COUNTRYMEN BEYOND BORDERS: IS HUNGARY ENCOURAGING SEPARATISM?

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to open a discussion of nation and ‘nation policy’ from a new angle and provocatively ask, whether the Hungarian recent policy in fact encourages separatism in the area. In general, three kinds of separatism will be recognized here: aims to separate from the euro, from the EU and finally from a particular state. Although separatism is not a topic in Hungarian official discourse, now the new constitution identifies a ‘unified Hungarian nation’ – in fact beyond borders, as well. Moreover, the present government is supposed to have increased its influence in the Carpathian Basin by supporting particular party fractions in neighbouring countries, as has unilaterally guaranteed dual citizenship to ethnic Hungarians. The paper concentrates on the period after the EU accession, culminating in the new constitution, and new electoral legislation. The author argues that in addition to nostalgia and prejudices the Hungarian ‘nation policy’ has revealed criticism in nation building and strengthened confrontation inside the EU. Empirically the approach analyses Hungarian newspapers, programs of ethnic parties in Romania, Slovakia and Serbia, as actions and statements of Hungarian parties, including the extreme Jobbik’s and its ‘national radical’ views. The methodology is based on ideas of conceptual history, and political rhetoric, which thus, understands concepts, like ‘nation’, and ‘nation policy’, contested tools in political debate of identities and identification.

When Hungary started its EU chairmanship by an exhibition, they introduced a carpet, which depicted a historical map of Central Europe in 1848. According to the Hungarian commissioner the carpet represented only a timeline of cultural, historical, and scientific symbols of the country. However, as the piece of art presented Hungary three times larger than its present borders, comments and reception varied from general surprise to allegations of backwardness and Greater Hungary (Hungary in EU presidency 'history' carpet row 2011).
I have to clarify immediately that a simple answer to the provocative question posed in the title is no: There is no official nation wide separatism in Hungary, neither from the European Union nor from other European institutions. Moreover, Hungary has confirmed present borders by particular mutual treaties already in the 1990s, and thus, from the Hungarian point of view this is mere propaganda. However, this paper takes another angle and seeks an answer to a more complicated question, why history matters and why these topics, including the carpet case, are still on the agenda: why for example a Foreign Minister still needs to argue to that there are no Hungarian demands to Transylvania (cf. NSZ 11.3.2013) or why Slovakian leading politicians spoke about Hungarian revisionism.

First of all, this is a study of Hungarian foreign policy and ethnic parties, to deal with the ethnic minorities beyond state borders in the 2000s. Eamonn Butler (2007) estimated that Hungary might never find a balance in its three priorities in her foreign policy: to support minorities outside Hungarian borders, to promote Euro-Atlantic integration and good neighbourhood policy (Butler 2007: 1140). Indeed, Hungarian foreign policy has aimed to support ethnic Hungarians in neighbour states, but, after the last parliamentary elections in 2010, I argue that there have been signs to undermine this fragile status quo for the sake of ethnic minorities. These have dealt with particular institutional changes in Hungarian foreign policy, and to quite openly support certain parties in neighbour states. Secondly, there is the aforementioned dual citizenship, as the Hungarian government has de facto completed an interesting experiment in the 2000s: Usually the dual citizenship has referred to immigration and emigrant populations (see for example Faist 2007), but in 2010 Hungary offered unilateral dual citizenship for their countrymen, without moving to the Hungarian territory. Thirdly, Hungarians are applying a relatively new concept nemzetpolitika “nation politics”, which goes beyond the traditional dichotomy between foreign and domestic politics. On the one hand its use raises doubts of lost territories as later will be clarified but even a liberal media is using the concept (NSZ 12.06.2012).
Although the Hungarian diaspora has existed since the First World War, I concentrate mainly on the period following the EU enlargement: It seems that the access to the union did not oust the question from the agenda, but in particular two significant timelines can be studied: firstly, in December 2004 the citizens had to decide in a referendum, as to whether the parliament should accept dual (multi) citizenship. Secondly, there is the debate since Spring 2010, when the parliament guaranteed Hungarian citizenship for minorities of Hungarian origin, ending to secure their electoral legislation in 2013.

Although there are a lot of studies to depict minorities in a particular country, practical forms, separatism and policies to deal with ‘kin-states’ and their relations to ‘kin-minorities’ are less studied. Wide analysis of the Hungarian Status Law could be found in English in The Hungarian Status Law Syndrome: A Nation Building and/or Minority Protection (2004). Moreover, Maria Kovacs has studied the 2004 referendum (see Kovacs 2005 and 2007), Nyyssönen and Korhonen (2010) focused on Hungary particularly looking at how these policies affect geopolitics and borders. Citizenship laws in the new EU member states were analysed in Citizenship policies in the New Europe (2007), whilst Waterbury (2010) has studied Hungarian diaspora politics and kin-state nationalism.

Basically this is a constructivist approach, in which it is finally difficult to find a Rubicon, when the question will be completely solved: a treatment of minorities is a consequence of politics, and power relations between different actors. Methodologically the article is based on ideas of conceptual history and the study of rhetoric. In addition to “what” question, there is always the question “how”, both which in constructivist representations are practically woven together. Here the latter refers to conceptual history and rhetoric, as in political debate even concepts, like ‘nation’ are contested tools; new are invented but also the content of older concepts might change and require new meanings and contents, when they are used in political action. The source material is mainly based on party programmes in Hungary, and by
her ethnic minorities in its neighbouring countries. Moreover, I use two Hungarian newspapers, the conservative *Magyar Nemzet* and liberal *Népszabadság*, and on the literature and minutes of the Hungarian Parliament.¹

**SEPARATISM – A FEW REMARKS ON THE CONCEPTS**

According to Reinhart Koselleck (1972) same phenomenon could be called with different names, but also different phenomena with the same name. Thus, there is a great potential difficulty to study concepts, like words in party programmes: basically in a democracy you should trust on the meanings – like autonomy (“goal”) is something different than separatism (“movement”). However, we have also the tradition of “Orwellism”, not at least in the recent history of Eastern Europe i.e. people might still expect something “else” than expressed publicly. Thus, I tend to think that conceptual history is dealing with the politics of trust, too: to find out whether only the hands are Esau’s, we have to contextualize concepts and compare them to other concepts and deeds.

History matters in politics of trust: For example, Slovakia opposed and has not recognised the separation and independence of Kosovo. In principle, Slovakia has some potential similarities in its own history, as the whole territory of Slovakia was earlier known as “Upper-Hungary”. Separatism became in fact integration, too, as Slovaks did not only separate from the Dual Monarchy but soon integrated to the forthcoming Czechoslovakia. Also Romania and Italia are countries, which benefitted from the failed state in 1918: Italy is usually an example of a successful territorial autonomy for South-Tyrol. Hungary instead gained territories back later with Hitler’s help in Vienna Awards from Slovakia and Romania, occupied the Vojvodina, too, but lost these again after the war. A small Hungarian Autonomous Region was created in central Transylvania in 1952, but its powers were strictly limited, and it was eventually eliminated in 1968.

¹ There I am fully aware how in Freedom House’s classifications Hungarian media has dropped to a category of “partly
It is very interesting that separatism does not belong those historical basic concepts (historische Grundbegriffe), which Reinhart Koselleck (et. al.) developed since the end of the 1960s. Although the focus here is mostly on territorial, separatism could be larger state of cultural, ethnic, religious, racial, governmental or gender separation from the larger group. Particularly three kinds of present separatism will be recognized in the present Europe: aims to separate from the euro, from the EU and finally from a particular state.

According to Svante E. Cornell secessionism is likely to be significantly higher for minorities with an autonomous region compared to non-autonomous. In the Soviet cases the fact that the centre sometimes tightly controlled autonomous regions, was no impediment to their use for political purposes. (Cornell 2002: 19). Autonomy, from the Greek *auto* (self) and *nomo* (law), is frequently used quite loosely (Lapidoth 1996: 29). While the concept often refers to full political secession, there is also the question of the goal, as separatist groups may seek nothing more than greater autonomy. In addition to territorial autonomy we may separate cultural autonomy i.e. specific rights and duties confessed on individuals belonging to a specific group ethnically or religiously based (Cornell 2002: 8).

For the state centric school of political realism secession is no doubt a threat for the survival of the state. One option is assimilation, which is based on the idea of the superiority of the dominant culture, and homogeneity of the country by eliminating the diversity. However, a liberal could answer that the meaning of borders has already diminished, and a constructivist might add that most countries in the Carpathian Basin belong already to the community sharing same common values. Whether autonomy then in fact strengthens the state or leads to a full secession, cannot be unanimously answered here. More important is to separate secession from integration: Thus, I would like to take one step further, and ask the question of potential integration, and tend to think that separatism comes first, and presupposes integration. Then the question is, whether these both could exist simultaneously.
Thus, despite Albania Kosovo seem to remain independent unlike Texas, which integrated to the United States. From this logic, not alien in Slovakia or Romania, autonomy is only a semi step to separatism i.e. giving finger to the devil demands finally the entire hand.

Also the concept of diaspora, frequently linked to the destruction of Jerusalem, belongs to this vocabulary. Sometimes the concept is used interchangeably with transnationalism, which refers to migrants’ durable ties across countries and more widely to capture not only communities but also all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organisations. (Faist 2010: 9). Shain and Wittes (2002) defined a particular diaspora politics of political behaviour of transnational ethnic diaspora, their relationship with their ethnic homelands and their home-states, as well as their prominent role in ethnic conflicts (Cf. also Waterbury 2010). Thus, there are several political actors in the game: First, within each of a diaspora's host states resident members can organize domestically to maximize their political clout. Secondly, a diaspora can exert significant pressure in its homeland's domestic political arena. Lastly, a diaspora's transnational community can engage directly with third-party states and international organizations, in effect bypassing its homeland and host state governments.

From the point of IR, three reasons for the origins of a “diaspora” will be listed here: At first a state failure, like the Kingdom of Hungary, gave room for new communities and independent states. For example more Lebanese, Armenians or Jews live in their present home-states than in the kin-states, or when the Soviet Union collapsed, around 25 million ethnic Russians were left in the successor states. The second case, a colonialisation, could be also derived from the former example: the Baltic States remind that their recent problems are a consequence of a Russian colonialisation, which since the Second World War significantly changed the ethnic composition. However, not all immigration is related to former territory, and therefore I like to separate this territorial connection from immigration in general.
The latter is global, and although these are also minorities beyond borders, their present home-states do not have territorial connections to the kin-state. When the Hungarian ethnic minorities are at stake, we may discuss about historical minorities, who were left aside, when the state border slipped away.

Should we then label all durable ties as nationalism as the concept of transnationalism implicitly suggest? This means that we understand nationalism first of all as political discourse, which not only creates nation states, but aims to maintain ‘we’, a political community in the global world. Contrary to expectations, the 2004 enlargement did not mean the death of nationalism. On the analysis of Polish and Hungarian cases Jon E. Fox and Peter Vermeerch use the concept of backdoor nationalism. They noticed correctly how ‘nation’ has provided a fulcrum for inter-party contestation. Also the EU integration has provided nationalists in the region with a backdoor for old nationalist ambitions. Thirdly, nationalist organisations define themselves as opponents of the EU itself. (Fox and Vermeerch 2010: 325-357). For example, the new constitution of Hungary (2011) refers to an idea of a unified Hungarian nation. For those, who understand the recent political discussions, it is evident that the formula refers to all Hungarians in the world, particularly to those ethnic minorities in neighbouring countries.

ATTEMPTS TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION BEFORE THE EU ENLARGEMENT

In Hungary the first post-1989 attempt to deal with the question of outer-Hungarians concerned basic treaties to confirm present state borders in the 1990s. In particular, treaties with Ukraine, Slovakia and Romania raised debate, as some MPs demanded guarantees for minority treatment in neighbouring countries – on the other hand a current socialist Foreign Minister could argue that particularly the acceptance of those bilateral treaties will end allegations of revisionism (Az Országgyűlés...1996: 23390-23391). A second, and still a current, topic is the question of regional autonomy, openly backed by the Hungarian Parliament in the mid-1990s; a softer
alternative compared to contest state borders. Thirdly, a particular Status Law was an attempt to lower the Hungarian state border for the ethnic Hungarians in the threshold of the EU accession. On the basis of an idea of belonging to the same, homogenous “nation” Hungary aimed to subsidise and grant benefits for Hungarians in neighbouring states, except the EU member Austria.

However, the Council of Europe noted in the resolution 1335, how international law operates only with concepts of state and citizenship. According to the CE there was a feeling that in the neighbouring countries the definition of the concept of ‘nation’ could be under certain circumstances understood as non-acceptance of the state borders dividing the members of the ‘nation’. On the basis of the resolution Hungary, a EU candidate country at that time, abolished separate units planned to grant certificates of Hungarian nationality, which violated other states’ territories. Concerning the thematic of the ‘nation’, the socialist-liberal government gave up on the idea of a ‘unified [homogenous] Hungarian nation’ (egységes magyar nemzet) from the preamble. At that time Fidesz, the main opposition party, and two radical minority organisations did not sign the amendment of the law.

Although Hungary has been the most famous case, it is not the only one in Europe, as Andre Liebich (2007) has pointed out. Hungary was the first to raise concern about the conditions of ethnic kin into the revised constitution, which happened already during the last days of Communist rule in 1989, a pattern, which was followed by several post-communist states. In addition to the status of minorities in several post-communist constitutions, Slovenia (1996) adopted a Resolution on the Position of Autochthonous Slovene Minorities in Neighbouring Countries to support minority organisations abroad. Moreover, there was a legislative attempt in Poland to secure the position of minorities beyond borders there. Slovakia has since 1997 had a Law on Expatriate Slovaks, who can stay for a long period without a working permit or permanent residence status in Slovakia. According to Liebich the Slovak case did not raise international concern as it defined its beneficiaries in ethnic terms whereas the
Hungarian law was vague on ethnic requirements and based precisely on territorial conditions (Liebich 2007: 25).

In practice both political ‘camps’ in Hungary have shared an agenda of a responsibility of Hungarians outside borders, but there has been a lack of consensus of governmental actions based on this responsibility (Batory 2010: 31-48). What makes Hungary particularly special, is its large ethnic minorities and just beyond borders. Whilst post-Trianon Hungary itself is ethnically quite homogenous, ‘Hungarians are neighbours of Hungarians’, as all neighbour states have a Hungarian minority. According to official censuses between 2000 and 2002 there were 1,435,000 Hungarians in Romania, 516,000 in Slovakia, 293,000 in Serbia-Montenegro and 156,000 in Ukraine. In Croatia, Slovenia and Austria the number was less than 16,000 in each – in the Hungarian state there are 9,960,000 inhabitants (Cf. Kovács and Tóth 2007; NSZ 10.03.2012).

**POLITICS OF THE DUAL CITIZENSHIP REFERENDUM**

Despite EU citizenship, nationality falls within domestic jurisdiction, and it is the state, which decides whom to naturalise and to whom it will grant citizenship and dual citizenship. According to international law the extent of a state’s rights to determine to whom its nationality may be granted or from whom withdrawn is dependent on the definition of state sovereignty (Donner 1994: 29, 119; Bron 2002: 34-41; Faist 2007). There is no common policy line at the EU level in these cases, as not all EU countries accept dual citizenship; like Germany, which asks people to choose citizenship at the age of 23. As the Hungarian case shows, there the debate has not really concerned immigration but ethnic minorities and their existence beyond state borders.

In Hungary a formal proposal for dual citizenship emerged outside the state actor, from the diaspora pressure: a few months after the modification of the Status Law in 2003 minority organisations in Serbia and in Romania took the initiative, as at that
time it seemed plausible that Hungary would join the EU, and to close the borders from Hungarian minorities. According to the Hungarian constitution, a popular referendum (népszavazás) shall be held if so initiated by at least 200,000 voting citizens within a four-month period. The result of such a referendum would commit the parliament to act if at least half of the whole electorate participates in the referendum. Thus, with the help of the Hungarian World Organisation Hungarians managed to gather 474,000 signatures up to July 2004 and a referendum had to be organised.

Domestic party political emphasis was present in the referendum campaign. When studying the arguments of the socialist-liberal government, it can be noticed that they opposed dual citizenship, and there economic arguments and civic nationalism i.e. Hungarians inside the Hungarian state prevailed. Also historical arguments were used, as the then socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány surmised that the proposal would empty regions beyond borders and lead to a ‘second Trianon’ (MH 3.11.2004; NSZ 10.11.2004; MH 27.11.2004). ‘Trianon’ is a very sensitive argument, and the PM painted this ‘scenario’ to oppose dual citizenship in public. Statistically, the amount of ethnic Hungarians had decreased in the 1990s, and a slowly moving ‘Trianon’ was a then matter of fact. The question was, as to whether it could be stopped – the same kind of argumentation had been used in the case of the Status Law debate of 2001.

It was wondered whether the proposal would raise again barriers between Hungarians inside and outside state borders, and question the loyalty of minorities in their home-states – as it finally did – or would empty regions and even lead to more homogenised neighbour states. The worst scenario included an axiom that the land exists only as far as people will live there, and ethnic minorities beyond borders were a constant reminder of the existence of the nation. Thus, in this logic territory is ‘finally’ lost, when there are no more countrymen there, like the Germans in the present Czech Republic and Poland, or the Finns in Karelia after 1944.
Thus, also the territorial principle was present in the debate. The former leader of the Alliance of Free Democrats, SzDSz, philosopher János Kis, contemned Gyurcsány’s scenario by arguing that if people leave their land as a consequence of the law, the question is not about people but the land. The law would be harmful as the kin-minority would not be equal in their present home-states in the future. Instead of nationalist language and clichés of the extreme right the government should condemn the proposal as it would lead to postponing rational solutions for many years (MH 27.11.2004).

The biggest party in the opposition, Fidesz, had a completely different stance. On the basis of ethnic nationalism they estimated that dual citizenship would not empty regions. They aimed to maximize rights for ethnic Hungarians, even at the cost of political confrontation with their home state leadership and the ‘majorities’ there. The leader of the party, Viktor Orbán, re-bordered Hungarians as a nation of 15 million and argued that dual citizenship had already been carried out in many European countries, and ‘only Hungarians are made to believe that they should be small’ (MN & NSZ 29.11.2004). However, Fidesz’s current conception of citizenship was already a torso from the very beginning: it excluded the right to settle in Hungary, the right to vote or run as a candidate in parliamentary elections. Moreover, the debate linked dual citizenship to the nation thematic as it meant ‘re-uniting of the nation’ (új nemzetegyesítsés). Fidesz-led opposition demanded that a law of ‘becoming nationally together’ (nemzeti összetartozás törvény) should be enacted.

On December 5, 2004 voters had to decide, as to whether the parliament had to enact a law on citizenship that a person, who confesses to be Hungarian but is not a citizen, does not live in Hungary but could prove (Hungarian) nationality on the basis of the Certificate of Hungarian Nationality, or by other means defined by the law. (MN 04.12.2004; NSZ 06.-07.12.2004). As only 37,5% of the whole electorate voted, it meant also that a majority i.e. 62,5% did not participate in the referendum. Thus, domestic controversy was stressed in the end, and neither side was able to present a
coherent interpretation of international norms and practices that would have supported their respective positions (Kovacs 2005: 72). Romania had opposed the idea in public, claimed that Romanian Hungarians have to give up their citizenship in the case of applying a Hungarian one, and threatened to debate the issue in the Council of Europe, like in the Status Law case (NE 16.11.2004; NSZ 17.11.2004; NSZ 01.-03.12.2004).

‘NATION POLICY’
For Hungarian political discourse a distinction of a state (állam) and a nation (nemzet) has been important. After Fidesz’s landslide victory (1998) Viktor Orbán defined that the borders of a state and nation are not in congruence. The idea of Kulturnation appears in a dictionary in 2001, like a notion that since the 1990s a liberal view has spread, which makes an effort to separate nationality from ethnic-linguistic-cultural community and propagates a perception that nationality could be chosen. If we look at a few fact books and dictionaries published during the late Dual Monarchy period from the point of conceptual history, Hungary was considered an example of a strong national state. Moreover, we can find references to the ability to found a state particularly between the world wars. There are also notifications, how the content of the concept had varied in the course of history, from particular privileged groups to all inhabitants of the Hungarian realm, but a territorial argument is not particularly stressed in older dictionaries. (cf. A Pallas Nagy Lexikon 1896: 95; Uj idők lexikona 1940: 4745; Magyar Nagylexikon 2001: 676; Révai Uj Lexikon 2005: 81).

The concept ‘nation policy’ (nemzetpolitika) is a neologism and cannot be found in the dictionaries above. There is only one reference to it: one of the dictionaries recognised Nemzetpolitikai Társaság (National Political Society), an organisation founded in 1926, which had the aim to carry out Hungarian national policy ‘in a national minded but current progressive spirit’ (Uj idők lexikona 1940: 4748). In a sense we may discuss about a concept, which has recently appeared in political
vocabulary. According to Zoltán Kántor, ‘nation policy’ means policy regarding Hungarian minorities outside of Hungary. In Kántor’s view, all states practice a kind of ‘nation policy’, whether they admit it or not. Kántor separates two kinds of ‘nation policy’ as one operates within the state borders of the nation state itself, as nation building politics. The other is directed at extraterritorial persons and is defined as kin-state nationalism. (Kántor 2011). Thus, from this point of view the case is basically kin-state nationalism, but together with nation building is more sophistically called ‘nation policy’.

In Kántor’s view ‘nation policy’ implies a need to define, directly or indirectly who is Hungarian. Ethnicity is present, as if we were to substitute the political nation for citizenship, for Kántor it would make the concept of political nation redundant. Minority parties have been part of the governments in their home-states, but for him it does not mean that they also belong to those political nations or have a dual identity (ibid.). This is quite a retrospective conceptualization, in which we are not far from separatism and re-production of gaps between minorities and majorities.

However, socialists adapted the concept in the document ‘Renewing Nation Policy’ (Megújuló nemzetpolitika) (2005) to conclude their promises during the referendum campaign, and de facto expectations concerning the new EU membership. The main point was a reunification (újraegyesítése) of the Hungarian nation. It should take place in the perspective of the European Union, promoting the survival of Hungarians beyond borders (a határon túli magyarság) as communities in their birthplaces, demonstrating effective use of the integration and cooperation. (Megújuló nemzetpolitika 2011). In general the concept újraegysítés has been frequently used in the Hungarian context to describe the post-1989 European integration process, although we may ask to where this ‘re’ is referring to, as there was neither a united Europe nor a union even before 1945.

However, optimism and trust in the European Union could be read from the document, as Hungarians were surmised to become active formulators of the
European policy. An expectation of a rebirth of traditional sub-regions could be found, too, and support for the access of neighbor states in the European Union. In the long run the political aim, according to the document, the EU integration of the region, should mean the reintegration of the Hungarian community in the Carpathian basin. As an instrument they developed a ‘Program for National Responsibility’ (*Nemzeti Felelősség Program*) with five tasks: A particular ‘Birthplace Program’ (*Szülőföld Program*) would support cultural and educational cooperation for the birthplaces of Hungarian communities. Secondly, a national visa (in office since 2006) would help to promote cultural, national identity and family reasons to stay a maximum of five years in the kin-state. The third point dealt with naturalization, and the fourth efforts of autonomy in line with international norms. Finally, as a fifth point, they mentioned the concept of ‘nation citizenship’ (*nemzetpolgárság*), which content, however, remained unclear.

Whilst socialists seemed to hesitate on the question, their ally had a more definite view. In 2010 Tamás Bauer reminded how his group, the Alliance of Free Democrats, had been the only party to oppose the Status Law in 2001 and the idea of dual citizenship, too. In one of the articles, ‘We do not have a party’ (*Nincs pártunk*), published soon after the party dropped from the Parliament in 2010, Bauer noted how in the 2004 referendum 1,428,578 i.e. 48.43% of the current voters – and 17% of the whole electorate – had voted against the idea of dual citizenship. According to Bauer, nation was not an appropriate concept for solving the problem, but instead ideas of autonomy, protection of minorities and subsidising regions should be used. As a language-cultural unit nation has nothing to do with state borders but in fact Hungarian minorities are members of another political communities. According to Bauer the case was already settled in the mid-1990s by the then socialist-liberal government, which agreed with ethnic minority leaders in harmony with local integration. Fidesz, however, had continued ‘a Cold War’ against its neighbours, although only 18% of Hungarians had supported their policy in the referendum of
2004. (NSA 18.02.2010; NSZ 27.05.2010). Basically Bauer is right, but as Shain and Wittes have noted, the question is not that simple, as there are other players, too. Also in neighbour states, like in Slovakia, governments have flirted with nationalists, including even such (pre)modern thought experiences as population exchange, which Slovak PM Vladimír Mečiar suggested in the mid-1990s, or the more recent idea to fine the use of Hungarian language in public. As a result this is a spiral of mutual actions, an egg and a chicken –effect, in which players respond to former behaviour and basically act ‘rationally’ from their own point of view.

Despite the socialist birthplace programme and its dubious content, Fidesz-KDNP adapted the concept of ‘nation policy’ to legitimise their own, more radical views. After the party’s victory in 2010 the name ‘nation policy’ became in harmony with the actions of the new government, which rapidly was guaranteeing Hungarian citizenship to fellow Hungarians beyond the Hungarian border. Now there was a shift in the content of the concept of dual citizenship, as a dual-citizen could, whenever he liked, move to and settle in the kin-state (MN 08.10.2010.). Thus, whether the dual-citizenship factually raises prosperity of ethnic Hungarians in their birthplaces or forces them to move to the kin-state was quite a political question. And again, in turning the question upside down, by demanding all Hungarian rights but keeping them on former birthplaces has also other more provocative perspectives, as it raises Hungarian political influence in the said region, a ‘revision’ without a border revision.

**BETWEEN NOSTALGY AND IDENTITY POLITICS**

Thus, ‘national’ re-emerged on the political agenda after the Fidesz-KDNP landslide victory in 2010. Fidesz followed policy presented during the failed referendum of 2004, which now was labelled as a “national treason”, as the vice PM Zsolt Semjén concluded his rhetoric in *Nemzetpolitika* (MN 18.08.2010). According to Semjén, the question was about national solidarity and the motivation to repair an injustice of Trianon. As one of its first actions the new conservative government granted the dual
citizenship with a passport, but excluded the right to vote in parliamentary elections (A magyar állampolgárságról szóló…, 2010). However, this was later completed by the new electoral law, which since 2014 guarantees dual-citizens abroad to vote in national elections. The government also reduced radically the number of MPs to from 386 to 199, from them 106 will be elected by the first past the post system. Dual citizens could participate in fulfilling the rest 93 seats in the parliament with a proportional system.

According to Fidesz’s foreign policy strategy until 2014 domestic, foreign and nation policy are closely bound together. Under the sub-title “Nation Policy” they argue how it is peculiar for the Hungarian foreign policy that it has to fulfill two interests at the same time: Hungarian state and nation. On one hand this means securing international tasks for Hungarian citizens and on the other hand to support Hungarians beyond borders to “strengthen the stability of the area”. When defining the ideas of “becoming nationally together”, the EU in general is seen advantageous for the 10 million + 4-5 million outer-Hungarians. They will strengthen the country, and their efforts for autonomy are seen in a positive light. The party promises to support and defend Hungarians by all diplomatic steps and international forums. In a particular development policy they consider Carpathian Basin as one unified (egységes) geographic-economical area. (Következetes külkapcsolatok…).

Instead of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2010 minorities and ‘nation policy’ were located in the Prime Minister’s Cabinet under the secretary of state. In this ‘model’ also foreign policy deals with these issues, and the vice-Premier is in charge of the ‘nation policy’. For the outer-Hungarian audience, PM Viktor Orbán argued that foreign policy is not anymore superior to the strategy of ‘nation policy’ (MN 06.11.2010). According to Zoltán Kántor governmental change indeed brought changes and dilemmas (Dilemmákat is hozott a nemzetpolitikai rendszerváltás, 2011). The government defended itself by stating that there have not been particular countermeasures except in Slovakia – partly because Romania, the other country with
a large Hungarian ethnic minority – had lost the argument by circulating passports to Moldovan citizens.

The new Hungarian constitution (2011), the greatest effort of the new government, is another vintage point. The text begins with the words ‘We the members of the Hungarian nation’ (Mi a magyar nemzet tagjai) (Magyar Közlöny 43/2011). In this sense the preamble could be contrasted to examples such as the US ‘We the People’ or the Czech ‘We the Citizens of Bohemia and Moravia.’ However, Hungarian politicians seemed to follow the path of the Slovaks, who, in contrast to Czechs, use the form ‘We the Slovak nation’, a formula which ethnic Hungarians demanded to be abolished. Moreover, the Hungarian constitution flirts with the concept of nation already in its name ‘National Confession’, in fact ‘nation’, in different forms, is repeated more than 40 times. As much as the 1989 i.e. the revised 1949 constitution mentioned that Hungary shall bear a sense of responsibility for Hungarians living outside the borders, the 2011 paragraph is more detailed. At first the article D defines the cause i.e. ‘Motivated by the ideal of a unified Hungarian nation, Hungary shall bear…’. Moreover, they mention that Hungary shall promote their, i.e. Hungarians living outside her borders, survival and development, and ‘continue to support their effect to preserve their Hungarian culture and foster their cooperation with each other and with Hungary.’ (Hungarian constitution in English 2011).

According to PM Orbán’s current comment, the constitution puts to an end the concept of Hungarian beyond border (hatarontúli magyar). However, the constitution itself has been at stake in European institutions: Concerning our thematic here, the Venice Commission i.e. European Commission for Democracy through Law, noted that such a ‘wide understanding of Hungarian nation and of Hungary’s responsibilities may hamper inter-State relations and create inter-ethnic tension’. Moreover, the idea of responsibility touches ‘upon a very delicate problem of sovereignty of state’, and as a rather wide and not too precise formulation it might give rise to concerns. (Opinion on the new Constitution of Hungary). On the basis of
this criticism, the European Parliament recommended that Hungary would implement the commission’s recommendations, either by amending the constitution, or through future cardinal and ordinary laws. (European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2011). The government ignored criticism, whether it dealt with questions discussed here, or the content of the constitution in general. A proper political wrestling begun only in the end of the year, and has continued in 2013, too.

Moreover, the Trianon Peace Treaty rose to official memory ideology of the new regime. In 2010 the anniversary became one of the official memorial days of the country – a long time demand of the extreme Jobbik, which had emerged in the parliament as the third largest party. From the separatist point of view the party has become famous by burning the EU flag and demanding a referendum for leaving the union. According to the party’s home page, their first task is to set back (visszaillesztés) Hungarians in the West and Carpathian Basin to the embodied nation (nemzettest). There are not many concrete suggestions, how this reunion (újraegyesítés) will take place, but it is a moral duty to represent and defend their rights. The party promises to guarantee citizenship for all Hungarians, to reinvestigate basic treaties (in which Hungary confirmed present borders), and to support all political means for outer-Hungarians autonomy efforts. In a particular Nation Policy section they continue: reunification means cultural and economical reunification, the latter is not a burden but an interest and a necessity. There are no particular references to border revisions even here, but a kin-state thinking 15 million Hungarians, a status of protector (védőhatalmi státuszú anyaország) and a reference to restore the Hungarian state for its historical role are all enough obscure statements for making different reading and understanding possible. (cf. Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom).

Thus, in the final version of the Trianon commemorative bill in 2010, the concept of a unified Hungarian nation (egységes magyar nemzet) made its appearance again. Thus, on the 90th anniversary in 2010 they commemorated Trianon in the parliament
as a Day of National Unity (*Nemzeti Összetartozás Napja*). In fact this was the Fidesz version of a united Europe without strict borders, interpreted strongly in historical terms, on the one hand absorbing aims of the extreme right and on the other hand challenging the resolution 1335 of the Council of Europe. The socialists proposed alterations to the bill, for example the Meineckean concept of *Kulturnation*, which was rejected, and then they boycotted the whole ritual. (NSZ 01.06.2010; MN 05.06.2010).

**POLITICAL PRACTICES AND ETHNIC PARTY PROGRAMMES**

Meanwhile state borders were lowered, “de-bordered”, frames of the nation have become more visible, “re-bordered” (Nyyssönen 2011). Slovakia and Romania, countries, in which the largest Hungarian minorities live, have been the most critical. The newest conflict has dealt with the Székely flag (i.e. the area, which had had an autonomy 1952-1968), as Romania restricted the use of the flag, which was then hoisted in Budapest, on the parliament as a “symbol of national solidarity”. The Chairman of the Parliament László Kövér had earlier calmed relations by “campaigning” i.e. by visiting ethnic Hungarians, despite the Romanian authorities wish to postpone the visit after the parliamentary elections (NSZ 05.06.2012).

Moreover, in 2009 Slovaks prevented the President of the Republic László Solyom from entering to the Slovakian territory to meet Hungarian ethnic minorities. Slovakia has used arguments of realist school, state sovereignty and, during the dual-citizenship process, blamed Hungarians of Greater Hungary revisionism (NSZ 26.05.2010). As a counteract to the Hungarian dual-citizenship the Slovak Parliament changed the State Citizenship Act, after giving a ‘ultimatum’, which was made public before the final vote in Hungary, to withdraw citizenship from those Slovakian citizens, who wish to apply for Hungarian citizenship. Although the citizenship act is still valid, Slovak leadership has showed some eagerness to change the law, but expects Hungary to do the same (NSZ 20.02.2013). The Slovak Parliament also
finally rejected a proposal, which would have banned joining certain offices, like the military or police, from dual citizens (MN & NSZ 11.02.2011).

No doubt domestic politics has made an influence on Hungarian foreign policy. Whether this ‘nation policy’ is a kind of a new bridgehead, Fidesz-KDNP seems at least to have favoured more radical and pro-Fidesz groups. These hegemonic aims, however, have been only partially fulfilled: For example, in the Slovakian elections of 2010 and 2012 two rival Hungarian parties emerged, but the traditional Party of the Hungarian Coalition (Magyar Koalíció Pártja), which had drifted towards a close cooperation with Fidesz, failed to pass the threshold. Instead a new party, the Most-Híd – the name means ‘bridge’ both in Slovakian and Hungarian – with ethnic Slovakian members, gained seats. Fidesz-KDNP has disliked the party, and even vice premier Semjén has expressed how ‘ethnicity’ instead of ‘assimilation’ has to be the criteria of support.

Whether there are then real differences between the parties and in their relations, in the end we have to study the party programs of ethnic parties more closely. There the main focus is in their own identity definitions and political goals, as mutual relations between the minority and the kin-state: Thus, Most-Híd defines itself as ”a party of reconciliation of Hungarians and Slovaks, Hungarians and Hungarians, like other national minorities and ethnic groups”. In a foreign policy section the party favours Visegrad cooperation, and, as the most important, to improve relations with the Hungarian Republic. According to the party, Slovakia is a multi-ethnic, -lingual and – cultural country. There a modern national consciousness demands that national fears, prejudices and intolerance have to be solved – a nationalist democracy is not a democracy. There are no particular references to autonomy or ’nation policy’ in the programme. (A MOST-HÍD part programja).

Although its rival, the older A Magyar Koalíció Párt (2009) rhetorically welcomes all potential ethnic groups in its ranks, its more nationalist style and regionalism are striking: they consider Hungarian as a regional language in Southern Slovakia.
Moreover, nation lives in its language; their culture is a part of universal Hungarian culture, a pillar of national consciousness. According to the party, the Slovakian Hungarian community has three identities: From national, cultural and historical they confess to be part of the Hungarian nation, from the citizens point of view they are citizens of Slovakian state respecting its constitution, and thirdly European-ness. The party would not like to intervene Hungarian domestic politics, and consider actors as partners in the spirit of the Hungarian constitution, and aims to maintain correct relations to all parties. There are not particular references to autonomy or nation policy, although the latter is in one way or another, like news and activity, present in the party’s web pages. (A Magyar Koalíció Pártjának programja 2009).

Although party splits, like in Slovakia, could deal with political differences, they also culminate in persons, as political matters personify. Particularly in Romania the long term of Béla Markó (1993-2011) rose criticism: In 2003 conservative Priest László Tőkés founded the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania (Az Erdélyi Magyar Nemzeti Tanács), and in 2008 emerged MPP, the Hungarian Civic Party, which name was de facto adopted from one of Fidesz’s earlier names. Then the Transylvanian People’s Party (Erdély Magyar Néppárt) (2012) is the newest party for the autonomy, which in 2012 highlighted even systemic change and Transylvanian concentrated politics. Nation is one of the basic values of the party in addition freedom, family, Transylvanianism and Christian democracy. In the party programme (2012) the new Romania has to be based on constitutional asymmetric regions and their solidarity: minorities, including Romanians in the Szeklerland, would have a cultural autonomy on a regional level. “Foreign and nation policy” are dealt in the same chapter: Although community autonomy is a domestic affair in the first place, they consider foreign policy as a complementary instrument (kiegészítő eszköze) in this job. The primary task in foreign policy is to create a favorable international publicity for their autonomy purposes. The party would like to participate in current existing forms of Hungarian-Hungarian cooperation. In addition there are commodious gestures to
Fidesz: the party supports “without conditions” Hungarian national integration in the Carpathian Basin, is “a strategic partner” to all “national minded” Hungarian governments – which is a rhetorical exclusion in the Hungarian context. Moreover, the party would like to be an active player in “the system of national cooperation” – which is a straight reference to the declaration of the new Hungarian political system, defined by Fidesz after its landslide victory.

It is striking that these organizations have had particularly good relationships with Fidesz, but until now they have not superseded the main Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség, RMDSZ). According to critics, RMDSZ has been too moderate, has not had a particular doctrine and too easily bent to compromises; in fact it has backed all Romanian governments since 1996. However, a counterargument, similar to Slovakia, is that the amount of population versus the electoral threshold makes the situation critical to rivaling parties. Even first lines of the RMDSZ program (2011) remind multicolor and fractions of the Romanian Hungarians. Furthermore, (we), Romanian citizens, are members of the Hungarian nation and the European Union. Rhetorics of ‘nation policy’ had reached the RMDSZ, but it is discussed quite in a moderate and analytical way. In the programme there is a particularly chapter for this topic, in which they discuss their nation political aims i.e. to protect and develop national identity, language, as to protect cultural traditions, and to promote Hungarian integration in the Carpathian Basin. Also their demand of autonomy, since 1990s, belongs to this policy sector. There is a particular separate chapter to deal with foreign policy, like the European Union. There the party stress that they need a strategy of their own, which is based on basic interests of the community. The kin-state does not play a particular role there, instead they even stress their independency, and how the only ally is the Hungarian community in Romania. Nevertheless, as in the case of integration, they support cooperation with the Hungarian EU representatives, like the existing forms of Hungarian-Hungarian cooperation in general. Minority rights are
frequently stressed in the EU context, as universal human rights cannot be a domestic matter, according to the document.

In Serbian Vojvodina, officially in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, a population is over 1.93 million, with six official languages, and Hungarians as the largest ethnic minority. In 1990 Vojvodina was still referred to as an autonomous province of Serbia, but until then it had lost its extensive rights of self-rule. After the fall of Miloševićs and regime change, the amount of autonomy has increased again. Also there the Hungarian ethnic parties face the question of threshold: the main party is the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (A Vajdasági Magyar Szövetség, VMSZ), which for the 2008 national elections formed a Hungarian Coalition with two other Hungarian ethnic parties. In addition to these, there is, again, a Hungarian Civic Alliance (Magyar Polgári Szövetség, MPSZ), which demands “a true autonomy” for the area (Magyar Polgári..). It gained local success in 2008, but in 2012, contrary to VMSZ, belonged to a nation wide coalition with parties of Bosniaks, Croats and Slovaks, without greater success.

Thus, in the basic rules (2009) the VMSZ describes to represent Vojvodina Hungarians linguistically, culturally, socially, and with economic ties to connect them to the kin-state, Carpathian Basin and Hungarians globally. The proper party programme (2004) reflects the era of Hungary’s access to the EU, and, thus does not include ‘nation policy’. Their autonomy concept was based on three pillars: personal, ethnic and provincial. The VMSZ favored Serbia’s EU accession, as transparent (légiesítés) borders would make economic and cultural integration with the kin-state possible, without violating Serbs or other nations interests. In the sub-chapter dealing with cooperation with the kin-state and Hungarians they stated to maintain close relations with all parliamentary parties in the Republic of Hungary, all governments and Hungarian minorities in other countries. In this context they briefly introduced the idea of dual citizenship, discussed earlier in this article, which, according to the document, was not an unknown concept in the region anymore.
CONCLUSION

In this article I have analyzed recent Hungarian politics concerning the Hungarian ethnic minorities abroad, particularly in the Carpathian Basin. Provocatively it was asked, whether Hungary in fact is increasing separatism in the area. In principle, there are various possibilities to deal with minorities beyond borders in general. I have found five different attempts since the collapse of communist rule, and listed them in a chronological order: confirming present borders, autonomy, subsidies, dual citizenship and constitution. In addition to autonomy the last two were studied more closely, as they were on the agenda after the access to the European Union.

‘Nation policy’ is the newest conceptual attempt and a neologism in a long story of Hungarian nationalism. Hungarian leading politicians have rejected the concept of Kulturnation and raised the idea of a unified nation i.e. de facto beyond borders in the constitution. Although its contents are still in the making, it maintains the old basic questions of state sovereignty and minority protection on the agenda, even in the context of the EU. Moreover, with this radicalization there are signs that domestic and foreign policy have become blurred. Although, there have been assimilative tendencies in the neighboring states, it seems that Hungary has not done everything to promote nationalism free solutions to these questions. On one hand Hungary is a special case after Trianon, but could also be a forerunner to other states, like Russia and their minorities abroad after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In the Carpathian Basin we have witnessed a discursive change, from minority projection to more radical ‘nation policy’ during the last twenty years. The concept has now spread among ethnic Hungarians, particularly in Romania, and new parties have emerged. They have had seemingly good relations with Fidesz, but the proper role of Fidesz needs still further investigation: whether it is only a benefactor, an accoucheuse or has in fact created rival organisations to strengthen its own say in the area. Thus, whether these rivaling parties were born because the will of Fidesz, as I believe, or despite it, needs to be studied more closely. However, it is clear that
Fidesz’s activism has not improved mutual diplomatic relations between states. In this respect it is no wonder that the Hungarian Foreign Minister (2013) needed to explain that Hungary does not have any revisionist ideas and to get Transylvania back by supporting autonomist forces there.

Political space of ethnic minorities in general is like being between a rock and a hard place: they have to take both the home- and the kin-state into consideration. As a concept autonomy is politically flexible, as it could always be broadened and deepened. In the Kosovo case it finally led to independence, and in Texas the independence even to a further integration. For a unitary state demands of autonomy are separatism, as it changes the status quo, but there are no proofs that it definitely leads to a split, like classic cases of South Tyrol and Aland show. Although there are no signs of proper separatism, it remains a question of forthcoming political activity, whether the concept of ‘nation policy’ in fact will increase this kind of discussion in the long run.

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