

Ukraine's Place in Europe and Two Decades of Hungarian–Ukrainian Relations¹

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Samuel P. Huntington wrote, “Human history is the history of civilizations.” Civilisation, in turn, refers to the complete way of life of a people. In the post-Cold War world, peoples sharing a cultural unity have come together (Germany), while societies with “civilisational” differences have broken up (the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia) or they have been kept together at the price of tensions – Ukraine belongs in this latter group.² After Russia, Ukraine is Europe’s second largest country in area.

Independence Day

The breakup of the Soviet Union was the consequence of a reform process directed from above by the Kremlin, in which Ukrainians followed a path set by the Russian democrats and Baltic nationalists. From Kiev’s perspective, under Mikhail Gorbachev the government in Moscow sent several negative messages. For instance, in 1985, Ukrainian opposition members (referred to as dissidents) were prosecuted once again and many were imprisoned. Another instance was when the Soviet leader – who had already announced his policy of Perestroika – chose not to speak openly of the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in Ukraine (April 1986) until international pressure forced him to do so, and he then rejected Ukrainian Party First Secretary Volodimir Shcherbytsky’s request that the May Day parade in Kiev be cancelled. As late as January 1991, the clear message of the Crimean referendum was that if Ukraine should choose to leave the Soviet Union, then the Crimea would secede from Ukraine.³ Even US President George Bush advised caution during his visit to the Soviet Union. In a speech to the Ukrainian Parliament on 1 August 1991, Bush stated the following:

Some people have urged the United States to choose between supporting President Gorbachev and supporting independence-minded leaders throughout the U.S.S.R. [...] We shall maintain the strongest possible relationship with the Soviet Government of President Gorbachev. But we also appreciate the new

realities of life in the U.S.S.R. And since we are also a federation, we seek good relations – enhanced relations – with the Republics [...] In Ukraine, in Russia, in Armenia, and the Baltics, the spirit of liberty thrives [...] Yet, freedom is not the same as independence. Americans will not support those who seek independence in order to replace a distant tyranny with a local despotism. They will not aid those who promote a suicidal nationalism based upon ethnic hostility. Rather we shall support those who want to build democracy [...].⁴

Of the Soviet Union's various constituent republics, Russia was the first to declare its independence – on 12 June 1990. Several others then followed, including Ukraine on 16 July. In December 1990, however, the Fourth Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR rejected the independence of the republics and gave its support for the drafting of a new federal treaty. In March 1991, following a decision by the Supreme Soviet in Moscow, a referendum on the future of the Soviet Union was held. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian Parliament announced a referendum on whether the Ukrainian people agreed with the declaration of 16 July 1990, according to which Ukraine should be a sovereign state within the Soviet framework. The final result was contradictory, as a large majority of the Ukrainian population supported the retention of the Soviet Union as well as this special form of Ukrainian independence. The situation was no clearer elsewhere: in many of the constituent republics – in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia and Moldova – referendums were not even held.⁵

Thus, rather oddly, Ukraine has two declarations of independence. The aforementioned declaration adopted on 16 July 1990 – much of which is reflected in the current 1996 Constitution –, foresaw a sovereign state that would still be a part of the Soviet Union. The primacy of Ukrainian laws was proclaimed and the people acquired Ukrainian citizenship, but Soviet laws and citizenship were also retained. The real declaration of independence is the decree adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament on 24 August 1991, which in just two sentences states that Ukraine is an independent and democratic state with its own laws.⁶ This declaration was then affirmed by a referendum on 1 December 1991. The process of obtaining international recognition followed immediately, with Hungary playing a leading role. The United States only recognised Ukraine on 25 December 1991, the day of Mikhail Gorbachev's resignation.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance to Ukraine of the speed of international recognition. In a phone conversation with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on 30 November (the day before Ukraine's independence referendum), President Bush made it clear that the United States was prepared to support the Ukrainian people in whatever it decided in the referendum; the US would be willing to support Ukrainian independence if Ukraine permitted the supervision of nuclear weapons and if it complied with international rules governing conventional weapons and guaranteed

human and minority rights. For his part, Gorbachev spoke of how the Soviet Union was seeking to meet the demands of all its peoples and that the United States' intention to recognise Ukrainian independence could not be viewed as anything other than interference in Soviet domestic affairs. Most of the constituent republics had already declared independence, but this would facilitate rather than impede their sovereign decisions on the new federal framework. For this reason, a positive final result in the referendum would not automatically mean Ukraine's secession from the Soviet Union.⁷

The institutional framework established as part of Soviet nationalities policy served in a peculiar manner to facilitate the separation: borders, a Parliament, ministries, and so forth were already in place. When Ukraine became independent in a formal sense, it merely had to replace the symbols of the Soviet state – the national flag, insignia and anthem. Rather than create new ones, it reinstated – in an act of self-definition – those used by the Ukrainian People's Republic in the period 1918–20. This political entity had sought secession from the nascent Soviet empire, but had never received international recognition. The need for restructuring was greatest at the ministry of foreign affairs, which had previously been a minor office dealing mostly with foreign delegations and matters pertaining to Ukraine's representation at the United Nations.⁸ The tasks of developing and establishing foreign relations and monitoring international opinion were no less important than the restructuring of Ukraine's domestic institutions.

Following independence in 1991, Ukraine's old parliament, elected in 1990, continued to function until 1994. Vitold Fokin, the last Soviet-Ukrainian premier, became prime minister, while Leonid Kravchuk, the final leader of Ukrainian SSR, was elected as the first president of the new state. In 1994, Kravchuk was succeeded by Leonid Kuchma, whom Viktor Yushchenko then replaced in late 2004. Finally, in 2010, the present incumbent, Viktor Yanukovych, took office. Ukraine has a presidential-parliamentary system, in which the head of state is dominant but has variable power. The system of parliamentary elections (held in [1990], 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2007 and 2012) has been altered several times, and individual prime ministers have generally had relatively short terms in office, and none of them has stayed in power for a full election term. Until the most recent elections in October, Ukraine had had 14 heads of government (19 – if acting prime ministers are also taken into account). All the presidents were former prime ministers; two prime ministers – Viktor Yanukovych and Yulia Tymoshenko – have served twice.

<i>Ukraine</i>		<i>Hungary</i>	
<i>President</i>	<i>Prime Minister</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>Prime Minister</i>
Leonid Kravchuk [1990] 1991–1994	Vitold Fokin [1990]–1992 Leonid Kuchma 1992–1993 Vitaliy Masol 1994–1995 Yevhen Marchuk 1995–1996 Pavlo Lazarenko 1996–1997	Árpád Göncz 1990–2000	József Antall 1990–1993 Péter Boross 1993–1994 Gyula Horn 1994–1998
Leonid Kuchma 1994–2004	Valeriy Pustovoitenko 1997–1999 Viktor Yushchenko 1999–2001 Anatoliy Kinakh 2001–2002 Viktor Yanukovych [1] 2002–2004 Yulia Tymoshenko [1] 2005 Yuriy Yekhanurov 2005–2006		Ferenc Mádl 2000–2005
Viktor Yushchenko 2004–2010	Viktor Yanukovych [2] 2006–2007 Yulia Tymoshenko [2] 2007–2010	László Sólyom 2005–2010	Ferenc Gyurcsány 2004–2009 Gordon Bajnai 2009–2010
Viktor Yanukovich 2010–	Mykola Azarov 2010–	Pál Schmitt 2010–2012 János Áder 2012–	Viktor Orbán [2] 2010–

Note: The last row of data reflects the situation in late November 2012.

The two gravest legacies facing Ukraine are the communist past and the still-present consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The power station was finally shut down on 15 December 2000 and Ukraine's four remaining nuclear power plants (Zaporozhye, South-Ukraine, Rivne, and Khmelnytskyi) now provide almost 50 percent of the country's electricity. The consequences of the Chernobyl disaster remain a major environmental and health challenge. For Ukraine, this translates into huge costs – which the country would not be able to cover without international assistance. In January 2010,

the New York Academy of Sciences (NYAS) published a full summary of scientific studies on the nature and extent of the environmental and human effects of the Chernobyl accident [...] in the most affected countries of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine [...] According to the authors, at the time of the disaster, radiation levels reached 10 billion Curie, which is two hundred times the radiation from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. Worldwide there were an estimated 985,000 Chernobyl-related deaths between 1986 and 2004, and the figure has grown since. Some 112–125,000 of the 830,000 'liquidators' working at the site since the accident have died. Many women and men worked at the site without any protective

equipment; they were exposed to enormous doses of radiation and inhaled dust contaminated with uranium. [...] Technocrats may not be interested in the health and environmental effects, but they will surely be shocked at the total cost of the disaster. In the first 20 years, in the three most affected countries, costs directly related to the accident amounted to more than USD 500 billion, or EUR 2,000 billion calculated at EU price levels. This sum is the exact equivalent of the cost of constructing the world's entire nuclear industry-related infrastructure!⁹

The Kravchuk Era

In 1991, the shortage of goods was even more evident than it had been under the Soviet Union, and the population also had to cope with an almost ten-fold increase in prices while nominal wages remained the same. The breakup of the Soviet "empire" quickly exacerbated the situation. By 1992, inflation stood at more than 2,000 percent, and after Ukraine's exit from the ruble zone it increased to more than 10,000 percent in the course of 1993. Prices rose far more quickly than wages and fewer and fewer people had jobs. Some workers went unpaid for long periods, while an increasing number took compulsory unpaid leave – until the situation improved. Soon the shops were empty, while the supply of electricity and heating was regularly interrupted in order to save money. The social security system barely functioned or, in some fields, was abandoned. Live births fell drastically and there was a significant increase in emigration. Owing to these trends, Ukraine's population fell by more than three million between the two censuses (1989 and 2001). The only group in society to prosper was the new elite made up of old Soviet functionaries. Exploiting the situation, such people acquired enormous wealth. In consequence of the general discontent, at the 1994 elections the Communist Party, subject to a ban between 1991 and 1993, obtained the most seats in Parliament of all the various political parties.¹⁰

For Kravchuk the most important domestic task was Ukrainisation, which in the end meant nothing more than the granting of official status to the Ukrainian language. In foreign policy, Kravchuk's most spectacular decision was his renouncement of Ukraine's nuclear weapons, the world's third-largest arsenal (with 15% of the former Soviet Union's nuclear weapons). On 14 January 1994, in Moscow, Kravchuk signed the agreement with Russia and the United States in return for a promise of significant amounts of raw materials and financial compensation. In February, Ukraine joined the "Partnership for Peace" program, and in November it acceded to the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).¹¹ In a memorandum signed in Budapest on 5 December 1994, the United States, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation issued security assurances to Ukraine.¹² In this way, by 1996, Ukraine had become the first country to be

removed from the list of nuclear powers. This was also a decision of orientation, as Russia was seeking close relations with the “near abroad,” giving particular attention to the former Soviet military bases and the cultural rights of Russians who now found themselves outside the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, some Russian politicians still refused to regard Ukrainians as a separate ethnic group.¹³

From Hungary’s standpoint the central event of the period was its recognition of Ukraine as an independent country, which rapidly led to the opening of diplomatic missions and the signing of a basic treaty between Hungary and Ukraine.

Although these are relatively recent events, several myths have already arisen concerning the speed of Hungary’s recognition of Ukrainian independence. Publications in Ukraine usually state that Poland was the first country to grant recognition and that Hungary was “among the first,” noting, however, that Hungary was the first country to open an embassy in Kiev. In fact, however, as eye-witnesses have reported, András Páldi, Hungary’s first ambassador to Ukraine, was the first to grant recognition. As Consul General in Kiev, he had prepared in advance by ordering a plaque inscribed with the word “embassy.” The referendum was held on Sunday, 1 December 1991, and the result was announced the next day. On Tuesday, a fax was received from Budapest authorising the signing of a protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations. This then took place in Kiev on the same afternoon, at which time the new embassy sign was displayed. Minister of Foreign Affairs Anatolij Zlenko was present at the signing of the protocol, and he and a number of high-ranking diplomats “congratulated [Páldi] that the Hungarian government was the first to support, through its actions, the establishment and consolidation of an independent state.”¹⁴

For Hungary too, an extremely important task was to strengthen relations with Ukraine. Indeed, in the post-transition period

Hungary’s Eastern policy gave emphasis to developing relations with the constituent republics of the Soviet Union, alongside its relations with a weakening Moscow. The Hungarian government gave special attention to Ukraine as it sought to consolidate its sovereignty. There were several reasons for this: the geographical proximity and economic potential of Ukraine; its strategic importance for Hungarian energy imports; Hungary’s security policy interests; and the presence in Ukraine of almost 200,000 ethnic Hungarians.¹⁵

As early as August 1990, Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall told Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Anatolij Zlenko during the latter’s visit to Budapest that he supported Ukraine’s rapprochement with Europe as well as “the guaranteeing of the collective rights of the Hungarians in the Transcarpathian region. He made clear that Hungary respected European borders but also wished to see the granting of territorial autonomy to the Transcarpathian region.”¹⁶

In Kiev on 6 December 1991, Hungary and Ukraine signed a Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation – the Hungarian–Ukrainian basic treaty. A provision of the treaty was that both countries would regard the border between them as inviolable (Article 2) and establish the necessary conditions for the mutual protection of the cultural, linguistic and religious identities of the national minorities (Article 17). The vote in the Hungarian Parliament divided the country's elite: 279 of 405 MPs were present for the vote on the treaty, with 223 voting in favour, 39 voting against, and 17 abstaining. Most of those voting against the treaty or abstaining belonged to the largest governing party, the Hungarian Democratic Forum. The main controversy was whether, in connection with the treaty, Hungary should have raised the matter of Ukraine's Hungarian minority. Opponents of the treaty criticised Prime Minister József Antall and Minister of Foreign Affairs Géza Jeszenszky. Some observers have claimed that this dispute led to the split between the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP).¹⁷ In Ukraine, analysts noted how ratification of the treaty had been opposed in Hungary by the radical wing of the Hungarian Democratic Forum and by the Smallholders' Party and that their main criticism was directed at a clause in the treaty whereby each side renounced any territorial claims.¹⁸ One side was troubled by what had been excluded from the treaty, while the other was pleased by what it did contain.

The basic treaty did not address the question of autonomy, which Antall had raised. However, it did contain assurances with regard to the Hungarians of Transcarpathian Ukraine. The official documents of the period refute the criticism that the treaty was signed over the heads of the Hungarians living in the Transcarpathian region: "On the contrary, multiple consultations were held with the leaders of the major Hungarian organisation in the Transcarpathian region [the Hungarian Cultural Association of Sub-Carpathia]. By signing the treaty, Hungary proved to the international community that it did not seek conflict but wished, on the contrary, to act as a stabilising force in the region [...]."¹⁹

Hungary's rapid recognition of Ukraine's independence and its ratification of the treaty placed Hungarian–Ukrainian bilateral relations on strong foundations; even now the treaty's provisions are an important point of reference. Adding to the significance of the treaty was the fact that Ukraine faced several conflicts related to its territorial integrity: the Crimean issue, Rusyn separatism (especially in the first half of the 1990s), and the Romanian question. A majority of Ukraine's Romanians live in the Transcarpathian region or in Chernivtsi County (in historical Bucovina). After 1989 demands were made in Bucovina for the region's return to Romania (Greater Romania), while the Romanians of the Transcarpathian region sought the creation of a Romanian ethnic district.²⁰ On 5 July 1991, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted a resolution condemning the Romanian parliament's decision of June to declare the Molotov–

Ribbentrop Pact null and void, which had raised the spectre of a rebirth of Greater Romania. The Ukrainian parliament's resolution underlined, *inter alia*, that declarations on the illegality of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact could not result in territorial demands against Ukraine, and that Ukraine would reject any such attempt.²¹

The Kuchma Era

In the presidential election campaign, Kravchuk's appeal to voters was based on his nation-building ideas and his successes in dismantling nuclear weapons. However, his opponent, Leonid Kuchma, the president of the National Association of Entrepreneurs, was more successful in drawing the public's attention to Ukraine's economic difficulties, to the aggressive Ukrainisation program, and to the need to rebuild relations with Russia. Some voters were also impressed by Kuchma's pledge to make Russian the country's second official language. The success of Kuchma's campaign was not in doubt, given that the country was plagued by poverty. Although less than one-fifth of the population claimed to be ethnic Russians, in reality more than 50 percent spoke Russian as their mother tongue. In 1999, Kuchma's strongest challenger might have been Viacheslav Chornovil, a charismatic former dissident and right-winger, but he died in an automobile accident at the start of the campaign. Kuchma then brought several election experts into his team and won the election by means of the same technique employed by Boris Yeltsin in Russia in 1996, when, despite his unpopularity, Yeltsin had managed to defeat the Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov. In the same manner as Yeltsin, Kuchma went through to the second round with a communist opponent, Petro Symonenko. And although the Communist Party had achieved first place at the parliamentary elections a year earlier, Kuchma managed to prevent a further "red" victory when the majority voted for the "lesser evil."²²

Though Kuchma had promised to strengthen relations with Russia, in reality he made efforts to establish closer relations with the West. In this endeavour he was actually more successful than his supposedly more pro-Western predecessor Leonid Kravchuk. It was Kuchma who announced Ukraine's intention to join the European Union and to align itself with NATO. In 1996 Ukraine joined the Council of Europe, and it became the first of the CIS countries to sign a cooperative agreement with NATO. It joined the Partnership for Peace program and signed the Special Partnership Charter. In his speeches Kuchma always stressed Ukraine's place in Europe.²³

In economic terms, Kuchma's term saw the introduction of a new national currency, the commencement of a broad privatisation program in industry, and the adoption of a land ownership law. At the same time, however, foreign investment in Ukraine remained rather limited. It was at this time that iron ore became the country's major

export and main source of revenue. Thanks to excellent relations with the United States, by the late 1990s, Ukraine was – after Israel and Egypt – the third largest recipient of American financial aid. At the same time, the country became highly indebted to the IMF, to the World Bank and to Russia.

In domestic politics, Kuchma's greatest achievement was the adoption of a constitution. Ukraine was the last post-Soviet state to adopt a constitution, and it did so under rather odd circumstances. A legacy of the Kuchma era was the "introduction" of the tools of "political subculture." The first stage in this process was the adoption of the Law on State Power and Local Self-Governments in 1995. Under the rules, a two-thirds parliamentary majority was needed in order to adopt this legislation. Since there was no such majority, the normal parliamentary procedure was circumvented. MPs adopted the legislation by means of a so-called "signature vote" (signatures were simply collected) and it was then implemented through a series of presidential decrees. A consensus was also lacking when it came to adopting a new constitution, which had been under consideration for years. After another failure, in 1996 Kuchma publicly announced through the media that a referendum would be held on a constitution. Upon this unexpected announcement, the Parliament suddenly reasserted its powers, thereby preventing the adoption of a constitution without its consent. The draft constitution was debated for a single day, and it was adopted in a final vote the next day.²⁴

One aspect of the Constitution, the peculiar status of the Crimean Autonomous Republic, is worth examining in particular. Chapter 10 of the document (there are in total 15 chapters) deals exclusively with this issue.²⁵ It stipulates that the Crimean Autonomous Republic is an inalienable part of Ukraine (Article 134) with its own constitution, government and parliament, which, however, cannot take decisions that are counter to Ukraine's constitution. Article 1 (of Chapter 1) of the Constitution of the Crimean Autonomous Republic (1998)²⁶ repeats the provision in Ukraine's constitution that the autonomous republic is an inalienable part of Ukraine (Cf. Article 134), while Article 2 states that autonomous republic's legal status is grounded in Ukraine's constitution. Thus, in effect the Crimean constitution avoids clearly defining the type of autonomy enjoyed by the Crimean Autonomous Republic. This omission is evidently related to background interests with little interest in autonomy or the special rights of the indigenous population, the Crimean Tatars.

The Ukrainian government and some domestic and foreign observers viewed the approval of the constitution as a solution to the 'Crimean problem' and to the secessionist desires of the Russian separatists. It did so by reaffirming the status of the peninsula as an integral part of Ukraine. Even so, in several fields, the region received independent rights of decision. Nevertheless, the final compromise could not entirely satisfy either Kiev or Simferopol, because the constitution fully

ignores the interests of more than 260,000 Crimean Tatars. The latter group had been permitted to return to the peninsula during the preceding decade – almost half a century after their deportation. In this way the Tatars make up around 12 percent of the peninsula's otherwise mainly Russian population.²⁷

The formula is thus a relatively simple one: the lack of clarity of the constitutions of Ukraine and the autonomous republic on a more detailed definition of the legal status of the Crimea stems from the fact that the primary goal was to prevent "separatism." Thus it is correct to speak of territorial autonomy rather than a concession made to each ethnic community. According to various experts, "The dominant position of the Russian community has turned what was formally supra-national autonomous status into an advance bastion of Russian-based identity."²⁸

The murder of Georgiy Gongadze, an investigative journalist reporting on abuses of power and the oligarchies, gave rise to the biggest scandal of the Kuchma era. Gongadze was murdered in the autumn of 2000. Around the same time a tape recording was made public in which President Kuchma is heard to discuss the journalist's liquidation with the interior minister and the head of the national security agency. For a long time Kuchma denied that his voice could be heard in the recording, but then, in early 2001, he admitted that it was his voice. He claimed in defence that the tape recording had been manipulated, whereby the most sensitive parts of the conversation had been conflated. This claim has never been substantiated. Even though the recording was made available on the Internet and anyone could listen to it, Kuchma remained in office. Protesters were dispersed by the police. The contents of the recording were compromising not only in domestic political terms; they also showed that Ukraine had made a secret armaments deal with Iraq.²⁹ Even Ukraine's participation in NATO's mission to Iraq could not undo the damage.

There was one prime minister during the period who gained recognition abroad as a serious partner. Viktor Yushchenko, former chairman of the Ukrainian central bank, became prime minister in late 1999 and Yulia Tymoshenko became his deputy. Economic reforms soon led to results. In 2000 Ukraine achieved economic growth for the first time since independence, and the economy continued to grow until 2005. The government was able to balance the budget and reduce the backlog of wages and pensions. The Russian response to economic growth in Ukraine was to seek to acquire shareholdings in Ukrainian state-owned companies in the energy sector and in the raw material processing sector – in return for cheap energy supplies. Tymoshenko, a former CEO of the largest state-owned energy company, had considerable personal experience of the backroom deals. She made efforts to eliminate the gray economy and prevent the onward sale to the West of energy supplied by Russia to Ukraine. While she was still in office, Tymoshenko was tried by a court for alleged economic crimes dating to

the mid-1990s, but the court found her not guilty. She continued her political career by organising what became known as the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc. In April 2001, the Ukrainian Parliament voted down Yushchenko, who then also established a party by the name of Our Ukraine (*Nasa Ukraïna*).³⁰ Thus, in place of the People's Movement of Ukraine (RUKH), which had lost support after the death of Vyacheslav Chornovil, there were two new centre-right parties.

It was during this period that a paradigm shift took place in Hungarian–Ukrainian relations. On the one hand, Hungary's Euro-Atlantic integration caused no substantial problems in relations between the two countries, and the two sides showed flexibility in managing the related changes. On the other hand, there was a shift in Hungarian government policy towards Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries. Indeed, the new Hungarian government, which took office in 1998, made bilateral political relations subject to the issue of the Hungarians in the Transcarpathian region. For its part, Ukraine was of the view that this matter was only one of several important issues in bilateral relations. In February 2000, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán outlined the following priorities in a speech made in Berehove (Beregszász) to the general assembly of the Hungarian Cultural Association of Sub-Carpathia: to consolidate Hungarian institutions in the Transcarpathian region, to assist Hungarian families in the region in acquiring land, and, in the field of economic cooperation, to promote interest in Ukraine among businesses in Hungary. "Hungary has a special relationship with Ukraine [...] This is due in large part to you, Hungarians of the Transcarpathian region."

For Hungary, Ukraine is an important partner. Hungary has seven neighbours; even taken together, the other six are not as large as Ukraine. This in itself is a reason for the Hungarian government, when formulating its foreign policy, to give a special place to relations with Ukraine. I believe that the world is developing in such a way that relations between states should serve to strengthen cooperation at the regional level.³¹

An outstanding example of such cooperation was the joint action taken at the turn of the millennium when the Tisza River flooded, resulting in serious consequences. In the words of Zsolt Németh, Political State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "It was good to see spontaneous examples of national solidarity both in Hungary and among Hungarians elsewhere in the world; it was only at the time of the Romanian revolution in 1989 that we experienced something similar."³²

In connection with the Tisza River floods of 1998 and 2001, which seriously affected the mostly Hungarian-populated areas on Ukraine's western border, towns in the Transcarpathian region were included among the venues of high-level bilateral discussions from 2001 onwards, or such meetings were linked with events of symbolic importance to the Hungarians of the Transcarpathian region. The fact that

the concerns of the Hungarians in the Transcarpathian region began to be addressed in Ukrainian national politics – particularly in connection with the election debates – may also be regarded as one of the symbolic political advances.³³

An important government measure in Hungary during this period was the drafting and adoption of the so-called Status Law (2001). In view of the provisions of the Basic Treaty, this measure did not cause the diplomatic complications that became a feature of Hungary's relations with Romania and, to an even greater degree, of its relations with Slovakia. Orest Klimpus, Ukrainian ambassador to Hungary, stated that Ukraine viewed the legislation positively and with understanding.³⁴ On the tenth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the ministers of foreign affairs of the two countries, Anatoliy Zlenko and János Martonyi, emphasised in a joint article the positive aspects of Hungarian–Ukrainian bilateral relations; Zlenko commended Hungary's visa policy, while Martonyi cited Hungarian foreign policy efforts to promote Ukrainian relations with NATO and with the European Union.³⁵ A positive backdrop to such relations was provided by Ukraine's minority legislation (Articles 15 and 17 of the Minorities' Act), by bilateral governmental and institutional agreements, and by the intergovernmental joint committees. Ukraine recognised that in bilateral governmental and non-governmental relations, there should be opportunities for contact between the national minorities and their kin states.³⁶

Concurring with the statement issued by the European Union Presidency, the Hungarian government expressed its regret when Yushchenko's cabinet was dismissed.³⁷ Still, it was during Yushchenko's term (on 14 December 2000) that the first negative appraisal of the situation faced by the Hungarians in Transcarpathian Ukraine had been made – in the closing statement of the Third Session of the Hungarian Standing Committee: "The most recent statement of the Ukrainian minister of education has given rise to concerns regarding the future of the Hungarian minority education system in the Transcarpathian region."³⁸ Meanwhile, in Hungary it was possible until 2000 to take a state language examination in Ukrainian at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Thereafter for more than a decade and apart from a brief interruption, one could only acquire a Ukrainian language certificate in Hungary in the field of military technical language.³⁹ Since Ukrainian is the official language of a neighbouring country with almost 50 million inhabitants where the teaching and knowledge of the state language is one of the foremost problems affecting the Hungarian minority, this situation was regrettable.

On 26 November 2003 – following Ukraine's commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Holodomor on 22 November –, the Hungarian Parliament adopted a resolution in remembrance of the "genocide," which it referred to as an "artificial and intentional famine."⁴⁰ It was only during the subsequent presidential term, on 28 November 2006, that the Ukrainian Parliament passed a law defining

the Holodomor as a deliberate act of genocide and making its public denial illegal.⁴¹ Under the Yushchenko government in the post-Kuchma era, the Holodomor was given primacy among the various historical topics. This was also true during the subsequent presidential term, although the topic received less public attention, as it was no longer the focus of political debate.

The Orange Era

Concerning the presidential elections of 2004, commonly referred to as the “Orange Revolution,” it is generally known that protests by the opposition (Our Ukraine and the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc), which drew support from the international community, led to a repeat of second round of the elections and that in this “third” round the previous manipulated result was reversed and Viktor Yushchenko ended up defeating the incumbent Viktor Yanukovich. A lesser known fact, however, is that this result was influenced by a background deal concerning presidential powers. The Ukrainian Parliament voted in “a package’ (i.e., in a single vote) both to curtail presidential power and to repeat the second round of the presidential election, amending the election law for this purpose. In other words, the opposition candidate with the greatest chance of winning the election (Viktor Yushchenko) and his domestic and foreign supporters agreed to limit the powers of the incoming president in exchange for a legislative clause enabling the holding of a ‘third’ round.”⁴²

On 21 November, in the run-up to the third round of elections and in the presence of Fidesz’s Viktor Orbán, the presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko and the president of the Hungarian Cultural Association of Sub-Carpathia, Miklós Kovács, signed an agreement in which the Cultural Association agreed to support Viktor Yushchenko in the presidential elections

“with all available means” and throughout the Hungarian-inhabited areas. In exchange, Yushchenko agreed that, in the event of his election, he would support the Cultural Association’s proposal for the establishment of a Hungarian-inhabited district along the River Tisza. He also pledged to assist the rehabilitation of the Hungarian victims of Stalinism and their financial compensation and to secure permanent representation in Parliament for Ukraine’s minorities (including the Hungarians), to expand the language rights of the Hungarians of Transcarpathian region, and to ensure that financial resources granted by Hungary would reach those entitled to them. The agreement also provided for comprehensive support to be given to Rákóczi Ferenc II Hungarian Minority College, for the development of a network of Hungarian educational institutions in the Transcarpathian region, and for the establishment of an independent Hungarian school district within the framework of minority cultural autonomy.⁴³

On the occasion of the inauguration of Ukraine's new president, Hungary's President, Ferenc Mádl made the following remarks in a statement:

One of the reasons why we in Hungary are monitoring Ukraine's development is that, as is generally known, people of Hungarian ethnicity are included among the country's citizens. The Hungarian minority in Ukraine is making serious efforts, with the assistance of its educational and cultural institutions, to develop its homeland in the narrower sense. It is doing all this for the benefit of entire Ukraine.⁴⁴

In the course of the 2004 presidential campaign, Viktor Yushchenko presented himself as a national (or even nationalist) politician.⁴⁵ In speeches made during his time in office, he sought to reevaluate historical taboos, to demythologise the Soviet narrative, to develop a model that was more acceptable to the inhabitants of the various regions, while also seeking to promote the country's unity.⁴⁶ He emphasised unity in Ukrainian society and sought to bring together the national and liberal discourses. "We know that everyone is building Ukraine, regardless of the language spoken, the church attended or their political views. We all share a single fate, and we only have one Ukraine."⁴⁷ He repeatedly underlined that belonging to Europe was one of the basic values of Ukrainians. "The Ukrainians will be among the peoples defining Europe's new image. Europe's boundaries are set by the common values its nations call their own."⁴⁸

In domestic politics it seemed Ukraine would now be successful where it had failed after the 1991 transition: a new political elite was being established and most of the old bureaucracy was being replaced. After her appointment as prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, who had been a staunch supporter of Yushchenko's presidential bid, announced a policy of "reprivatisation." This policy, which actually meant renationalisation, caused some unease among foreign investors. Meanwhile, the country's new leaders failed to maintain the economic upswing of the preceding presidential term. On the contrary, there was a reversal: the economy slowed, inflation increased, and Ukraine's problems multiplied. It soon became apparent that the new elite was no less corrupt than the previous one. For instance, when Justice Minister Roman Zvarich failed to vote in favour of a law prohibiting the onward sale of Russian oil to the West, it soon became known that this was because his wife had interests in that field of business.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, a rather odd interpretation of press freedom – one of the initiatives put forward by Yushchenko and his circle of supporters – gave rise to protests, and an attempt to include "Christian ethics" as a subject in the school curriculum led to a similar reaction. Similar controversy surrounded the use of the tax authority for political means, a policy initiative to unify Ukraine's two Orthodox churches (one subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate and the other belonging to the

Kyiv Patriarchate – which in canonical law remains unrecognised to this day), efforts to undermine theatres and artists suspected of supporting the opposition, and a new regulation necessitating Ukrainian subtitles when foreign-language material (even a Russian film or TV show) was shown on TV or at the cinema. During this period, relations with Russia were tense. This was particularly so given that Vladimir Putin had given his support to Viktor Yanukovych at the time of the “Orange Revolution.” The matter came to a head when Russia, on two occasions, shut off the supply of natural gas to Ukraine. The stoppage led to a shutdown of the transit supply to other European countries. At the time, 80 percent of Russian natural gas was supplied to Europe by means of three major pipelines passing through Ukraine. Ukraine was forced to agree to a significant increase in the price of imported Russian natural gas, resulting in an even dimmer economic outlook.⁵⁰

The Orange alliance proved unable to function smoothly. Tymoshenko became prime minister in early 2005, but she only held office for a few months. Among other things, she raised wages and pensions. Her government also increased payments on the birth of a child to what were dizzying heights for Ukraine.⁵¹ This latter measure has remained a permanent feature of policy, regardless of which party is in power. In 2011, the state grant amounted to 30 percent of the minimum livelihood after the birth of the first child, 60 percent after the birth of the second, and 120 percent after the birth of the third or any subsequent child. Ten times this amount is paid out immediately, while the rest is paid in monthly instalments over a period of 24 months for the first child, a period of 48 months for the second child, and a period of 72 months for the third and any subsequent child.⁵² The effect on demographics will have to be measured in the censuses.

Tymoshenko's term in office saw a monetary outflow that held back GDP growth. Under her government there was also a “petrol crisis,” a “meat crisis,” and a “sugar crisis.” The reasons for and management of these crises exacerbated the conflict between president and prime minister. In the end, Yushchenko dismissed Tymoshenko, blaming her for the economic downturn and the increased political tension.

The turmoil in the Orange ranks was reflected in the results of the 2006 parliamentary elections and in the results of the 2007 parliamentary elections, which were brought forward. In 2007, Viktor Yanukovych's Party of Regions, which had been soundly defeated in 2004, received the highest number of votes, while the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc also improved on its 2006 result. There was a sharp decline, however, in support for Yushchenko's political associates. Even so, at the end of 2007, Our Ukraine and the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc – still regarded as “natural allies” – were strong enough to jointly form a government. Thus Yulia Tymoshenko became prime minister once again. During this period, the source of most domestic political

strife was Tymoshenko's policy of eliminating private companies from the Russian gas business in an effort to avoid a further natural gas crisis with Russia. The Ukrainian government's preferred policy was for Naftogaz, the national oil and gas company, to deal directly with Gazprom. This policy resulted, however, in a significant increase in gas prices for domestic consumers. A major success in the international arena was Ukraine's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in February 2008; negotiations on membership had been underway since 1993.

In 2009, the Tymoshenko Bloc and the Party of Regions began coalition talks: the main goal was a renewed amendment to the Constitution further limiting presidential power. In the end, however, the Party of Regions backed out of the deal.⁵³ Tymoshenko remained in office until early March 2010, but relations between her and President Yushchenko deteriorated further.

Concerning Hungarian–Ukrainian relations during this period, two areas should be highlighted. The first was summarised – during President Yushchenko's official visit to Hungary in 2007 – by Hungarian President László Sólyom, who stated the following on 10 January:

I attribute great significance to the initiative that we have mentioned in our statement today, which calls on us to pay our respects to the war dead, to mark the places where they fell, and to cherish and protect their graves. In this connection Ukraine has offered to locate the Hungarian victims who lost their lives on its soil and to properly mark their resting places. Hungary has gratefully accepted this offer and has undertaken to do the same. Today, I submitted to the President a list of 48,000 names of (Soviet) Ukrainian soldiers who died and were buried on Hungarian soil during World War II. The list was compiled by the Institute and Museum for Military History. Indicating the graves and cemeteries, it will assist in locating the final resting places of the fallen.⁵⁴

Cooperation in this area is ongoing.

The second major area comprises issues associated with the Hungarians in Transcarpathian Ukraine. Hungary became a member of the Schengen Area on 21 December 2007. According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hungary has done its utmost to ensure [...] that the Schengen Borders Code has the least possible impact on relations with the mother country of Hungarians living in (the Transcarpathian region of) Ukraine. By actively contributing to European Union policy we have succeeded in elaborating a system of measures that will keep the borders open for this broad section of the Hungarian community abroad. The European Union's visa facilitation agreement with Ukraine serves this purpose [...] as do also the Hungarian–Ukrainian local border traffic agreement, which entered into force on 19 December 2007, and the rate reduction pertaining to the important national visa.⁵⁵

Major changes took place in education, an issue of vital importance to Hungarians. In the second Tymoshenko government, Minister of Education Ivan Vakarchuk initiated a series of measures that regrettably realised people's fears concerning school education in Hungarian. Among other reasons, this was because the measures "prescribed the introduction of the so-called transitive education in schools where Ukrainian was not the language of tuition, whereby the long-term goal was to achieve majority unilingualism through education."⁵⁶ On 3 December 2009, the Hungarian Parliament issued a political statement "concerning minority policy developments in Ukraine that were a cause of concern for the Hungarian minority."⁵⁷ Meanwhile, Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai wrote a letter to his Ukrainian counterpart, Yulia Tymoshenko, on the subject of the "school textbook scandal in Ukraine, which curtails the minority rights of the Hungarians in the Transcarpathian region." This action reflected a concern in Hungary that school textbooks in Hungarian had not been ordered for the coming school year.⁵⁸ At the time such efforts were fruitless.

Recent Developments

In the 2010 presidential elections, the incumbent Viktor Yushchenko had no chance of re-election. His two major rivals turned out to be Viktor Yanukovych and Yulia Tymoshenko. Yanukovych appealed to voters with a new and changed image: among other things, he had learned to speak excellent Ukrainian. (Tymoshenko had also done so years earlier.) It may seem surprising, but for some of Ukraine's leading politicians over the past 20 years, the Ukrainian language and the learning process have been closely connected with their political career. Even so, language use has not always influenced ideological convictions: Yulia Tymoshenko was already an active politician when she switched to using Ukrainian. The presidential election was positively received outside Ukraine and no one doubted Viktor Yanukovych's victory. Once again a new era dawned.

Following the presidential election, Tymoshenko had to vacate the prime minister's chair. Under the Constitution, parliamentary groups (caucuses) can enter into a coalition in order to form a government; the votes of newly formed groups and of politicians that have switched to another group or who are independents do not count in this process. Nevertheless, in October 2010, following a change in the parliamentary rules, a new government coalition was formed called Stability and Reforms.⁵⁹ Under the new circumstances, the candidate of the Party of Regions, Mykola Azarov, became the country's prime minister. Following protests from the opposition, the Constitutional Court conducted an inquiry and decided in favour of the new parliamentary rules. In May 2010, a criminal investigation was launched

against Yulia Tymoshenko and several fellow politicians. In October 2011, the court found the former prime minister guilty of abuse of office and sentenced her to seven years in prison. Tymoshenko's illness, medical treatment, and hunger strike, as well as the prison conditions, have caught the attention of the public – and not only in a political sense. Moreover, the reaction of the international community has been extremely negative and Ukraine's image has been damaged. The European Union has regularly expressed its concern and displeasure. Thus although the EU initialled a part of the Association Agreement with Ukraine in April 2012, there are no signs of the agreement being concluded in the foreseeable future. In May 2012, a summit meeting of Central European heads of state in Yalta was cancelled with reference to the Tymoshenko affair. A shadow was even cast over the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship, hosted jointly by Poland and Ukraine. Several foreign politicians announced they would not attend the event (that is to say, that they would not be present at matches played in Ukraine). This mixture of sport and politics evoked the worse memories of the former era.

In 2010, a "constitutional restoration" took place in Ukraine. As already noted, one of the deals at the time of the "Orange Revolution" resulted in a constitutional amendment limiting presidential power. Now there was a desire to get rid of this restriction, but parliamentary support was lacking for the needed constitutional amendment. Even so, a group of parliamentary representatives requested the Constitutional Court to review the constitutionality of the original constitutional amendment (Act No. 2222-IV of 2004). In September 2010, the Constitutional Court decided, on grounds of formal deficiencies, to cancel the controversial act. It also stated that through this action the presidential powers contained in the original 1996 Constitution had been restored.⁶⁰ Opposition politicians gave little attention to this decision, which was broadly ignored by the international community. Then, in February 2011, the so-called Constitutional Assembly of Ukraine was established with the task of drafting a new constitution for the country.⁶¹ In late 2012, the exact course of this development is uncertain, and so the details will not be covered here.

Some commentators considered the adoption of the new Language Act to be an important step towards legal harmonisation with the European Union, while others saw it as preparation for the parliamentary elections of the autumn of 2012. The linguistic situation of the Ukraine – usually regarded as a nation-state – is rather complex. Ukraine is a country that historically has lacked independent statehood, a factor influencing its linguistic map. The nation-building (unification) process that took place in Western Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries could not be emulated in Ukraine, which lacked a unified national territory. Although the standardisation of the Ukrainian language based on various "Little Russian" dialects and the development of a Ukrainian national idea in the latter half of the 19th century proved successful,

nevertheless these processes failed to exert a uniformising effect. The placement of regions of diverse historical heritage (pertaining to mentality, socialisation and other factors) within common borders did exert a uniformising effect during the Soviet era. Rather this process tended to benefit Russian – “the language of contact among the peoples” – rather than the Ukrainian language. To date, Ukraine has failed to cope with this heritage. Ukraine’s minority population comprises above all ethnic Russians (80%). Each of the other minorities constitutes less than 1 percent of the total minority population. Without the ethnic Russians, these other minorities constitute less than 5 percent of Ukraine’s total population. Almost 30 percent of Ukraine’s inhabitants consider Russian to be their native language, and even more Ukrainians are speakers of Russian. Thus, all decisions relating to the minorities are closely linked with the Russian question: those who defend the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian national interests are regularly accused of Russophobia. In fact, however, the true victims of it are all the other minorities, forming far smaller percentages of the population. Those, on the other hand, who take the Russian question as their starting point, tend to be branded anti-national. The reason for this is clear: ethnic Russians in Ukraine so greatly outnumber the other minorities and are so close to being numerous enough to form a nation in their own right that if Russian were to be given the status of regional language, this would make Ukrainian – the state language – superfluous in a large part of the country. An inability to resolve this situation is the root to most of the political controversy. Whenever the minorities seek to make their views known, they are met by an unlevel playing field.

In recent years, the language issue has been an ever-present feature of public debate and political discourse. While there have been several attempts to draft a language law, none of the draft legislation has passed beyond the committee stage. The best chance for legislation came after the Party of Regions put together a parliamentary majority. At that time the first draft of a bill, jointly elaborated by a single representative from each of the parties in the parliamentary majority, was submitted to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and to the Venice Commission. This action was taken to counter in advance the expected domestic political turmoil. The reaction of both bodies to the draft was basically negative; in essence their concerns were similar to those of the opposition: the bill failed to adequately protect the state language. And so a new version of the bill was drafted. Representatives of the Party of Regions then submitted the bill, but representatives of the Jewish and Romanian organisations as well as Mihály Tóth, honorary president of the Hungarian Democratic Federation in Ukraine, were involved in its elaboration. The law was adopted under rather odd circumstances. During the parliamentary session on 3 July 2012, a final vote was absent from the original agenda. The parliamentary speaker, Volodymyr Lytvyn, was summoned to the Presidential office for consultations, which became so drawn out

that Lytvyn was unable to return to Parliament until the evening. In the meantime, a final vote had been held without his knowledge. In protest, the scholar historian Lytvyn (chairman of the People's Party) threatened to resign and demanded an inquiry. Finally, on 31 July he agreed to sign the bill and forward it for signature to President Yanukovich. According to a report by Radio Free Europe, Lytvyn explained his decision as follows: "If none of the suggestions of the Speaker are accepted, then he is obliged to sign the submitted law immediately."⁶² Viktor Yanukovich signed the legislation on 8 August. Thus, "Act 5029-VI on the Foundations of State Language Policy" entered into force on 10 August.⁶³ The real purpose and effect of the language law will be determined in the coming months. At this stage, it is too earlier for a clear impression – especially in view of the autumn 2012 parliamentary elections and likelihood that the legislation will be used in campaign strategies.

Ukraine's elections serve as a prism through which to explore Hungarian–Ukrainian relations. Presidential elections are held every seven years in Ukraine, while parliamentary and local government elections are held every four years. The parliamentary elections of 2007 were brought forward, and so the parliamentary and local government elections no longer coincide. Consequently, the Parliament elected on 28 October 2012 must function alongside a president elected in 2010 and local governments also elected in 2010.

The current election law was passed on 17 November 2011. Under what is a mixed election system, 225 MPs are elected in constituencies (voting districts) and 255 from the party lists. The necessary threshold is five percent of total votes. Candidates in the constituencies are put forward by the political parties or may run as independents. Candidate registration is subject to the payment of a relatively large fee: 12 times the minimum wage in the case of a constituency candidate (i.e., approx. USD 1,500) or – for the party lists – 2,000 times the minimum wage (i.e., approx. USD 250,000). The voters' register is drawn up on the basis of the personal data and address register. Resolution 1862 (2012) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the functioning of democratic institutions in Ukraine (26 January 2012) negatively appraised several aspects of Ukrainian democracy, but the country's election law received a positive assessment: the resolution noted that the election law had been adopted on the basis of a broad consensus between the government and opposition parties.⁶⁴ Overall, 87 parties took part in the elections: 22 parties put forward lists of candidates and 81 parties fielded candidates in the constituencies. Voter turnout was 57.99 percent, with votes being cast by 21 million of a total 37 million people entitled to vote. The end result was made known after a fierce political battle: five parties won seats in Parliament on the lists, while most of the successful constituency candidates were also from these parties. The five parties were: the Party of Regions; the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc ("*Batkiivshchyna*"); UDAR – Ukrainian Democratic Alliance

for Reform of Vitali Klitschko (the boxer's party was not only a newcomer in national politics but also achieved substantial success in the 2010 local government elections); the Communist Party (the only party to have held seats in Parliament throughout the period since independence); and the radical-nationalist All-Ukrainian Union ("Svoboda").⁶⁵ The latter's performance was the real upset of the election: analysts had predicted it would barely acquire the necessary 5 percent of the vote, but in the end it won more than 10 percent of the vote. This is the first time such a party has won seats in the Ukrainian Parliament. For this reason it is difficult to predict the party's likely course (the experiences of other European countries in this regard are varied).

Prior to the elections the most serious controversy surrounded the drawing up of constituency boundaries. The Hungarian government also made efforts to ensure the presence of a "Hungarian constituency" among the various constituencies in the Transcarpathian region, where the election of an ethnic Hungarian candidate would be a possibility. Between 1994 until 2006, the ethnic Hungarian population in the region had its own MP in Parliament. However, in the two more recent elections (2006, 2007), the community failed to elect an MP. In the end, a "Hungarian constituency" – which might have resulted in an overt struggle between the two ethnic Hungarian parties (the Hungarian Democratic Party in Ukraine and the Hungarian Party in Ukraine) – was not established. Instead, a backroom deal was attempted once more. Miklós Kovács, chairman of the Hungarian Party in Ukraine, stated at a public forum that

the Ukrainian leadership made an offer to the government of Hungary according to which it would arrange for a representative of the ethnic Hungarian community to be voted into the national Parliament by means of the election list of the Party of Regions. [...] the Hungarian government, however, stuck to its principled position, arguing that what is at stake in the elections is the representation of the interests of the Hungarians of the Transcarpathian region, rather than a presence in Parliament [...] For this reason Hungary did not accept the Ukrainian offer, because its previous request to Kiev had been for a Hungarian constituency rather than a Hungarian parliamentary representative. And this request had not been met by the Ukrainian side [...].⁶⁶

This decision, however, created a new and more favourable situation for the Hungarian Democratic Party of Ukraine: the government party offered a place on its list to its representative, as a means of solving the issue of ethnic Hungarian representation in the Ukrainian Parliament. At the time of the 2010 presidential elections, the Hungarian Democratic Party of Ukraine decided, in view of its experiences during the Vakarchuk era, to form a strategic alliance with the Party of Regions, which had ties to the candidate who was later elected as head of state. Its MP was included in the committee drafting the language law, and yet,

at that time, the possibility of a place on the Parliamentary list had not even been discussed. Incidentally, an examination of the results of the 2010 local elections in the Transcarpathian region reveals that at the county, municipal and district level 60.2 percent of the ethnic Hungarian representatives had been candidates of the Hungarian Democratic Party in Ukraine, while 39.8 percent had been candidates of the Hungarian Party of Ukraine. However, at the rural level, where 64.6 percent of the ethnic Hungarians live, these parties are barely represented. Indeed, most of the ethnic Hungarian representatives are independents.⁶⁷

In late November 2012, it would seem that the candidate of the Hungarian Democratic Party in Ukraine will be one of the list MPs if the Party of Regions manages to form a government and those candidates further up the list who become ministers are removed from the list (as the two positions are incompatible). Otherwise there is no chance of a seat for the Hungarian Democratic Party. Meanwhile the Hungarian Party in Ukraine fielded candidates in three constituencies. The nature of the election system and the small percentage of ethnic Hungarians meant they had no chance of success and, ultimately, they obtained even fewer votes than they had expected.⁶⁸ This poor result was not only due to the fact that the Hungarian Democratic Party was campaigning alongside the Party of Regions; it also reflected protest votes at the local level of Hungarian society.

In Hungarian–Ukrainian relations, there remain at least two other open questions. The first concerns the matter of dual citizenship, which is not legally recognised by Ukraine. Article 4 of the Constitution states the following: “There shall be a single form of citizenship in Ukraine.” According to Article 25, “No citizen of Ukraine shall be deprived of citizenship or of the right to change citizenship. No citizen of Ukraine shall be exiled from Ukraine or surrendered to another state.” The provisions of the current Citizenship Act, adopted in 2001, reiterate this idea; it too recognises a single form of citizenship. To date the Ukrainian government has shown no intent to officially address the issue of dual citizenship. On the other hand, the possibility of sanctions has been raised on several occasions in the legislature. For Ukraine the issue of dual citizenship pertains not only to its relations with Hungary. Even so, this does not mean that Hungary should be satisfied with the current “implicit” arrangement.⁶⁹

The other open question is the status of the Hungarian–Ukrainian joint committee on minorities. The 15th session of the Hungarian–Ukrainian Intergovernmental Joint Committee on the Rights of the National Minorities, held in Budapest on 19 December 2001, ended without a protocol. This had never happened before in the history of the Joint Committee, which was established on the basis of a declaration on the rights of the national minorities, signed on 31 May 1991 by the ministers of foreign affairs of Hungary and Ukraine. Although such protocols are generally symbolic in nature, nevertheless the Joint Committee is an important forum for the discussion of matters concerning the minorities.

Ukrainian analysts acknowledge that Hungarians in Ukraine have greater “visibility” than their population ratio might warrant (ethnic Hungarians make up only 0.3 percent of the country’s population). Regrettably, the issue of the Magyar monument at Verecke (Veretsky) Pass has accentuated this trend. The area in question at Verecke Pass is commonly regarded as no-man’s-land, for it was only until 1980 that the main road passed through here. Hungary’s press gave the impression to its readers that extremist Ukrainian nationalists were preventing or dishonouring the commemoration of this important landmark in Hungarian history. In fact, however, the story does not begin with the protests against the Verecke monument. Rather, it is a consequence of the excavation works that have been underway for some years at the Verecke Pass as part of efforts by the Ukrainian authorities to disinter the Sich soldiers allegedly massacred there by units of the Royal Hungarian Army in March 1939. The Sich soldiers earned themselves a place in Ukrainian national history as the defenders of Carpatho-Ukraine after its declaration of independence in 1939. According to some interpretations, therefore, the erection of a Hungarian monument at this site serves to dishonour the memory of these Ukrainian national heroes rather than to commemorate Hungarian history. The issue is topical: as noted above, in October 2012, a far-right nationalist party entered Parliament for the first time in the history of independent Ukraine, and this party has been linked on several occasions with the destruction of the Hungarian monument at Verecke. Moreover the far-right party was victorious in Lviv County, and Verecke forms a section of the border between the Transcarpathian region and Lviv County. So far it is Hungary that has made gestures in this matter: in 2009, the Varjúlapos Memorial was inaugurated at Nyírtelek, which commemorates, among others, the Sich soldiers who were brought there after mid-March 1939.⁷⁰ And in 2012, following a Hungarian proposal, an international scholarly discourse began on the events of March 1939, supported by the European Network for Remembrance and Solidarity among other bodies.⁷¹

At the time of the Hungarian EU Presidency, Minister of Foreign Affairs János Martonyi stated the following: “We take into account that for Ukraine in its present state the relationship with Russia is particularly important. Without even raising the question or necessity of a choice, we seek to strengthen Ukraine’s bonds with Europe’s centre of attraction, the European Union.”⁷² The right course of action is to conclude the EU–Ukraine Association Agreement – which is clearly in Hungary’s interest. We know that this step would bring many issues with uncertain outcomes into the European stream.

Notes

- 1 This paper was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.
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- 3 Сергей Екельчик: *История Украины. Становление современной нации* [The History of Ukraine. The Birth of a Modern Nation]. Kyiv: Издательство К.І.С., 2010. pp. 261–264.
- 4 Askold S. Lozynskyj: “Independence Diaries: U.S.A. Recognizes Ukraine.” *Ukrainian Congress Committee of America*, <http://ucca.org/en/newsroom/ucca-statements/210-independence-diaries-usa-recognizes-ukraine>. Accessed: 11 May 2011.
- 5 Вячеслав Иванов: *Історія держави і права. Навчальний посібник*. II. [The History of Government and Law. Textbook. Vol. 2. Kyiv: МАУП, 2003. p. 930.
- 6 Mihály Tóth: “Az 1996. évi ukrán alkotmány megszületése” [The Birth of the 1996 Ukrainian Constitution]. *Pro Publico Bono. Allam- és Közgazdaságtudományi Szemle*, No. 1. (2011). pp. 86, 88.
- 7 For the full text of the conversation, see Україна. антологія пам’яток державотворення, Х–ХХ ст.: у десяти томах. Т. Х. *Відродження й утвердження української державності (1987–2005 роки). Дорога до себе*. [Ukraine: the Anthology of the Documents of the Construction of the State. Vol. 10. The Rebirth and Consolidation of Ukrainian Statehood (1987–2005). The Path of Identity.] Редкол.: І. М. Дзюба та ін. Kyiv: Вид-во Соломії Павличко «Основи», 2009. pp. 333–337.
- 8 Екельчик: *op. cit.* p. 246.
- 9 Alison Katz, “Chernobil következményei” [Chernobyl’s Consequences], *Le Monde diplomatique*, <http://www.magyardiplo.hu/component/content/?view=article&id=410>. Accessed: 23 November 2012. English original: Alison Katz: “Health Consequences of Chernobyl: the New York Academy of Sciences Publishes an Antidote to the Nuclear Establishment’s Pseudo-Science”. *PubMed*, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21058538>.
- 10 Екельчик, *op. cit.* pp. 290–295.
- 11 Юрій Мицик, Олег Бажан and Віталій Власов: *Історія України* [History of Ukraine]. Kyiv: Видавничий дім «Киево-Могилянська академія», 2008. http://www.ebk.net.ua/Book/history/mitsyk_iu/index.htm. Accessed: 23 November 2012.
- 12 “Меморандум про гарантії безпеки у зв’язку з приєднанням України до Договору про нерозповсюдження ядерної зброї. Будапешт, 5 грудня 1994 року” [Memorandum on the Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine’s Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Budapest: 5 December 1994]. http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/998_158. Accessed: 5 December 1994.
- 13 Екельчик: *op. cit.* pp. 286–288.
- 14 András Páldi: *Egyre távolabb Moszkvától. Egy diplomata kijevei emlékei 1986–1992* [Ever More Distant from Moscow. The Memories of a Diplomat in Kiev, 1986–1992]. Budapest: Belvárosi Könyvkiadó, 1996. p. 254.
- 15 Ernő Keskeny: *A magyar–orosz kapcsolatok 1989–2002* [Hungarian–Russian Relations, 1989–2002]. Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 2012. p. 82.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Cf. János Kis: “A kisebbségi kérdés az új világrendben” [The Minority Question in the New World Order]. *Beszélő*, No. 4. (2002); Ferenc Mák: “Az új nemzeti politika és a Határon Túli Magyarok Hivatala (1989–1999)” [The New National Policy and the Office for Hungarians Abroad (1989–1999)]. *Magyar Kisebbség*, No. 3. (2000).
- 18 Cf. Ірина Бабинець: “Становлення українсько–угорських міждержавних відносин (1991–1993)” [The Founding of Ukrainian–Hungarian Bilateral Relations (1991–1993)]. *Ін: Міжнародні зв’язки України: наукові пошуки і наслідки* [Ukraine’s International Relations: Research Results]. Вип. 12. Відп. ред. Степан Віднянський. Kyiv: Ін-т історії України НАН України, 2003. pp. 85–94.

- 19 Keskeny: *op. cit.* p. 96.
- 20 On the Romanian minority in Ukraine, see Лариса Лойко: *Громадські організації етнічних меншин України: природа, легітимність, діяльність* [Social Organizations of the Ethnic Minorities in Ukraine: Splits, Legitimacy, Activity]. Kyiv: Фоліант, 2005. pp. 273–279.
- 21 For the text of the resolution, see Україна: антологія пам'яток державотворення... *op. cit.* pp. 235–236.
- 22 Екельчик: *op. cit.* pp. 295–301.
- 23 Viktória Szereda: “Ukrajna és Oroszország: történelmi narratíva és pártosodás” [Ukraine and Russia: Historical Narrative and Partisanship]. *Regio*, Vol. 18. No. 3. (2007). p. 56.
- 24 Tóth: *op. cit.* pp. 91–93.
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