question: Udvari, *Ruszin (kárpátukrán) hivatalos írásbeliség...*, 1995.) The bishops’ office used the local version of the Church Slavonic, with Polish then with vernacular forms, then from the 19th century a Rusyn literature were shaped, on vernacular, as for instance artificial folk-songs by Vasilij Dovhovich. From the middle of the 19th century, the literary Russian language was proposed by the most writers although it was not understandable for the people even seemed very artificial for those wrote poems in Russian. “The Shaping of a National Identity”, as to cite the title of great monograph about this epoch by Magocsi, was full of debates between Russophil, Rusynophil and, in lesser part, Ukrainophil intelligentsia. Magocsi gives a complete statistics about these three positions of cultural elite with biographies. (Magocsi, 1978, pp.282–311, Appendix 2.)

The “*ukrajinec*” (Ukrainian) ethnonym was already known among the Carpathian Rusyns but they did not refer it to themselves. A very narrow stratum of the Rusyn intelligentsia only began to use the word “*ukrajinec*” for self-nomination from the first decades of the 20th century, but before 1945 it was not been accepted even by the majority of the Rusyn intelligentsia. The name Ukrainian only became official in Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia after 1945 when the Carpathian Rus’ became a part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and East Slovakia as part of Slovakia was a part of the artificial Czechoslovak state.

In the last, the Russian and Ukrainian were the both, parallel used literary languages for Rusyns until 1953, when a decision made by the Central Committee of the Slovak Communists' Party ordered Ukrainian for official language of the Rusyns in Slovakia. Nor the schoolbooks, nor any other conditions were available, and the soviet school-books and other manuals were quickly imported did not attract the sympathy of the local inhabitants. The result was a phenomenal Slovakisation of Rusyns.

After collapsing of the Soviet Union and ending the socialist regimes in Central Europe the Rusyn awakening became to develop, even faster as it was able to be tolerated for any partners. (Udvari, 1994.)

In February 17, 1990, Uzhorod, the founding convention of the Carpathian Rusyns' Society was held. It programmed to manage the cultural organisation of the Rusyns in Carpathian Region also outside, the advancement of the study of history of Rusyns, their culture, to keep their oral and written even material heritage as archival sources, archaeological items and historical buildings, and to establish a Centre for Rusyn Researches at the Uzhorod State University. Though these were real and acceptable purposes, the Carpathian Rusyns' Society went ahead and programmed the autonomy of Transcarpathia from widening the Rusyn political rights.

The neighbouring association was established in Medzilaborce, Slovakia, March, 1990, under the name *Rusyn'ska Obroda* (Rusyn Renaissance). Its activity became significant in the field of publishing, as issuing the journals *Rusin* and *Narodny Novinky*, also many books in Rusyn culture as for instance Fedynyšynec, 1992, and a lot of others.

Then the first world congress of Rusyns was held in Preshov, March 23–24, 1991. Deputies from five countries declared the Rusyn is branch of the East Slavic languages as coequal with Ukrainian, and decided to publish periodicals in Rusyn also establish new association and NGOs for advancement of Rusyn culture.

As for the language, it is quite sure the Rusyn is a coequal East Slavic language, according to the linguists in the field, but it hardly can be decided by cultural, moreover, political organisations, NGOs. (For the linguists' viewpoint cf. Dulichenko, 2006.)

Another societies were soon established as the Lemko Association (*Stovarysynja Lemkiv*) in Legnica, Poland (est. April 1990); the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus' (*Spolecnost pratel Podkarpatske Rusi*) in Prague (est. October 1990); and the *Ruska Matka* (Rusyn Matka)

in Ruski Kerestur, Yugoslavia (est. December 1990). By the spring of 1991, a sixth one was established, this time in Hungary: the Rusyn organization in Hungary (*Magyarországi Ruszinok Szervezete*) in Budapest (est. May 1991). (Magocsi, 1995)

For the further development of Rusyn movements, on recent level of the studies in the field, and for the latest situation see Plishkova–Magocsi, *Language and national identity...* 2009.

It is worth to mention, in the recent days a PhD program in Rusyn philology is already accredited at the Preshov University under conduction of Prof. Anna Plishková. This is the unique place on the world where one can obtain a science grade in Rusyn philology.

What was the reaction of the Ukrainian powers? The fear, of course. As the Rusyns lived in frameworks of the Hungarian Kingdom until 1918, then in Czechoslovakia, it was logical to fear the burning of a new political movement even the danger of separatism.

Moreover, a small and short-time existing political formation has already established in the 20th century, due to Rusyn movements, in the most sensible sphere of Ukrainians: on the Polish-Ukrainian border, The Lemko Rusyn Republic (1918–1920), cf. Magocsi, 1993a. The roots of Ukrainian fears in historical traditions may be drawned in the Habsburg-Galizian-Rusyn-Ukrainian relations, cf. Magocsi, *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism...*, 2002.

Nowadays, in my opinion, the danger is as follows: first, Hungary's policy must be very careful, for the defending the rights of Hungarians in Carpathian Ukraine may automatically burn the fire in Rusnys. Second, if the borders would not be saints – although hopefully they are –, Carpathian Rus' would rather to connect to Slovakia than to Hungary. This is not the aim of Hungarian politicians, as well. Thus the Hungarian NGOs and some political organisations should not encourage the territorial dividing of Ukraine, since this would led to enriching the Slovak State but not of Hungary. Therefore, the cultural autonomy, usage of language can be the very purposes which can be and must be provided by any tool. However, some far right-wing movements should not take into consideration, that we have already had experiences with Russian tanks and soldiers, and nobody wish them again at the border of Hungary, of course.

For the science and cultural providing of Rusyns, Hungary take much, although after passing Professor Udvari, the academic researches in Carpathian history and Rusyn philology suffered a decline. Thanks to Professor Plishkova, she continues in Preshov the work was based by Udvari.

Hungary's official policy seems to be still moderate in comparison with the "Jobbik" Party (the right-wing opposition to the recent Hungarian government; its name means "The Better" which in Hungarian sounds "The Righter", too), as the government provides Ukraine with gas (according to statements by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, has been told in the state television), and by quite careful political agreements, too, declaring the wish for remaining Ukraine a stabile state. Thus no Ukrainian fear should be arise by the recent Hungarian politics unless the right-wings in Hungary feed it. On the other hand, The Ministry of Human Resources in Hungary (*"Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma"* in Hungarian), which is responsible for the education and culture, too, provided with huge money the establishing of a new but virtual Centre for Rusyn Studies at the Ferenc Gál Theological College in Szeged (South Hungary), and this imaginary institution is officially located in Szarvas (South-East Hungary, near to the border with Rumania). No Rusyn population inhabits that territory and there is no physical building or infrastructure for such a research institution in Szarvas. The members of this virtual research centre work at home (e.g. in Nyíregyháza, where the former great specialist István Udvari has founded a Rusyn Dept. of glamorous reputation, located next to Transcarpathia, and instead of developing that already existed one, a new but virtual centre has established far from any Rusyn-connected place), and they earn not virtual but real extra money by means of being members of this virtual institution. It is connected to the Roman Catholic Theological College in Szeged, probably also because of the church institutions have nowadays better reputation in the eyes of the recently decision makers. (According to the information by Tibor Popovich, former head of the Centre for Rusyn Researches in Budapest.)

It is completely correct to provide the cultural life and researches in the Rusyn culture while The Rusyn are suspicious in the eyes of Ukrainian politics. Although this Ukrainian suspicion and fear seems to be quite exaggerated, it may be understood and taken into consideration, for the maintenance of the international stability Slovakian and mainly Hungarian decision makers should more provide the researches in Ukrainian studies, too, as both country are members of the NATO also The European Union. While in Slovakia, the Ukrainian and Rusyn studies are concentrated at the same university in Preshov, where the respective population and the neighbouring Ukraine are nearby, on contrary, there are there are three universities in Hungary, having departments of Ukrainian, and now a fourth but imaginary place for Rusyn researches has established, though the Rusyn minority represent far lesser ration in Hungary as in Slovakia. (In the latter, a worldwide respected PhD program and

research centre works under chairing prof. Anna Plishkova, thanks to concentrating but not decentralization of the supplies and power.)

Research and development make effects on perceptions in the security policy, moreover, the cultural life and the studies in history were, have been and will be of great importance in East European national states (which consist of multinational and multi-ethnic population as well). There is no room for the comparative analysis of Hungarian, Slovakian and Ukrainian security policies in this paper (although the author is going to do it in the further one). We have showed the factors and the historical background of the Rusyn problem and have given some examples to demonstrate how it is a complicate and delicate question.

The recent number of the Rusyns, according to Magocsi, *The People from Nowhere...*, 2006, p.11.

Country	Official data	Estimate:
Ukraine (Transcarpathia 650,000; Lemko Rusyns resettled 90,000)	10,000	740,000
Slovakia	55,000	130,000
Poland	5,900	60,000
Serbia	16,000	25,000
Romania	200	20,000
Czech Republic	1,100	12,000
Hungary	1,100	6,000
Croatia	2,300	5,000
Unites States	12,500	620,000
Canada	---	20,000
Australia	---	2,500



The contemporary territory of Carpathian Rusyns, according to Magocsi, *Persistence of Regional Cultures...*, 1993, page 6.

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Interview

H. E. Rastislav Káčer, Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Hungary

Zuzana Balcová

Introduction: In January, 2014, the ICRP conducted a comprehensive interview with Slovakia's Ambassador to Hungary, H. E. Rastislav Káčer. Mr Ambassador provided very valuable opinions and notions on the topic of minority and ethnic issues. In this context, the ICRP were chiefly interested in his personal but also expert perception of past, but also current Slovak-Hungarian relations that have not always been entirely smooth. To sum up, the questions focused on three main areas, namely on the purpose and significance of the cultural diplomacy in bilateral relations, the Slovak-Hungarian issue and the Roma question as a worrisome problem in both neighbouring countries.

Cultural Diplomacy

What role does the cultural diplomacy have in maintaining positive relations of a state with its neighbouring countries and with minorities within the state?

Cultural diplomacy is a very significant additional tool of any kind of diplomacy, not only between neighbouring states and regardless minorities, but in general, even in cases when coercive diplomacy is used. In diplomacy, we can differentiate between soft and hard power instruments and cultural diplomacy is a soft power tool. However, when the use of these two tools is not balanced, neither regarding strategic issues, nor hard power can then be sustainable, if that is not accompanied by an attractive and well-presented soft power. The role of cultural diplomacy is notably substantial for relations of neighbouring states and

particularly when these states are intertwined by mutual long-standing history. The case of Slovak-Hungarian relations is considerably unique because it is a 1000 years old connection. Slovaks and Hungarians had together been formed into modern nations. The reality is, that Czechs had their own kingdom, Romanians during the most of their history had their kingdom, too and likewise Croats. If we look at that conglomerate of nations that once belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then we can see that Slovaks had very intimate historic relations with Hungarians. Actually, there is no nation with which we would have had more intimate relations. Naturally, this familiarity brings many similarities, but simultaneously, it is apparent that many problems can accumulate during the 1000 years long period. When you coexist with someone for so many years you have a lot in common, but there are also many things that can irritate you. That is why an especially significant role is played by the cultural diplomacy here.

In this context, do you think that Slovakia has even stronger ties with Hungary than Czech Republic?

I do not dare to claim this, because Czech-Slovak relations have been very intense during last 70 years and after all, these relations had been tight long before, although Czechs were not part of the Kingdom of Hungary. Despite of that, the intellectual and cultural ties, as well as the linguistic affinity existed already before. On the other side, what I dare to claim with an absolute certainty is that concerning the inner mentality and cultural heritage, Slovaks and Hungarians have the most in common, more than with any other nation. You can notice it even while travelling through Slovakia or Hungary, with regard to cuisine, family habits, traditions, folklore or the behaviour of people under certain life circumstances. In these respects, no other nation stands closer and is more similar to Slovaks than Hungarians and vice versa.

Slovak-Hungarian Relations

You have started to carry out the function of Ambassador of Slovakia to Hungary only recently, basically just few months ago. What are your principal goals and priorities that you would like to achieve in this office?

Practically, I have two main objectives. The first one is bilateral and connected to the question you have asked at the very beginning. In bilateral relations, I particularly care about that nowadays, we managed to make the most of the 1000 years-long coexistence. The Kingdom of Hungary within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Empire in general was a powerful, rich and influential state in which in mutual synergy we managed to produce really a lot in Europe. At present, after certain fragmentation Europe anew integrates on the platform of the European Union (EU). I think that it is time to return to the point of our ability to produce a common synergy in the form of a Slovak-Hungarian cooperation so it will become an added economic, but also political value in the frame of the entire EU. From this perspective, I would like to strengthen this mutual cooperation in order to be jointly stronger and able to move forward. And not only concerning the Slovak-Hungarian, but ideally the Visegrad cooperation in the broader context. I am a strong supporter of the Visegrad cooperation and Visegrad cooperation in a broader frame where possible and appropriate, specifically with regard to eventual Visegrad plus Austria, Slovenia or Croatia. This is one of central aims of the cooperation with Hungary, thus to modulate projects that would push Slovakia and Hungary towards a greater impact, power and prosperity in Europe.

The second area is more general and strategic. Slovakia and Hungary share a lot of foreign policy interests. However, we often tend to look excessively inward and focus on our scars from the past and not those much relevant problems that in the global context mean nothing in comparison to challenges that we have to face within the global competition. In this respect, my aim is to carry out such policy so we realise that these challenges that Hungary and Slovakia have to cope with are much grave than those we have between each other. The indisputable fact is that by cooperation we can achieve much more than in a mutual hostility.

In your opinion, what are the major challenges or alternatively, stumbling-blocks in current Slovak-Hungarian relations?

The most of the disputes result from the fact that as I have already mentioned, we had coexisted together for a very long time. During that period, the national policies were liberal and in the Middle Ages, but for the certain time also in Modern Times, the nationality did not have such a dramatic function than after the industrial revolution and national-consciousness process after the 19th century. It means that history brought us a cultural interconnection, intermixture and inhomogeneity that on one side is an enrichment factor, but on the other

side, after the Austro-Hungary Empire's division into successor states, many historical minorities remained to live on territories of various states. This fact has been a source of disputes not only between Slovakia and Hungary, but in general, too. Though, we are not a unique instance as not only the Austro-Hungary Empire, but also other European states have a difficult history. What I want to say is that history can sometimes be a source of irritations and the approach to minority questions can lead to contradictory issues. I can say that this may currently be the only source as in other spheres we can cooperate exceptionally well. I suppose that in 90% or maybe even more than in 90%, we not only have common interests, but often cooperate and move forward together.

We can state that Slovak-Hungarian relations were the most turbulent in 2004–2009, when several controversial milestones occurred. We can for example mention the Slovak amendment to the State Language Act, Hedvig Malina's case or even the refusal for the Hungarian President László Sólyom to entry Slovak territory. From the Hungarian side, we could point out the establishment of certain extremist groups or burning the Slovak flag in front of the Slovak Embassy building in Budapest. How do you perceive these national "clashes" from the perspective of your current position?

I would not dramatically differentiate years 2004–2009 compared to others. I would perhaps rather say that since 2010 until today, the Slovak Hungarian relations have been very satisfactory and during the Slovak independence period since 1993, these relations have probably been best ever. But since 1993, we have experienced several more turbulent periods, for example the Gabčíkovo (Bős)-Nagymaros Dams case and many others. That is why I would not specifically underline these years and designate them as extremely bad. On the other hand, what pleases me very much is the fact that since 2010 until today, the Slovak-Hungarian relations have been very good and constructive at government level. The Prime Ministers have a personally very good relationship between each other. I deem they respect each other greatly and in my opinion, this constructive approach advances the agenda forward. We got used to a new discussion tone which is based on the fact that we do not solve the problems through media or yell at each other over the Danube, but we seek to communicate sophisticatedly and find common views. I am convinced that this is a path on which we should go on. However, this does not mean that we had swept the problems under the rug, but we seek to solve them in an advanced way, not by shouting or in public, but in a

sophisticated and cultural manner as it is appropriate for good neighbours and strategic partners.

Do you therefore think that one of the main reasons largely leading to the improvement of Slovak-Hungarian political and diplomatic relations is that sensitive subjects have been discussed behind the closed door?

Definitely. First of all, there must be a goodwill to solve issues and do that in the way that do not offend or humiliate the partner. This applies also to interpersonal relationships. If we, for instance use crude words, it is difficult to find an adequate solution for such a situation. Simply, the key thing is a use of sophisticated manners and especially manners that do not push the partner to the corner or to such situations that are difficult to politically advocate. The essential thing is to approach the partner with respect and consideration, that he is also confronted by domestic political complications. The worst case is when we seek to solve problems in diplomacy as on the football match, where one side has to win and the other lose. Politics, diplomacy and particularly international relations have to be based on the win-win principle and I think that the current mutual dialog respects these rules.

Could you specify when did the turning point in dialog occur? When did delicate issues start to be discussed in the mentioned way?

I suppose that this turning point occurred in times when the government of Ms Radičová started to operate, but I would perhaps not designate it as such a clear turning moment. I think, that also Fico's cabinet approaching the end of the governance in 2009, likewise the Hungarian part started to be clearly aware that the applied diplomacy was not a good choice, because it reduced our credibility within our relations with other states and did not bring any effective solutions. But if I had to define a turnover, I would claim that it was the onset of Ms Radičová's cabinet and I am very satisfied and glad that the second government of Prime Minister Fico continued in this trend. I even believe, that in a certain sense the current relationship between Prime Ministers is even more qualitative than before. In my view, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán respects greatly Robert Fico and on the contrary, Fico perceives with great seriousness a strong position of Orbán. I hope that the upcoming parliamentary elections in Hungary and presidential elections in Slovakia will not stimulate the Slovak or Hungarian

question, because the potential is still there but it would be a very unhappy decision. I know surely at least from the Slovakian side, that there are no ambitions to use the Hungarian issue and I strongly believe that this question will not be regenerated by some inductive effect.

How do you perceive the issue of dual citizenship?

It is an unhappy topic. I think, that the Dual Citizenship Act adopted by the Hungarian Republic is bad, it was not properly thought out, caused a lot of damage, was adapted purely for domestic political consumption and disregarded legal international usages and customs that are conventional in Europe and globally. Moreover, it was not adopted in accordance with agreed mechanisms that dictate that measures influencing also neighbours, in particular when regarding to minority issues, should be consulted with neighbouring states before the adoption. This Hungarian law is very uncommon and has acted as a serious irritant factor in relation to Slovakia. On the other hand, I have to admit that Slovakia responded with a bad law and bad countermeasure, so we actually got into a kind of impasse, where Slovakia did not reacted in the happiest way to this bad law, because no state should adopt laws by which it gets so easily rid of its own citizens. But this is already the other side of the coin. We were not those who started this bad avalanche. We might have reconsidered our respond and reacted more creatively but it does not change the fact that I am deeply convinced that the Hungarian Act on dual citizenship is bad, purpose-built and politically motivated.

What in your opinion would be a more adequate respond to this law by the Slovak side?

I do not want to speculate about this at present. The Ministry of Interior is preparing the amendment to this law and I think that within a year this amendment could be adopted. I also think that at present it would be premature to discuss what would be a more adequate response. In any case, the mentioned amendment will bring a better legal status and situation in Slovakia in comparison to that of today. But when I previously talked about situations when both partners should leave the round table contented, I also think that Hungarian side should likewise amend some parts of its law on citizenship so that these will not act as unreasonable irritant factors to its neighbours. This law should be modern and should more precisely meet international legal standards as at present. In this regard, we should meet somewhere half way. I think that Slovakia is unfortunately more willing to make some

concessions, but I believe that in these respects, we can manage to find mutually satisfactory solutions within a year.

What is your opinion on the theory, that in Slovak-Hungarian relations is basically no real conflict directly among Slovak and Hungarian citizens, but it is more about a dispute between Slovak and Hungarian political elite. There are also notions that the minority question is raised by political elites at times, when they seek to side-track from more severe society problems, for example economic issues.

I personally agree with this theory. I think that when you need to find some enemy in politics, any intolerance is a miserable tool that is used in times when the society is in a crisis, whether economic or other. It is a kind of an emergency brake which is applied by weak politicians but it occurs anywhere in the world, it is not something specific only for Slovak-Hungarian relations. Concerning the Slovak-Hungarian coexistence, I come from a family that has many bonds with Hungary and I also have a lot of friends with Hungarian as a native language. Moreover, I grew up in Nitra which is situated on the verge of Slovak-Hungarian mixed areas. My mum was a director of a mixed Slovak-Hungarian school for many years and my father was a doctor in Slovak-Hungarian environment and I have never, absolutely never perceived this as any irritant. It was always more about a friendly teasing rather than real problems. When I lived for four years in Belgium, the Flemish-Walloon conflict seemed much more intense and emotional to me in comparison to one that I experienced at home. That is why I agree with this statement to a great extent.

Nowadays, we can consider Slovak-Hungarian relations as rather moderate, when top politicians on both sides seek to avoid disputed areas of minority question in domestic or foreign policy, whilst greater emphasis is put on other issues, in particular on the strengthening of the economic and regional cooperation. You have already partly answered this question. Could you perhaps yet add something?

What unites us and what is really important are projects that stimulate regional development and increase our economic competitiveness in Europe and globally. In this respect, we have many regional development projects for building a common infrastructure. We could more efficiently share EU funds for improving North-South infrastructure, both road and rail

transport. Indeed, it is a paradox that fast train from Bratislava (Pozsony) to Štúrovo (Párkány) goes very quickly but then it continues to Budapest very slowly, so the infrastructure is indeed very poor. Also, if you want to travel to Krakow, it is a picturesque scenic route, but when you go there for a business, it is a suffering. The roads are really bad, the infrastructure linkages are missing. But there is also other kind of infrastructure that is even more essential and on which we work intensively. This is the interconnection of wires and pipelines. In this sphere, we have markedly progressed and we should definitely yet more intensify our work. I would expect greater enthusiasm from the Hungarian side than we see today. So these are domains that we would like to focus on and on which we also focus to some extent as we lead intense discussions. Another area of cooperation that moves us further is a defence question. We consult still more and more about common Visegrad projects or Czecho-Slovak projects of a common airspace protection. These discussions are extended by Hungary, as well by common acquisition and modernization projects that would substantially reduce our costs, so that would be an excellent area of cooperation. Here I could raise an absolutely great example of Nordic cooperation between Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. There are a lot of pragmatic solutions and I think we could more open and liberalise regulations that control trade and thus increase the business flexibility and make this whole Central European region more attractive for foreign investors. It would be outstanding if we succeeded in bringing large investment projects to North-Eastern Hungary or South-Western Slovakia. In this perspective, I would not be jealous at all because it is evident that such investments would have a great gravitational effect for both countries and would cause an economic expansion on both sides of borders.

The fact that, I do not want to say that divides us, but is essential in many aspects, is that Hungary nowadays is a country that is largely criticised by many European states. Some laws and practices of the current government are not always enthusiastically and with open arms perceived among the EU Member States. Hungary receives criticism for not fully democratic procedures and practices. In this view, I would like to stress that Slovakia does not belong to states that would be insensitive to Hungary in this regard. We strive for a very friendly policy that takes into account that we are neighbours. Despite the fact that even if there are certain aspects in Hungary we are not happy with, Slovakia does not always join the critics of other states. We are not the ones who would like to publicly judge Hungary for these practices. We can say what annoys us, but we do not want to do that in a way that would offend our partner.

We seek for an open, friendly and sophisticated dialogue and I expect that such policies will be applied also by Hungary towards Slovakia in the future.

In a broader context, what are common goals of Hungary and Slovakia in the foreign policy? I mean, for example, regarding Balkans region.

In this direction we have absolutely identical attitudes and proceed hand in hand, aiming at stabilising the Balkans. We have many projects individually, likewise Hungary, but complete each other politically. We support the integration of the Balkans into the EU, but of course on the basis that they meet all the necessary conditions. In this aspect, we seek to help these states as much as possible, for instance concerning inevitable reforms, development assistance, know-how, etc. The Slovak-Hungarian policy is identical in foreign affairs. If we mention the Eastern policy towards Ukraine or the former Soviet Union area, approaches relating NATO operations or joint EU foreign security policy, there are no considerable differences. If you asked in what aspects is the Slovak position different, I could not be able to point out such an example. The truth is that the Balkans is a number one priority in the foreign policy scale for both of us and thus we also behave.

I have recently read an article of one Hungarian political analyst who stated that according to him, Hungary has closest relations definitely with Slovakia from all its neighbours. These two states have much in common, not only concerning the cultural heritage or foreign policy objectives, but they also share a very similar national mentality. Could you agree with this statement?

I absolutely share this view. If I was supposed to write it by myself, I would not write it otherwise. This reflects the reality and every emphatic person can feel it. The only thing that distinguishes us is the language, nothing else, because traditions, family routines, folklore, art, cuisine or even bad things like certain scepticism and cynicism are similar. Language is the only consideration that distinguishes us. All other things are only nuances. Maybe people who have lived their entire life in one village do not realise it that much. Especially in the past, when people were born, got married, worked and died in one village, they perceived the differences more intensely. But I am a person who has spent half-life abroad since 1989 and I can say that if you look at daily routines from a different way, you will find out that the

resemblance is incredible. However, there is not only a Slovak-Hungarian similarity. I personally also feel a very strong Central European identity, because the fact is that the Austro-Hungary Empire was a political, economic and cultural phenomenon that created our historic reality for centuries. This reality contributed to the formation of our common identity. I can feel that identity when traveling through Austrian villages, but also in Bavaria, Czech Republic, Slovenia or Croatia. There is something like a Central European spirit, an element of Central European identity that distinguishes us from the rest of Europe. Regarding broader, European identity, we often hesitate over it and think that it is only theoretical. I lived for five years in the US and I can tell that I have never felt more European than when I lived there. So when you look at it from afar, in confrontation with other cultures and environments, then you realize how close we stand to each other and what meaningless disputes we share.

Roma Issue

In Slovakia, there are two main issues constantly dominating in the minority perspective. These are besides Hungarian question, also the Roma issue. In terms of vision for the future, during let's say next five years, which minority question will in your opinion attract more attention in political and diplomatic spheres, but also in general public?

Definitely the Roma question. But I would not compare Hungarian and Roma questions as minority problems. I do not perceive Hungarian question or people having Hungarian as a mother tongue in Slovakia as a problem for the future. I think that it will not be a problem for the future and actually it is not a problem even today. It is rather a political capital thing than a real problem. I think Slovakia is very tolerant to Hungarian minority and native Hungarian speakers. The fact that we have had such a consistently strong and numerous Hungarian community for so many years in Slovakia is a sufficiently reliable evidence. Regarding Roma people, it is a completely different level of problem, because it is a cultural, as well as social phenomenon. I am not an expert on Roma issue and I cannot offer any recipes, but I suppose this problem has potentials to grow more severe in the near future. It is necessary to seek solutions not only on the Slovak or Hungarian level, but also on the European stage. The Roma minority and its integration to major communities is a cross-cutting issue in the EU. Hungarian citizens are fully integrated into our society in any context but Roma minority poses a serious social problem. Their integration is a matter of the EU, too. That does not mean that I want to divest responsibility and I think we should not do that, but it is a broader

problem that covers the entire EU. We should have a unified policy on how to uphold Roma community so that their social status and integration would be smooth. I think that we unfortunately cannot solve this situation within next few years, so we have to be patient in this regard. I also would like to add, that the Roma issue does not divide, but unites Slovakia and Hungary because this problem is similar in our countries. We should rather learn from experiences of one another, get inspired by the Hungarian government and thus find out more easily which measures and practices are more or less efficient. This is what we could do at least.

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Analysis of ethnic relations in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Taylor Helene Matevich

Abstract: This analysis consists of a brief overview of ethnic relations in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the different historical aspects that have contributed to past and present ethnic relations in the country. Macedonia's withdrawal from the former Yugoslavia was the beginning of a long, and on-going, divide between the two major ethnic communities in Macedonia, the Slav-Macedonians and the ethnic Albanians. Since the end of the ethnic conflict in 2001, the country has seen some progress resulting from the implementation of the Ohrid Peace Agreement, yet there are still several forces, both internal and external, that are inhibiting Macedonia from European Union accession, NATO membership, and the potential for international recognition as becoming a part of the West.

Keywords: Macedonia, Ohrid Peace Agreement, ethnic relations

History of ethnic relations in Macedonia

Consistent with many of its neighbours' history, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) has a well-documented and steady history of ethnic tension, within the country itself and the in the regional context of the Balkans. Macedonia is a country that is greatly divided between two significant distinct populations, Slav-Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, which comprise noteworthy social, religious, ethnic, and linguistic variances. Ethnic Albanians in Macedonia are the largest minority group in the country, representing about 23 per cent of the population. (Simoska, n.a.)

Since the early 20th century, Macedonia has been partitioned, occupied, and conquered by various outside forces. At the end of the Ottoman rule in Europe, today's Macedonia was incorporated into Serbia, it was then occupied by Bulgaria, and years later, after the First World War, it again became part of Serbia, which would later become Yugoslavia. (BBC News, 2012)

The Republic of Macedonia is now one of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia after gaining independence in 1991, when a majority of voters supported independence in referendum, and joined the United Nations in 1993. (BBC News, 2012) Yet, despite this progress, the new constitution at this time faced much opposition by the ethnic Albanians in the country and, in 1992, an unofficial referendum among ethnic Albanians indicated a demand for their own territorial independence. (BBC News, 2012) While tensions among citizens continued to escalate, so did tensions with their neighbours. International recognition of an independent Macedonia was slow due to the fact that its southern neighbour, Greece, objected to the use of the name "Macedonia", citing that because it is the same as the name of a Greek province, it could not also be used by this newly independent country. (BBC News, 2012)

Despite these disagreements, in 1992, Yugoslavia acknowledged Macedonia's secession and the Yugoslav government resigned after mass demonstrations that had resulted from the failure to gain recognition for the country's autonomy.

Inter-ethnic issues began to escalate exponentially a few years later at the national level. Several incidents in the late 90s prompted protests in the country, such as in 1997, when the Constitutional Court forbade the use of the Albanian flag, in which Parliament later adopted a law to enforce this decision. However, what really caused a significant increase in inter-ethnic conflict in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia started in March 1999. At this time, NATO initiated a bombing campaign in Yugoslavia in response to the treatment of Kosovo Albanians. This, in addition to the mass expulsion and killing of Kosovo Albanians by Serbia, prompted increased migration of Kosovo Albanians into many neighbouring countries, such as Macedonia. "The flood of Albanian refugees from Kosovo has seriously destabilised the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Above all, the refugee influx heightened fears among the Macedonian Slav majority that, because of their higher birth-rate, Macedonia's Albanians are becoming the dominant force in the state." (Strategic Comments, 2007)

In early 2001, the emergence of the National Liberation Army, which demanded equal rights for ethnic Albanians in Macedonia, led to uprisings. After several months of widespread violent conflict between the two groups, peace was restored later that year and was met with a NATO operation, a new constitution, and the Ohrid Peace Agreement.

Ethnic division and tension among residents of the country continue to be some of the most sensitive and complex issues influencing the stability and security of Macedonia today. Since December 2005, Macedonia has been a candidate for European Union accession and has applied for NATO membership. And while the major ethnic conflict ended more than ten years ago, Macedonia is still struggling to prove if they are ready to join the West. This doubt can generally be attributed to the severe lack of trust between the Slav-Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, despite the peace agreement that exists between them. “Trust between the Slav-Macedonians and Albanians has hit rock bottom.” (Armakolas and Feta, 2012)

Contributing factors to continued ethnic division in Macedonia

The unresolved issue regarding the name dispute with Greece has continued to delay progress in Macedonia for years. This ongoing disagreement has considerably slowed down Macedonia’s progress towards integration with NATO and the EU and has simultaneously increased the tension between Slav-Macedonians and Albanians. Currently, a large majority of Slav-Macedonians would prefer to continue arguments over the name issue rather than compromise for the sake of NATO membership whereas a large majority of ethnic Albanians disagree with this approach, and would instead prefer to resolve this issue quickly so as to attain NATO membership. (Armakolas and Feta, 2012) This long-standing disagreement has only continued to intensify tension between the two ethnic communities and a prolonged process of gaining NATO membership and EU integration will only facilitate further ethnic division in the country.

Additionally, the failed 2011 census also indicates the state’s failure to alleviate ethnic tension. The census conflict in Macedonia can be credited to the competition between the ethnic communities for public resources. With the weak state of the economy and the currently high unemployment rate, public administration jobs are being highly sought after. The failure to complete a census is a result of the political elites’ concerns that their respective communities had diminished in numbers relative the other ethnic groups and a census had the

potential to essentially decrease their political power or influence, as the principle of “‘equitable and just representation of non-majority communities’, enshrined in the public policies of the country since 2002, has direct implication on census taking in Macedonia.” (Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 2013). In this regard, it is important to note that a policy change in which these kinds of affirmative action policies were reformed to instead focus on economically disadvantaged populations, as opposed to ethnic groups, would be a potential solution to the census conflict in Macedonia.

Skopje 2014

Another recent development that has continued to intensify the divide between ethnic communities is the Skopje 2014 government program. This new project “has undermined inter-ethnic reconciliation... the anti-Albanian animus of rising ‘ancient’ Macedonian nationalism is a cause of serious concern for the Albanian community.” (Armakolas and Feta, 2012) The official purpose of this government project is to renovate the country’s capital into a metropolis. This entails the construction of several bridges and churches, as well as new monuments of medieval and ancient figures. While it may be appealing for national tourism, the project appeals to the history of Slav-Macedonians, whereas the Albanian community and their history are not included in the reconstruction and memory of the country’s history.

The Future of ethnic relations in Macedonia

In 2014, there have still been protests and outbreaks of ethnic violence in Macedonia. While much of the Ohrid Peace Agreement has been implemented at the national level, the tension that still exists among the Slav-Macedonians and ethnic Albanians can be largely attributed to the actions of political actors in the country. The utilization of media to exacerbate the divide between these two ethnic groups has not subsided and is being used as a tool to increase tension and, subsequently, divert public attention from the country’s political and economic problems. “The systematic violation of human rights and freedoms, the suppression of media freedom, poverty and corruption, all remain invisible under a tide of orchestrated chauvinism and ethnic, religious and political divisions.” (Deralla, 2014) The media in Southeast Europe has played a prominent role in enabling ethnic conflict in the Balkan region and the media in Macedonia is no exception, as it has deeply reinforced these ethnic divides.

Many of the problems Macedonia faces today exist on the national level, and the ability to resolve these issues and improve and foster ethnic coexistence in the country is unlikely without the presence of political will at the national level. “Inter-ethnic relations, disputes with neighbours, functioning of democratic institutions and rule of law, absent political and economic reforms complete the mosaic why Republic of Macedonia is lagging behind in EU integration processes.” (Zendeli, 2012) While these factors are inhibiting Macedonia’s progress toward EU integration, it is only with the continued and also increased support of the international community and international organisations, such the NATO and the European Union, that Macedonia will be able to overcome these ethnic divisions. Without EU Conditionality as an incentive for eventual, or potential, EU integration, the ethnic tension between Slav-Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in Macedonia will not diminish. Though Macedonia became a candidate for EU membership in 2005, it still remains a fragile state due to rising nationalism, an increase in school segregation, and a slow decentralisation process. These national issues, particularly in light of the failed 2011 census, need to be dealt with at an international level, so as to allow for improvement. The promise of NATO membership and EU accession have the rare potential to unify the country, however, the current situation in regard to the name dispute has instead created further divide and has stalled progress in the country.

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institute@culturalrelations.org

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