

1. Frameworks of Interpretation

1.1. Parallel nation-buildings

During the last two centuries, the history of Central Europe (the region between Germany and Russia, from Finland to Greece) has been determined basically by the dissolution of empires, the transformation of various peoples into nations, and the aspiration of minority movements to create their own states. In this process, the relationship of Hungary with the neighbouring nations is a history of parallel nation-buildings.

The Hungarian minorities of Central Europe, part of Hungarian nation-building before 1918, were caught between these developments. After World War I – since these communities were organised by the idea of national belonging – the minority elites took on the role of minority nation-builders.

These are native minority communities that claim the status of a national minority, would like to build and institutionalise their own parallel societies, while in their own countries are considered to be imperial/residual minorities, and as a result their activities regarding self-organisation, maintenance of cultural heritage are considered to raise problems of security.

This led to a situation in which the Hungarian minorities of Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine, as political communities, were part of the political system of the respective state, but were not part of the given political nation. Among other factors, in the inter-war period this was due to the fact that the nation-building processes of the neighbours created their nation-states exactly in opposition to the Hungarian minority positions (land reforms, the nationalisation of enterprises, policy of assimilation, discriminatory educational policy, etc.). The Hungarian minorities policy of the neighbouring states was defined by state homogenisation in the socialist period, and from the 1970's by national rhetoric used as a means for acquiring political legitimacy. After 1989, the stress was again put on the creation of a nation-state. The political community and the nation (both in its political and in its cultural meaning) differ from each other in identification, in the emotional-cultural nature of the connection to the nation.

In spite of the fact that Hungarian minority parties participated in coalition governments of Central European countries after 1989, this did not bring about a decisive change in the doctrine concerning Hungarians: it is still interested in a policy of assimilation, while it takes notice of the demographic decrease and emigration.

The National Councils created from above in the successor states of Yugoslavia offer a sort of framework of integration into the Hungarian minorities policy of the given country, at the same time offering the Hungarian minority elites possibilities to assert their own interests (access to resources, monopolisation of state support). Consequently, they do not strengthen the functioning of the independent political community of the minority.

In Romania, neither asymmetric bargaining, nor control through co-optation (described by Tamás Kiss) could achieve a breakthrough in accepting a minority law or in the problem of autonomy. However, today the Romanian political elite considers that the Hungarian question is not relevant for its security policy or identity politics.

In Ukraine, due to its proportions, the Hungarian minority is visible only in local, regional politics. The whole issue depends on the relationship of Ukrainian nation-building to the Russian minority, to the language question, and to Hungary.

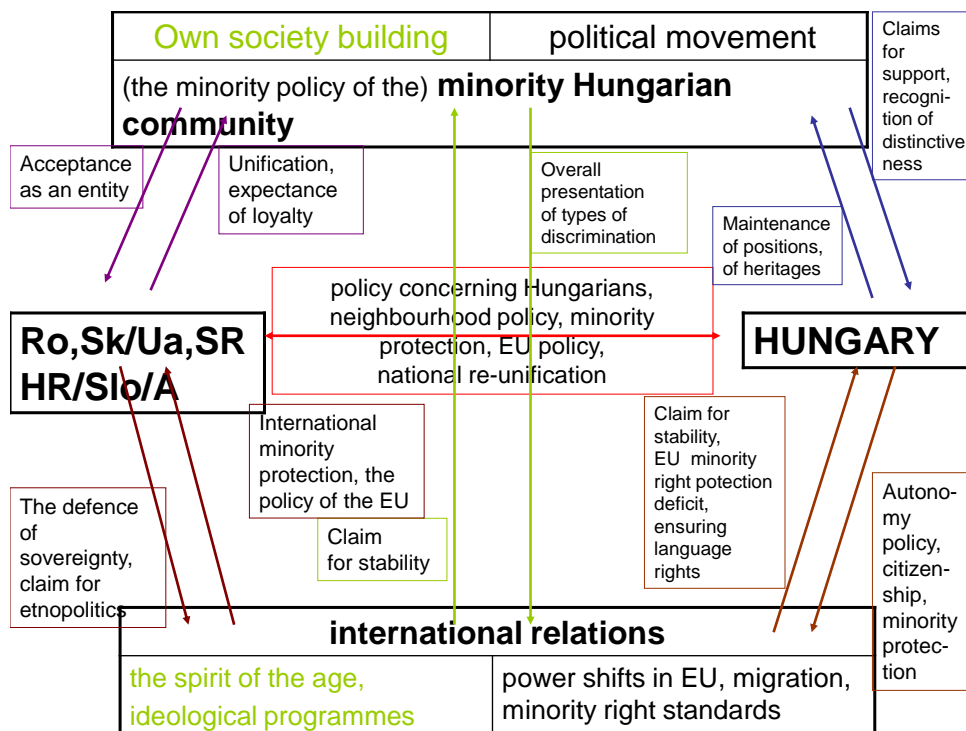
In Slovakia however, the relations between the two countries and the situation of the Hungarian minority is still a crucial problem of identity politics.

In Austria, the relationship to Hungarians is unequivocally a question of migration.

Summarising the experiences of the past 25 years, following Miklós Bakk one can say that the majority elite's position can be characterised by a sort of wait-and-see "strategic indecision" concerning the problem of the Hungarian minority: basically, this means that they leave to the discretion of the minority elites the control of their communities and within it the allocation of resources, without giving up the idea of a homogeneous nation state. But they do not support, or even forbid (according to internal political circumstances) independent ethnic institutionalisation, institution building, the construction of an overall parallel society. Or they support institutions that can be controlled (HMDSZ, UMSZ), or that gave up the idea of a separate, ethnically based political community (Híd-Most), the Hungarian representatives of the Democratic Party in Serbia.

This indecision is demonstrated by the fact that the parties of the majorities in the neighbouring countries do not have programmes concerning the minorities.

1.2. Actors, factors, relationships



1.3. The areas of ethnopolitics in Hungary:

minorities in Hungary	/an issue related to minority (local government)
Roma	/Roma question
Jewry	/the Jewish question
migrants	/immigration policy
Hungarian minorities abroad	/national policy, Hungarian minorities policy

the problems of Hungarian national consciousness
stereotypes, xenophobia, racism

1. 4. In Hungary, after the changes of 1989, beside creating a market economy, a constitutional state, political pluralism, Euroatlantic integration, **the coherence of the political community** became a key issue. Until now, no serious results have been achieved, since the internal coherence of the rhetoric of the two major political communities of identity mutually exclude each other. The “Leftist-Liberal” side used a rhetoric that centred on anti-nationalism, constitutional patriotism, and international conformity. On the other hand, the right wing stressed on the primacy of national interests and the strengthening of the ethno-cultural community. This became manifest during the disputes over the basic treaties (1994-1996), the referendum concerning dual citizenship (2004), and the new constitution elaborated during the second Fidesz government. In these debates the cause of the Hungarian minority communities that organise themselves on a linguistic-cultural basis was used as a pretext in constructing the border between national/nationless. This is the reason why the question of the minority Hungarians is encroached by a rhetoric that tries to meet symbolic requirements. Under such conditions, the public sphere uses everything according to its symbolic value, ignoring the problems themselves, their historical, social, economic relationships.

Question:

In the course of *nation building* in its historical sense, nationalism works as an ideology and institutionalises society on a national basis. The classical goal of nation-building is the formation of a nation state, as a community of a state-nation/citizens. Due to European integration, globalisation, and migration, this idea lost its sharp contours. Consequently, one can identify today four major types of nation-building: the traditional state-nation; construction under the umbrella of the state (sub-state); crossing borders, aiming at trans-sovereignty; the defensive type. Obviously, in practice one encounters not clear types, but dominant characteristics within the policy of a state. The enforcement of national interests in present-day *Hungary* is characterised by the dominance of sub-state and trans-sovereign approaches (they can be noticed on the level of programmes, plans, and rhetoric). The former stresses the integration of the Hungarian minorities abroad and of their institutions, while the latter refers to inter-state and regional relations. In the *neighbouring countries*, the dominant form is the building of a nation-state. What is the relationship between the debates concerning the future of the EU, and community buildings at a sub-state level, respectively

those aiming at a trans-sovereign, trans-national horizon? How far can a kin-state go in integration, beyond citizenship?

2. The social transformation of the Hungarian minority communities after 1989 (major processes)

2.1. Decrease of the population

Number of Hungarians in the neighbouring countries (in the regions which belonged to historical Hungary): 1910: 3,175 Million

2002: 2,4 Million

Proportion of Hungarians in the regions which belonged to historical Hungary:

1910: 32,1%

2001: 17,1%

The number of the Hungarians living abroad decreased from 2,763,625 in 1991 to 2,188,738 in 2011.

This reduction with 574,000 already contains the new migrants who work in Austria (40,000).

The causes of the decrease of the Hungarian minority communities between 1991-2011

Territory	Changes in the population (thousand) 1991–2001–2011		Natural population increase/decline (thousand) 1991–2001–2011		Migration balance (thousand) 1991–2001–2011		Assimilation (thousand) 1991–2001–2011	
Transylvania	- 193/	- 197	- 100	- 60	- 106	- 111	8	- 20
Slovakia	- 47/	- 63	- 12	- 23	- 2	- 15	- 34	- 24
Vojvodina	- 50/	- 40	- 30	- 30	- 50	- 5	- 5	- 5
Transcarpathia	- 4/	- 9	- 5	- 5	- 4	- 2	5	- 2

This table shows that while the decrease of Hungarians in Romania is basically due to *natural causes* and to *migration* (mostly to Hungary), in Slovakia the most important cause is inter-generational nation switch, i. e. *assimilation*. This is first of all the result of mixed marriages, where approximately 2/3 of the offsprings, when grown up, claim to be part of the majority nation. In Serbia, the most important cause of the decline of the Hungarian population was the *exodus* provoked by the Balkan war. The demographic situation of the Hungarians in Ukraine is *stable*. The Hungarians in Austria can be divided into two groups: the aging Hungarians in Burgenland (6,000 people), and the immigrants who settled in Vienna and its surroundings from Hungary, Romania, and Serbia. According to prognoses, it is only here that a more serious increase can be expected. The demographic decline in Hungary is alleviated by the immigration of Hungarians from the neighbouring countries. The greatest decrease will be in the two smaller Hungarian communities (Slovenia and Croatia), where more than 50-60% of the Hungarians live in mixed marriages. In the next twenty years, the reduction of the Hungarian population will be highest in Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia (60%, 50%, 31%); in Romania and Slovakia it will be more moderate (20%, 18%); in Ukraine the decrease with 4% is lower than on the national level; in Austria the number of Hungarians will increase sixfold.

2.2. In three countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Ukraine), the aging Hungarian population lives in a mostly rural environment.¹ But the other Hungarian minority communities are **also characterised by a re-evaluation of small towns and a kind of re-ruralisation.**

Lost its Hungarian majority: Marosvásárhely, Szabadka

Significant decrease of the Hungarian population: Beregszász, Szatmárnémeti

The role of small towns gains in importance within the given regional community:

Somorja, Dunaszerdahely/ Beregszász/ Székelyudvarhely, Csíkszereda, Sepsiszentgyörgy/ Zenta

The terms Southern Slovakia and Szeklerland gain a more reduced meaning

2.3. A similar loss in social positions can be noticed if one looks at the Hungarian minority *middle class*. The Hungarian minority middle class becomes proportionally thinner, due to emigration and the handicaps involved by the educational system.

- Lack of qualifications
- Lack of capital
- Losses due to migration

2.4. The difficulties of ethno-cultural reproduction can be seen most clearly in the *appearance of scattered communities* without their own institutions and in *mixed marriages*. Over the past two decades the role of *multiple* (linguistic, cultural, national) *attachments* has continually increased.

The percentage of mixed marriages:

Slovakia: 20%, Serbia: 28%,

Romania: 12,3% (the percentage of mixed marriages in Arad, Temes, Máramaros: approximately 50%)

- + diaspora community: Austria, Western Europe, USA
- + consciousness of origin, double attachment: Austria
- + ethnic, regional communities: Slovenia, Croatia
- + national communities: Ukraine, Slovakia, Serbia, Romania
(weakening of ethnic mobilisation)

¹ L. Gyurgyík, I. Horváth, T. Kiss: Demográfiai folyamatok, etno-kulturális és társadalmi reprodukció. In B. Bitskey (ed) (2010) *Határon túli magyarság a 21. században. Konferencia sorozat a Sándor-palotában. Tanulmánykötet.* (Budapest: Köztársasági Elnöki Hivatal) p. 81.

2.5. The problem of the *Roma communities with Hungarian attachments* came into the foreground during the past decades.

- In Transylvania, 6.5% of those who consider themselves Hungarian (150,000 speak Hungarian, 90,000 have Hungarian attachments)
- Transcarpathia: 9% of Hungarians (14,000 of a Roma population of 32,000)
- Slovakia: 7.2% of the Hungarian population (40,000 of a Roma population of 98,000)

Hungarian institutions are used. Segregation within the Hungarian minority communities.

2. 6. The influence of Hungarian media consumption and socialisation through media.

- The appearance of a common media space
- Duna Tv
- MTI and news from Hungary in the local Hungarian media
- The lack of regional media centres, that can offer a standard

2. 7. The establishment of a minority system of institutions

(without the educational network, approximately 4-5,000 institutions working in Hungarian)

After 1989: the building of the Hungarian society project, the reproduction of Hungarian identity by means of self-organising civil institutions; the construction of a parallel Hungarian institutional system.

Pillarisation and the **search for elite legitimation: the consociational model + remaining in the homeland**

minority institutional subsystems (financing: state budget, local government, NGO, support from Hungary, market)

political defence of interests

- positions in local governments
- the public sphere
- church life
- education
- community culture
- scientific activity
- economy

2.8. Claims of ethnic Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries

a)Hungarian should receive the status of a *regionally official language*.

b) They want to *organise their educational and cultural life themselves*. They claim to have the right to control their educational system. In cultural life, they claim financing proportional with the institutions of the majority, and insist on free institutional development.

c) The administrative division of the respective country or region should *allow most Hungarians to live in administrative units controlled by Hungarians*.

d) *The development of the regions inhabited by Hungarians should not lag behind that of the other regions*. On the other hand, state development should not destroy the structure of the localities or change the ethnic proportions.

e) *The symbols of the Hungarian minority should become official*. By this the state would give a symbolic sign of respect to their national dignity.

f) *Political representation* on all levels (national, regional, local). They regularly formulate the claim to participate in the government.

g) In Hungary they expect to be considered on equal footing with the Hungarian citizens, and claim equal, institutionally ensured opportunities in educational and cultural life.

Question: how can one separate, within the building of a minority community, political interest representation from the subsystems of social institutions? What are the European examples showing that such subsystems can function efficiently even without formally recognised autonomy? Or is local self-governance, together with internal pluralism and democratic decision-making within the minority society the only precondition?

3. The changing Hungarian minorities policies of the Hungarian governments

3.1. The most important statements of Hungarian minorities policy will be presented on the basis of the party and government programmes developed in Hungary.

The principle of non-violence.

The right to be part of the universal Hungarian community.

One should change not the place, but the quality of the borders.

Equality of rights is possible through the rights of local governments

In order to maintain the identity of Hungarians living in the neighbouring states as incomplete societies and as independent political communities, they are entitled to an autonomous institutional system.

The principle that the representatives of Hungarian minority politics should be treated equally.

The representation of the interests of the Hungarians from the neighbouring countries in international forums, within the framework of international norms, is the duty of the current Hungarian government.

The support of the Hungarians from the neighbouring states is a permanent budget item of the Hungarian budget.

3.2. Strategies and attitudes of Hungary towards Hungarians living abroad

Minority protection – legal, bilateral, social modernisation aspects

Ideology of „re-integration”, „re-unification” of the whole nation (on a contractual basis)

Regionalisation – development of border regions

+ Visions

Romantic visions of struggling but pure Hungarian worlds

Depressive visions on the future – total disappearance of Hungarians within decades

3. 3. The exigencies of Hungarian governmental and party politics

a) At the beginning of the 1990's, the Hungarian government and the Hungarian parties from the neighbouring countries hoped that they could manage the situation of the minority communities:

- through democratic transformation: through civil equality of rights, local governance, but the neighbouring countries' ideas of nation-building did not change; on the contrary, the emergence of new states further strengthened it,
 - the Hungarian minority law, the basic treaties and Euroatlantic integration did not manage to induce a positive turn
 - unsuccessful attempts at constraining the neighbours to accept minority rights during the process of Euroatlantic integration
- by the middle of the 1990's it turned out that without the support of the majority nations and short of international pressure, minority autonomies cannot be realised; consequently, the building of their own institutions came to the fore, mostly with support from Hungary.

b) Due to the experiences accumulated until the middle of the 1990's, the Hungarian minority elites underwent certain changes:

- they started developing differentiated relations with the political parties in Hungary
- they realise that participation in government is important for their social-political legitimisation,
- as a result of their experiences in coalition governments, the role of the minority politician representing cultural values was replaced by the model of the politician who thinks in terms of regional economic interest groups, and who tries to assure his legitimacy by fund raising and lobbying.

c) with the exception of the periods when Fidesz was in power, the Hungarian governments considered the minority question a secondary one. For them, the major problems referred to economy, development. As a result of the 2004 referendum, which was first of all a fight between parties, the left – which mixed welfare nationalism with constitutional patriotism in its campaign rhetoric – lost its influence within Hungarian minority communities. At the same time, the Fidesz committed itself to the idea of dual citizenship (which it rejected until 2002, fearing an increase in immigration).

d) The governmental “constraint” to offer citizenship to Hungarians outside Hungary:

- the failure to achieve autonomy,
- the communication of Fidesz after the referendum of 2004,
- the claims for Hungarian sovereignty; a tool of nation building,
(compensation of the lack of a political community in Hungary)

- the need, expectation of the Hungarian minority communities to be addressed to, a new demand for an identity,
- as against minority backwardness (e. g. official name changes on a mass scale)

- the Hungarian government is aware of the fact (although this is not mentioned publicly) that it does not have the necessary resources, international leverage to stop the deterioration of the condition of the Hungarian minority communities. It can only compensate it. It is part of the process of European integration that centuries-old trends continue, like for example migration toward the centre of the Carpathian Basin, which after 1920 is reduced to Hungarians.

Prospective consequences:

for the Hungarians facing existential problems, first of all those from Serbia and Ukraine the Hungarian passport meant participation in the international labour market,

for the Hungarian minority communities it made possible individual emancipation in Hungary, paving the road for a new minority identity that can be combined with Hungarian civic identity,

within Hungarian minority communities, individual social mobility tracks are easier to find in Hungary; bilingualism, minority competences become less important,

The legitimization crisis of the minority elites:

until now they had no relevant ascendancy over naturalisation, the partners are chosen by the Hungarian government

the programme aiming at the construction of a parallel minority society, as an overarching programme of public policy, stuck in, while in the areas with a

Hungarian majority there is a process of home-building (the weakening of the dual power structure, the takeover of, and identification with state and local institutions

the divergence of the goals, interests of Hungarians living in localities where they form a majority, respectively a minority

until now, the Hungarian minority elites have not presented programmes of social organisation, public policy that could counterweight the influence exercised by the politicians from Hungary

The dilemma of the Hungarian governments:

to what degree does the citizenship of Hungarians outside Hungary overrule the construction of a minority society, remaining in their homeland, the existence of independent Hungarian minority political communities?

while in Hungary the government of Viktor Orbán aims at the centralisation of the state, will it be able to cooperate with Hungarian minority communities living in seven countries, with distinctive interests?

is it possible to strengthen the institutional sub-systems of a minority professionally, positioning them outside party politics, but in the meanwhile in harmonious partnership with the present-day processes of internal politics in Hungary?

Question: in a European context, how is minority autonomy influenced by dual citizenship, respectively the right to vote in Hungarian elections? What are their advantages and disadvantages, taking into consideration the experiences accumulated until now.