Hungarian minorities in Slovakia and Romania
A source of ethnic conflict?

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ABSTRACT

The issues of minority rights and minority protection became matters of high politics for both Slovakia and Romania after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. The war in former Yugoslavia revealed the importance of the need for a sound framework for minority protection as ethnicity became linked with (internal) conflict. The international institutions like the EU, OSCE, the Council of Europe and NATO thus became more and more involved in developing norms for minority protection. To attain membership within these institutions, compliance to these norms was made obligatory. Slovakia and Romania, who both harbour large groups of ethnic Hungarians within their borders, thus had to address their ethnic minority situations in order to make their ‘return to the West’ successful. The main goal of this study is to see if there is a potential for (violent) ethnic conflict in these two countries and if there should be any concern at all. This study examines how this process of attaining membership and complying with certain norms for minority protection has fared between 1989 and 2010 and if this has had any effect on containing ethnic conflict. To answer these questions this study will focus on three areas: history, national politics and ethnic representation, and cultural, language and education issues. To make sense of these areas in relation to minority issues and ethnic conflict two theoretical frameworks will be used. The first framework reveals the underlying and proximate causes for conflict; the second framework identifies the majority, the minority, the external homeland (Hungary) and the international institutions as the most important actors involved in minority issues.

In conclusion this study finds that ethnicity as a source for conflict in Slovakia and Romania exists mostly within the political arena. However, a certain animosity does exist between the majority and minority groups. This means that a special responsibility lies with the elites of the majority and minority, as well as the elites in the external homeland Hungary, for not aggravating or capitalising on this animosity. The role of the international institutions in containing aggravating elite politics proofs to be very important. The linkage and will to integrate with the Western institutions has certainly influenced the development of minority protection in these countries enormously.

Key words: Slovakia • Romania • Hungary • international and European institutions • ethnicity • ethnic groups • ethnic conflict • minority rights • minority protection • post-communism • democratisation • nationalisation • supranational integration •
## Contents

| I. | Introduction .......................................................................................................................... | 4 |
| II. | Chapter 1: **Theoretical framework and contested terms** .......................................... | 9 |
| | Introduction |
| | 9 |
| 1.1 | Two frameworks |
| | 9 |
| | - The Brown framework |
| | 9 |
| | - The Brubaker/Kelley framework |
| | 12 |
| 1.2 | Terms and definitions |
| | 15 |
| | - Introduction |
| | 15 |
| | - Ethnicity and ethnic groups |
| | 15 |
| | - Ethnicisation and ethnic group representation |
| | 17 |
| | - Ethnic conflict and ethnic violence |
| | 18 |
| 1.3 | Conclusion |
| | 19 |
| III. | Chapter 2: **Post-communism and the nationalising state** ....................................... | 21 |
| | Introduction |
| | 21 |
| | - Hungary and Hungarian minorities: a short history till 1989 |
| | 21 |
| | - Post-communist democratisation |
| | 24 |
| | - Nationalising states |
| | 26 |
| | - The international dimension: minority rights in the 1990s |
| | 28 |
| | Conclusion |
| | 30 |
| IV. | Chapter 3: **The case studies: Slovakia and Romania** .............................................. | 32 |
| | Introduction |
| | 32 |
| 3.1 | Slovakia |
| | 32 |
| | - The Slovak nation: a short history |
| | 32 |
| | - The first steps toward a new nation-state |
| | 34 |
| | - The Mečiar governments: Difficulties, tensions and international integration |
| | 35 |
| | - The Hungarian Coalition Party joins the government in 1998 |
| | 40 |
| | - Membership waits and beyond |
| | 41 |
| | Conclusion |
| | 47 |
| 3.2 | Romania |
| | 49 |
| | - The Romanian nation: a short history |
| | 49 |
| | - A bloody revolution and post-cold war democratisation |
| | 50 |
| | - Elections, nationalism and ‘moving back to
Europe’
- Toward accession: poverty reduction and reform
- After the EU accession

Conclusion

V. Chapter 4: Conclusion

VI. Chapter 5: Annexes

5.1 General
Map. 4 - Hungarian minorities in Europe
Map. 5 - Hungary in the twentieth century

5.2 Slovakia
Table. 3 - Total population Slovakia by nationality
Map. 6 - Hungarian minorities in Slovakia
Table. 4 - Vote for Hungarian parties in Slovakia

5.3 Romania
Table. 5 - Total population Romania by ethnicity
Map. 7 - Hungarian minorities in Romania
Table. 6 - Vote for Hungarian parties in Romania

VII. Chapter 6: References

6.1 Books
6.2 (Online) Articles
6.3 General documents and Internet sources

List of maps/ figures/ tables (in the main text):

Table 1. Underlying causes of internal conflict
Table 2. The proximate causes of internal conflict
Figure 1. The Brubaker/Kelley framework
Map 1. Greater Hungary and present day Hungary
Map 2. Transylvania, Wallachia, Moldavia (1600 AD)
Map 3. The Szeklerland (Romania)

Note: all internet links to news articles, treaty texts, declarations or websites provided in this study have been tested and accessed on the 1st of October 2010.
Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 marked a new beginning for many of the Central and Eastern European countries (CEE). Romania broke with communism through a violent overthrow of the Nicolae Ceaușescu regime in 1989; Slovakia joined the community of independent states in 1993 after the ‘velvet-break up’ with the Czech Republic. The fall of communism, for both countries, entailed a reorientation in political, geographical, economic and social areas, both domestically and internationally.

Internationally this reorientation of both post-communist countries involved striving towards integration with the West (i.e. the European Union (EU), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Council of Europe (CE)). The domestic reorientation meant breaking away from the past, the Soviet, communist ideologies and one-party systems, which was done in a way that can be characterized as a nationalisation of the state. The creation of a strongly national, or nationalising state, meant that the minority or ethnic groups residing in these countries, a sizeable group of Hungarians, Roma and others in the case of Romania and Slovakia, also faced a completely new situation.

In communist times, minority groups as well as majority groups, were fully accommodated and were of no true importance in so far as being fully subjected to the Soviet political system.¹ In the post-communist world, however, majority and minority or ethnic issues became a matter of high politics. The cause of this is to be found in the political dynamics of the newly democratising and nationalising states where apart from the majorities, the minorities too ‘rediscovered’ their identities and had to fight for their rights, demands, and a place in the political arena.

The immediate period after the collapse of the Soviet Union revealed a new trend in the area of conflict and war. Where after World War II (WWII) most conflicts, violent conflicts and wars were fought and defined in the international context of a bipolar world, of communism versus liberalism, the Soviet Union versus the United States of America, the

¹ The Russian communists did take ethnicity and national self-determination very seriously, as long as it served the Soviet empire. In order to keep the communist system of states intact, the Soviets allowed for formal recognition of national differences and cultural expression, be it under very strict rules and limits, while simultaneously working to create a single, powerful Soviet identity. This however concerned only the internal situation of the Soviet Union, not the satellite states in CEE. More on this see, for example: Zoltan Barany, Robert G. Moser, ed., Ethnic politics after communism, New York, 2005, chapter 1, p14. Or: Rogers Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe, Cambridge, 1996, ch2, p25.
world now saw itself confronted with many domestic conflicts and domestic wars (e.g. Yugoslavia, Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan).

The fall of communism certainly revealed the true nature of many of these conflicts, some of which already existed, or had been simmering or were restrained during the Cold War period.\(^2\) It is striking that most of these conflicts saw ethnic groups, ethnic majorities and minorities pitted against each other. These observations along with the questions to the cause of ethnic conflict have generated an abundance of literature, which shows the complexity of ethnic conflict and explaining ethnic conflict.\(^3\)

This study concerns two former communist countries that, despite having considerably large minority groups within their borders, have not fallen into conflict or, worse, war. The general question here is why this has not happened in countries that have had to deal with reorientation and reinvention of themselves as independent nation-states. Two countries, therefore, that have had to deal with the instability generated by an internal and also external reconfiguration of power and have not known any large ethnic conflict as result of this. The analysis in this study will be build around the main problem definition: *In how far has integration with the Western organisations dampened the potential for ethnic conflict in Romania and Slovakia between 1989 and 2009 and what has been done in these countries in the field of development of minority protection?*

The choice of Romania and Slovakia, in the light of minority laws and ethnic group protection, lies with the fact that both countries harbour large, compact groups of Hungarians within their borders, which are comparable in size as both groups account for 6 to 10% of the total population.\(^4\) Moreover, both countries have become members of the most important international organisations. The desired integration with the West, however, saw Romania and Slovakia confronted with strict demands and norms concerning the rights of minorities and minority protection, such as can be found in the EU Accession or Copenhagen Criteria.\(^5\) The demands for the integration of these political, cultural and social rights for minorities,

\(^2\) ‘Proxy wars’ were quite common in the Cold War period. The USA and USSR fought these wars indirectly, using and supporting third parties as their proxies. These conflicts usually pitted ethnic groups against each other, getting support from either the USA or the USSR (i.e. Afghanistan, Angola, Korea, and Vietnam).

\(^3\) See for instance the list of literature given by Brubaker in: Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups*, Cambridge, 2004, p94.

\(^4\) See Annexes: Tables 3 and 5; and Maps 4, 6 and 7.

\(^5\) ‘Membership requires that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate’s ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.’ Quoted from and available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop_en.pdf)
therefore, had to become an important issue on the agenda of the post-communist governments. Slovakia and Romania all in all represent good cases for comparison.

The existence of, in this case, Hungary as a neighbouring nation concerned with their minorities across the border, adds more dynamic to the relations of Slovaks, Romanians and their governments with the Hungarian minorities. Hungary, historically, culturally and politically, feels it has the right to protect their kin across the border against the majorities or core nations of both Romania and Slovakia. To strengthen their credibility to do so, Hungary gives equal rights and progressive ways of political participation to Slovak, Romanian and other minorities within their own borders.

In order to make sense of the complexities involved in the study of ethnicity and ethnic conflict, two frameworks will be used in this study. The first is a framework on the causes of ethnic conflict, as described in Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict by the former co-editor of the Quarterly Journal International Security, Michael E. Brown. Brown identifies four underlying factors to the cause of internal conflict: structural factors, political factors, economic and social factors, and cultural and perceptual factors. As the proximate causes of ethnic conflict Brown states that ethnic conflict is either elite or mass triggered and internally or externally driven. This framework will be explained in greater detail below.

The development of minority politics and ethnic issues in the post-communist world of Central and Eastern Europe can be described by using, secondly, a framework introduced by Rogers Brubaker, Professor of Sociology at the University of California, in which he uses a ‘pas de trois’ of the nationalising state, the national minorities and the ‘external’ national motherland. This framework, in short, identifies the relationship and the interplay between the most important actors involved in minority issues, especially when it comes to explaining how and why certain minority policies are implemented and others are not. In this study this means the nationalising states of Romania and Slovakia, Hungarians as national minorities within the borders of those states and Hungary as the ‘external’ national homeland, which has or claims to have a say in issues involving their kin across the border.

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6 More on core nations see: Brubaker (1996), ch3, p55.
Judith G. Kelley, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at Duke University, acknowledges the usefulness in employing this framework of the ethnic minority, majority and external homeland. However, she adds to this ‘pas de trois’ framework by pointing out the importance of international institutions and organisations, like the EU, the CE and the OSCE, and the power of their norms and incentives. This combined ‘Brubaker/Kelley’ framework will also be described in more detail below.

Used together, the two frameworks will make sense of and clarify how ethnic conflict can come to be (Brown), who the most important actors are and how they are involved in containing or worsening the potential for conflict (Brubaker/Kelley).

The aim of this study is to give a political and historical analysis on the potential for ethnic conflict in Romania and Slovakia. Moreover, the analysis will concern the question why no major conflict has developed in these post-communist countries. This study is not concerned with predicting whether conflict or violent conflict will occur, let alone when this would happen. The intention of this study is to identify possible areas of conflict and/or draw possible lessons for avoiding ethnic conflict in these countries, and to see if there is any reason for concern at all.

To find out where conflict or a conflict potential might exist, this study will look at three areas: (recent) history, politics and the political process, and language and education laws, which corresponds with two factors in the Brown framework: the political and cultural/perceptual factors. The positive or negative roles of the minority group, majority group, Hungary and International Organisations (Brubaker/Kelley) will feature throughout the analysis of these areas.

To answer the question asked, the above mentioned frameworks will be explained in greater detail in chapter 1. Also, an account will be given on the terms used in the tremendously complex areas of ethnicity and (explaining) ethnic conflict. The terms discussed, in a manner of ‘What exactly are we talking about when we use the term...?’ are: ethnicity and ethnic groups, ethnicisation and ethnic group representation, conflict and ethnic conflict in particular. This is done in order to give a theoretical feel on the subject matter and the complexity of it. It is however beyond the scope of this study, to go into great detail of all the problems and debates surrounding ethnicity and ethnic conflict.

Proceeding to chapter 2, on post-communism and the nationalising state, a short history on how large groups of Hungarians became minority groups within the Slovak and

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Romanian states, and a general account on the process of nationalisation and democratisation of post-communist Slovakia and Romania will be given. The importance of history in relation to conflict lies in the possible existence of grievances between the national groups and if a pattern of either trust or mistrust exists or can be identified, which might help explain the occurrence or non-occurrence of conflict in the present day. The explanation of the process of nationalisation and democratisation, in general terms, will tell how most CEE countries came to define themselves in nationalistic terms, from which ethnic cleavages in politics and society resulted. Lastly, an account will be given on the international and European development of minority protection.

Chapter 3 will deal with the case studies of Slovakia and Romania. An analysis of the potential for conflict in these countries in the three areas mentioned above: (country specific) history, politics and the political process, and school and language laws, will be given. Following this a comparison on the success or failure of Romania and Slovakia in containing possible ethnic conflict and the notable similarities or differences will be given.

In chapter 4 a conclusion will be given on the analysis carried out before that. In a summary the main findings will be discussed and presented. And after the main question has been answered more explicitly, some concluding remarks will follow.
1 Theoretical framework and contested terms

Introduction

The first part of this chapter will explain in greater detail the two frameworks and some of the terms used in this study. The frameworks will help to understand the complexities behind the study of ethnic conflict. The Brown framework goes into how and why conflict can come to occur. The other framework, by Brubaker and Kelley, identifies the most important actors and the interplay between these actors, when it comes to explaining ethnic minority protection. Of course it is also possible for these actors to cause or worsen problems of this kind. The main point here is that the more a minority can rely on certain rights and protection, the less threatened it may feel, the less space there is for conflict or violence.

At the end of this first part of chapter one, both frameworks will be brought together, to show the connection between the two, and its use in this study.

The second part of chapter one will feature a more extensive and theoretical explanation on some of the definitions and terms used, giving more clarification on these selected definitions and important mechanisms behind ethnic conflict. The goal is to give a sense of the discussion around some of the terms and give an understanding of some of the theoretical debates surrounding these terms. It is, however, beyond the scope of this study to go into too much detail and join the debates. The importance here is that these debates influence the actors and policymakers involved, and their view on minority related issues. The terms discussed are as follows: ethnicity and ethnic groups, ethnicisation and ethnic group representation, ethnic conflict and violence.

1.1 Two frameworks

The Brown framework

It is hard to pinpoint exactly where the cause of internal conflict, including national and ethnic conflict, lies in a particular case. It is therefore, as Michael E. Brown states, important to remember that: ‘there are many different kinds of internal conflict. And many different sets of factors bring about different types of conflicts. The search for a single factor or set of factors that explains everything is comparable to the search for the Holy Grail - noble, but futile’.11

Giving an overview, Brown has developed a framework for analyzing different sets of proximate causes of internal conflict, which will be used in this study. First of all, he

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11 Brown, p4.
identifies four different underlying or permissive factors as causes for internal conflict, four factors which have received the most scholarly attention:

**Table 1  Underlying causes of internal conflict**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Factors</th>
<th>Economic/ Social Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak States, Intra-state security concerns,</td>
<td>Economic Problems, Discriminatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Geography.</td>
<td>economic systems, Economic development and modernization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discriminatory political institutions,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusionary national ideologies, Inter-group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>politics, Elite politics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural/ Perceptual Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterns of cultural discrimination,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic group histories.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Brown, p5.

In this study the focus will lie mostly with the political factors and cultural/ perceptual factors. The reason for this is that these two factors have arguably played the biggest role in the minority issues in Romania and Slovakia. This does not mean that the other factors may not have been of importance and will not implicitly be touched upon, however it is beyond the scope of this study to go into all the factors given.

Brown identifies four main **political factors** which play a role in internal conflict: discriminatory political institutions, exclusionary national ideologies, inter-group politics, and elite politics. The *first* factor, discriminatory political institutions, can be a cause for conflict as these discriminatory institutions can generate resentment over time, when certain groups benefit more and others are excluded.\(^{12}\) If a group feels underrepresented it might take action in order to correct this. The methods used to do this may vary.\(^{13}\)

The *second* factor, exclusionary national ideologies, can make conflict more likely, because it is capable of dividing a nation-state; giving one group a feeling of having the right to more rights and privileges within the nation-state than another group, making the first group act upon this feeling and ideology, whereas the latter may organise to battle the feeling of exclusion. These types of ideologies are mostly found in states that have no effective, weak or discriminatory institutions to allow citizens to give their views.\(^{14}\)

The *third* factor, the dynamics of inter-group politics, makes conflict more likely, because groups have ambitious objectives, strong senses of identity and confrontational strategies. If, like Brown says, the groups are strong and determined, have incompatible

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12 Political institutions like: courts, the military, the police, political parties, and other state institutions.
13 Brown, p8.
14 Ibidem.
objectives and if inter-group comparisons lead to competition, anxiety and fears of being dominated, conflict is even more likely.\textsuperscript{15}

The fourth and last main political factor is elite politics. This factor holds that elites, the leaders of certain groups, can provoke and indeed pit one group against another for their own interests, by using the legitimacy or self-bestowed legitimacy of the group as a whole. These leaders are interested in dividing groups, keeping groups divided and exploiting group differences as this is their base of power and legitimacy.\textsuperscript{16}

Two cultural/ perceptual factors feature in Brown’s framework and will be focussed on in this study. The first, cultural discrimination against minorities simply holds that certain groups of minorities are discriminated against when it comes to educational opportunities, the use of their own language or cultural symbols, or constraints on religious freedom. The most extreme form of cultural discrimination would be for the majority or ruling group to try to completely and forcefully assimilate the minority. The worst possible case would be the complete elimination of the minority and with it their culture.\textsuperscript{17}

The second factor here, problematic group histories, can legitimize conflict behaviour and violence, as groups and persons in those groups will use violence or conflict more easily if they have ‘a reason’ to do so. These histories of ‘ancient hatreds’ can have legitimate historical bases. The stories, however, can also be exaggerated versions of minor crimes in the past committed by private persons, which in turn or over time can be explained as violence of one group targeting another. Thus feeding certain hateful perceptions of one another, the slightest provocation today will, as Brown states, confirm deeply held beliefs and provides the justification for a retaliatory response.\textsuperscript{18}

These factors alone, however, are not enough to explain why conflict and especially violent conflict takes place in some cases and not in others. To trigger conflict, Brown has identified the proximate or catalytic causes of internal conflict:

\textbf{Table 2} \hspace{1cm} \textit{The proximate causes of internal conflict.}

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|}
\hline
 & Internally-driven & Externally-driven \\
\hline
Elite-triggered & Bad Leaders & Bad Neighbours \\
\hline
Mass-triggered & Bad Domestic Problems & Bad Neighbourhoods \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textit{Source: Brown, p15.}

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p9.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p12.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p13.
All four of the proximate causes will feature one way or another in the cases analysed. Internal conflict can be triggered by either elite-level factors or mass-level factors. Also a distinction can be made by whether this conflict is internally or externally driven. Put together in the matrix as shown above, an *internally-driven and elite-triggered* conflict is said to be a conflict driven by bad leaders, which involves power-struggles over ‘who-controls-what’. *Externally-driven and elite-triggered* conflicts are caused by bad neighbours, which means that nearby states meddle in other societies, for political, economic or ideological purposes of their own. *Mass-triggered conflicts which are internally-driven* happen because of bad domestic problems. One can think of people getting agitated and acting upon this agitation, because they are the losers of modernization, rapid economic development and internationalisation, or have to suffer patterns of economic- or political discrimination. The last combination, of *mass-triggered and externally-driven* conflicts, deals with bad neighbourhoods. Countries can experience (volatile) situations where conflict and violence spreads from one country to another. For example because of refugee flows, the spreading of radicalized ideas within a region or groups of fighters operating in a neighbouring country crossing borders.

It is clear that Brown’s framework depicts the ‘problem side’ side of conflict. It is important to understand how and why conflict can come to occur, which is why this framework is used in this study. Equally important is the problem solving side. This is where we turn to the Brubaker/ Kelley framework.

**The Brubaker/ Kelley framework**

The Brubaker and Kelley framework is a combined theoretical framework of a ‘pas de quatre’ between: a newly emergent nationalising state, an ethno cultural or national minority residing within it, an external national homeland, state of the expatriate national minority, and the international community. It is essentially a framework which identifies the relationship and the interplay between the most important actors involved in minority issues, especially when it comes to explaining how and why certain minority policies are implemented. The framework explains how the different actors are linked by continuous mutual monitoring and inter-action. In dealing with the rights of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia or Romania it is

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19 Ibid., p15.
Added to Brubaker’s framework by Judith Kelley in: Kelley, p2.
hard to, apart from the governments of Slovakia and Romania and the minorities themselves, exclude the role of Hungary and/or the international institutions like the EU or CE.

If either of these actors is excluded in hypothetical talks, they will still try to influence any such process. Moreover, because they will feel there is something at stake for them. For example, both the external homeland and international community may push the nationalising state to protect and grant rights to the minority group(s). A reason for the external homeland is, for example, that it may feel responsible for the well-being of their kin across the border. The nationalising state however might see this as meddling in its internal affairs. This is why security issues and concern for regional stability may push the international community to put pressure on the nationalising state and/or the meddling external homeland. As recent history has shown in former Yugoslavia, minority issues can be a threat to regional stability.

When dealing with minority issues it is the, mostly political and power, dynamics between these four levels that decide in what way minority issues are dealt with, what rights are given or taken away and what laws are passed to protect minorities. Of course, there is an internal dynamics to the actors themselves as well and as such cannot be regarded as fixed entities. The internal dynamics of an actor can influence the interplay between the actors, making relations less predictable and actors less reliable partners in dealing with one another. This means that when, for example, the national state of Romania changes government and a more right-wing national party enters government, a more extreme position could be taken by the state vis-à-vis minorities and minority issues. The shifting nature of this four way relationship is what makes the dynamics between the actors unstable and potentially explosive. This study will mostly use the more simplified view of four actors, except when it

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22 An external homeland that does not show any (political) action towards its kin, however, cannot be called an external homeland. ‘A state becomes an external national homeland for its ethnic Diaspora when political or cultural elites define ethno national kin in other states as members of one and the same nation <…>’ Quoted from: Brubaker (1996), p58.

23 Ibid.
comes to changes on the governmental level of the nation-state actors: the external homeland and the nationalising state, i.e. Hungary, Slovakia and Romania.24

The ‘potential explosiveness’ also lies in the fact that most post-communist countries are, what Brubaker calls, nationalising states. As a reaction to the collapse of the communist system, societies in most CEE countries divided itself along ethnic lines. More nationalistic positions were taken by new political parties, which could count on the support of a majority of its citizens. These nationalising states are, as Brubaker says, ‘ethnically heterogeneous yet conceived as nation-states, whose dominant elites promote (to varying degrees) the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation’.25 The problem of a nationalising state, which has large minority groups within its borders, is that a minority may feel threatened by the policies of the nationalising majority. As a reaction to this perceived threat, a minority may, to varying degrees, organise itself politically and push for a voice within the government of such a nationalising state, try to get external help from an external homeland or international institutions, in order to obtain certain rights, protection or regional autonomy, or strive for outright secession. The discussion of post-communism, the nationalising state and the division of society along ethnic lines will feature in chapter two. Observe, however, the resemblance between Brubaker’s nationalising states and Brown’s concern with exclusive nationalistic ideologies.

By using the two overlapping frameworks together a clearer picture develops on where to look for a potential for conflict or why no conflict has developed. As said earlier, this study will deal with the political and cultural/ perceptual factors of conflict. Brown tells us to look at discriminatory political institutions, exclusionary national ideologies, inter-group politics, elite politics and patterns of cultural discrimination and problematic group histories. He also states that these factors alone are not enough to explain how conflict is triggered and tells us that conflict can be internally- or externally driven and elite- or mass triggered. This in turn reveals the overlap with the Brubaker/ Kelley framework, which identifies the four important actors or levels of analysis when looking at the development or non-development of minority protection. The frameworks therefore tell us where to look for conflict, what might trigger conflict and what actors, and the dynamics and interplay between these actors, should receive close scrutiny.

24 The other two actors are fairly consistent in the position they take, as will be seen in chapter 3.
1.2 Terms and definitions

Introduction

Before going into post-communism and the nationalising state, and the history of Hungarians across borders and how they came to be minorities, an account will be given on a selection of definitions used. The first part on ethnicity and ethnic groups deals with the discussion on what exactly ethnicity is and when one can speak of a group or ethnic group and how ‘real’ one can regard such a group to be. The second part on ethnicisation and ethnic group representation deals with the dynamic and processual character of forming groups, how strong or weak a group feels and how a group is represented and by whom. The last part deals with the terms ethnic conflict and violence, and discusses the question of when conflict and violence can said to be ethnic.

Ethnicity and ethnic groups

Ethnicity [(eth-nis-uh-tee)]

Identity with or membership in a particular racial, national, or cultural group and observance of that group's customs, beliefs, and language

Ethnicity is a highly ambiguous term and as a result a vast amount of literature is available on ethnicity and ethnic conflict. Many different positions around these terms exist, resulting from questions like: What is ethnicity? Are ethnic groups closed and firmly bounded, or more loose entities? Are ethnic groups socially constructed or are they real, bounded groups based on deep-seated historic affiliations? Do ethnic group boundaries change or are they fixed?

These questions are in part the questions that have fuelled the long-standing debate between primordialists and instrumentalists. This debate, in short, is about the nature of ethnic groups. The difference of approach is between those who, in the words of the James B. Duke Professor of Law and Political Science at Duke University, Donald L. Horowitz, see ethnic groups as firmly bounded, durable communities inclined toward ethnocentrism, hostility to outsiders, and passionate conflict, and those who see them as social constructs, with a solidarity based on material rewards and conflict behaviour based on calculation. It is helpful to explain the different positions in the literature on ethnicity in terms of, and on a scale between ‘weak or soft’ and ‘strong or hard’ positions. A hard or soft position can be taken in the sense that the first sees ethnic affiliations as made of stone (primordialist), while

26 Quoted from and available at: http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ethnicity
27 An excellent introduction to these questions and debates can be found in: Horowitz (1998).
the second sees them as made of putty (instrumental). Different positions are taken between these ideal types.

In line with Brubaker, I do not wish to take a stance in this debate, but rather look at ethnicity and ethnic groups in contextual, processual and dynamic terms in the sense that, depending on the context in which ethnicity and ethnic cleavages come to the fore, a weak or strong *ethnicisation* of a group exists. With ethnicisation here is meant in how much an ethnic way of seeing things is employed; in other words, the degree of how ethnic one can perceive certain events, issues or even groups to be. The question always remains if a certain event or issue is ethnic at all; this observation will be discussed in more detail below.

Whether ethnicity and the ethnic group are socially constructed or not, whether it is based on rational calculation and material rewards rather than emotions, they exist in the minds of people and can be politically used or emerge as such. This means that groups and their assigned characteristics and sense of boundaries can be strong or weak, depending on the context and the issue at hand. The strong sense of boundedness, commonness, connectedness, groupness and identity can emerge or be used during some events and not at all during others.

One important thing should be pointed out. It is very human to categorize to make sense of the social world. Individuals as such are assigned, assign themselves and others to a certain category and will feel they belong to that category. An individual can have a nationality, a certain social status, can be a musician, banker, female or a child. However, there is a major difference between the categories ethnic groups and, for instance, interest groups: a nationality or ethnic group identity is assigned to a person at birth. The consequence of this is that, when a strong ethnicisation exists, individuals belonging to that ethnic category will be treated according to this ethnic identity, whether they want to or not.

In this study the Hungarians, as minority groups in Romania and Slovakia will be regarded as entities with a strong sense of groupness and identity. Evidence for this exists for instance in the fact that these minority groups are represented by ethnic political parties and patterns of ethnic voting exist in these countries (*see Annexes, tables 4 and 6*). However, some ambiguity remains in regard to the boundaries of such a group. One needs to be careful in talking about the Hungarians, the Romanians or the Slovaks, as a group or a real entity when talking about certain events. As pointed out earlier an individual can be treated as a Hungarian even when this person does not want to. This study will view the minority group as

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31 The terms ethnicity and nationality, ethnic group and national group or nation, ethnicisation and nationalising will be used interchangeably in this study.
a bounded entity; however, the concern here is with generalization of characteristics assigned to an individual simply because he or she is part of any group.

**Ethnicisation and ethnic group representation**

In this section we turn to the question of ethnicisation and elite representation of the ethnic minority group. The aim here is to go into the question why certain events or processes are *ethnicised* or become *ethnic* and to give some theoretical feel on the importance of domestic/minority elites in this process of *ethnicisation*. The essential thing to understand is that not all *ethnic* issues or events are ethnic from the start, but can be perceived or framed as such; as the next section will show: ethnicisation or over-ethnicisation of conflict and violence is also possible.

Having an ethnic identity does not mean it immediately becomes important in the everyday life of politics as politics in many countries shows and will continue to show. It becomes more important if a person belonging to such an ethnic group and the group as a whole feels threatened, physically or culturally, and is able to organize itself to counter this threat. A group can also be mobilized by political entrepreneurs or an elite who utilize and strengthen the groupness, commonness and boundedness of an ethnic category to bind them to their cause and mobilize the group into conflictual (or peaceful) behaviour; and, rightly or not, claim to speak for the group as a whole. Both examples given here correspond with the possibilities of conflict to be either mass- or elite-triggered and with the importance of elite politics.

As is pointed out by Joseph Rothschild, there are also examples of ethnic groups who have not been mobilized, because there is no elite or the potential elite is assimilated by the majority group. Such examples are the Belarusians of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Slovaks of Habsburg Hungary, or the Amerindian populations of several Latin American countries.\(^{32}\) As a result, these people *simply remained peasant sharers of their primordial languages and customs*.\(^{33}\) The importance of elites and leaders who mobilise this ethnicity (or majority nationality for that matter) should therefore not be disregarded to easily. Especially, because the analysis of post-communist society and politics is of a necessity top-down and elite-driven, as will be shown in chapter two.

The process of mobilisation, explaining events, politics and society in ethnic terms is that which can be called ethnicisation or the politicization of ethnicity. Instead of mobilising

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33 Ibid.
people around categories like liberalism, socialism, conservatism, an ethnic way of seeing things is employed. Many explanations exist as to why a society within a state divides itself along ethnic lines. As will be shown, the ethnicisation of society in both Romania and Slovakia is a result of post-communist nationalisation of the state, which will be elaborated upon in chapter two.

**Ethnic conflict and ethnic violence**

*Conflict is a struggle in which the aim is to gain objectives and simultaneously to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals.*

*Conflict is a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns.*

There are a lot of definitions of conflict ranging from broad descriptions to very narrowly defined ones. In this study the word conflict is used in a very broad sense. The two definitions given above seek to point out that conflict encompasses both action and in-action. Conflict is always over something and between at least two parties, and can exist as tension with a possibility of developing into something as serious as violence. The assumption here is that not all tension leads to violence, however all violence results from tension. The major concern to this study is to identify areas of tension, not with explaining why and when certain events turn violent.

Many different types of conflict exist and as such many different types of ethnic conflict exist. One can think of criminal assaults on state sovereignty and raw power struggles to control the state or of civil war where one ethnic group is pitted against the other to achieve a goal like secession. Other examples are conflicts within a government between ethnic parties over certain cultural rights like the usage of a minority language in official dealings with the state, ethnic riots, where persons of the ‘other ethnic group’ are systematically targeted, discrimination of ethnic groups or persons in the sense that they are treated differently in every day life; one can also even think ‘just’ of insults. Conflict can thus turn violent on a large or a small scale or be fought in the political arena with words, boycotts or legal action, or exist on a micro level in every day dealings of one person to another.

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36 For an excellent detailed account on why and when ethnic conflict can turn violent and what can make ethnic conflict particularly violent see:
Horowitz (2001).
Horowitz (2000).
Many variations of conflict and violence thus exist. However, what makes a conflict ethnic? This depends largely on what the conflict is about. A conflict over ethnic discrimination, the use cultural symbols or language, over representation or autonomy are easily identifiable as *ethnic* conflict. Conflicts like this are more present in ethnicised and ethnically divided societies. However, not all conflict or conflictual events in societies like these thereafter need to be explained as *ethnic*.

Brubaker rightly points out that conflict and violence can be framed, coded or labelled as *ethnic* through the meanings attributed to it by the perpetrators, victims, politicians, officials, journalists, researchers, relief workers and others. Participants in ethnic conflict do regularly represent an ethnic group. However, the problem of labelling, framing or coding a certain conflict as *ethnic* is that people belonging to an ethnic group and who have nothing to do with a particular issue and/or do not want to be involved, are being sucked in to such a conflict, precisely because they *do* belong to that group.

The lesson taken from the account on conflict given above, and of importance to this study too, is to be concerned with an over-ethnicisation or over-ethnic way of interpreting certain conflicts or events. One should be very critical of what one sees. As Brubaker tell us: *Not every ethnic conflict is a conflict between ethnic groups, just as racial or racially framed conflicts need not be understood as conflict between races, or nationally framed conflict as conflict between nations.*

**Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with the theoretical side of conflict and ethnic conflict, to give more background information and clarification on the terms used. In the first section two frameworks have been put forward and explained, which will be used, as one tool, throughout the analysis in the following chapters. The Brown framework explains in broad terms what the causes are for internal conflict and where to look. The Brubaker/Kelley framework adds to this by telling us which actors we should look at and which actors are most important in containing or worsening conflict. The second section of this chapter has dealt with some important definitions and concepts, explaining in greater detail some of the ambiguities, discussions and debates involved.

Some assumptions and implications result from this chapter which will be summed up. It has been put forward that the four actors in the Brubaker/Kelley framework do have

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38 Ibid., p10.
internal dynamics of their own, which might change their behaviour. However, when it comes to minority groups, this study will view them as fixed entities, meaning this study will speak of the Hungarians, clearly represented by an elite. The internal dynamics of the nation-state actor, or government dominated by the majority national group, however, will be taken into account.

Concerning ethnicity, ethnic groups and ethnicisation: they will be looked in contextual, processual and dynamic terms in the sense that, depending on the context in which ethnicity and ethnic cleavages come to the fore, a weak or strong ethnicisation of a group exists. It also has been pointed out in the second section of this chapter, that individuals are not always part of a group out of their free will and ethnicity is not always the right category to explain certain events or issues. One should therefore be careful to use an ethnic way of seeing things too readily.

The major concern to this study is to identify areas of tension, not with explaining why and when certain events turn violent. As was stated earlier: not all tension leads to violence, however all violence results from tension. As to dampening the concern of ethnic tensions and conflict it is assumed that the more a minority can rely on certain rights and protection and a voice in government, the less threatened it may feel, the less space there is for conflict or violence.
2 Post-communism and the nationalising state

Introduction

This chapter will address the history of the Hungarian minorities between 1918 and 1989 and how these numerous ethnic Hungarians came to live outside the borders of their ‘homeland’. It will become clear that Hungarians on the one hand and Slovaks and Romanians on the other share a history of enmity from which grievances and unfriendly perceptions of one another rise. These perceptions still play a considerable role in today’s politics.

Another subject featuring in this chapter is the change of the political landscape in the CEE countries in post-communist times. The former CEE communist countries left the Soviet-Union between 1989 and 1991, and went through processes of democratisation and nationalising of the state; both processes have had profound consequences for minorities in general and the Hungarians in the Slovak and Romanian states in particular. The last section will discuss the international, and more specifically European, development of minority rights after 1990 as these rights became more and more important and became a subject of high politics in the international and European political arena.

Hungary and Hungarian minorities: a short history till 1989

The age-old Kingdom of Hungary became a part of the Dual Monarchy of Austria–Hungary, which was founded after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. This Compromise resulted in two realms governed separately by two parliaments from two capitals, with a common monarch and common external and military policies. After the Compromise the Hungarian parliament was quick to implement a policy of Magyarisation (or Hungarianisation), an active assimilation policy which was designed to impose the dominance of the Hungarian culture and language on the other ethnic groups present in the Hungarian part of the dual Monarchy. This meant for instance the use of Hungarian as the only language in administration and politics or the closing down of schools where other languages were used, thus preventing children from learning the language of their parents in these schools.

The defeat of Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I (WWI) meant the collapse and dismantling of the latter’s great empire.\(^{39}\) Part of this dismantling meant that Hungarian army had to disarm, a demand that was answered by the Hungarians. In the immediate aftermath the then independent Romania, Serbia and the newly found state of Czechoslovakia seized the opportunity to attack the undefended Hungary and annexed some

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\(^{39}\) As allies to Germany and Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria also suffered defeat.
of the Hungarian land.\footnote{The Czech lands were part of Austria before the founding of the dual monarchy. Until 1918 Slovakia has always been referred to as upper-Hungary. Grievances of ethnic Slovaks are therefore directed mostly against Hungarians.} The allies did not object – French generals even lead the Romanian troops.\footnote{László Marácz, Hongaarse kentering, Een politieke beschouwing over Midden-Europa, Nieuwegein, 1995, p126.} The Hungarian communists seized on the opportunity of the existing power vacuum and proclaimed a Hungarian Soviet Republic. They quickly formed a Hungarian Red Army and tried to drive the Romanian and Czech armies back. After some initial success in regaining a part of annexed land the Hungarian Red army was finally driven back. Eventually, a peace agreement was signed between Hungary and the Allied Forces in 1920. Hungary however did not really have a say in the negotiations and had to accept this Treaty of Trianon which left it to see the borders of its former territory reduced and redrawn: it lost 72% of its territory.\footnote{Original text Trianon Treaty see: http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Trianon} Another of the major consequences of the treaty was, even though large parts of the former Hungarian territory were not inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, that numerous Hungarians, nearly one third of the total, found themselves to be minorities outside their former homeland (see Annexes, maps 4, 5, 6 and 7).

The consequences of this harsh peace agreement are still felt in Hungarian society today and referred to as the Trauma of Trianon; one political party, the ultra-right Jobbik party which won 17% of the votes in the 2010 general elections, still has the revision of Trianon as a political goal. Besides damaging national pride, the economic consequences and losing one third of its national population (thus severely disrupting family ties), Hungary also found itself geographically defenceless, as the former natural borders consisting of rivers and mountains were lost too. Hungary tried to have Trianon revised on the basis of the principle of self-determination, a principle strongly advocated for by the president of the United States of America (USA) Woodrow Wilson, but this fell on deaf ears.

The treatment of the then-minority Hungarians in the inter-war period remains subject to controversy.\footnote{The controversy stems from lack of resources and the problem of dubious or non-accurate censuses.} Although the peacemakers of the allied powers, most notably president Wilson, sought to ensure national minority protection, it was clear that the Hungarians in both Czechoslovakia and Romania suffered from assimilationist policies in turn.\footnote{See for instance: Edwin Bakker, Minority Conflicts in Slovakia and Hungary?, Capelle a/d IJssel 1997, p38.} This meant for example the implementation of land reforms, transferring ‘Hungarian’ land from the former
Hungarian landowners to the local Slovak and Romanian peasantry, the banishment of the Hungarian language in official life, and the changing of Hungarian place names into Slovak and Romanian respectively.

As an early party to the axis powers of WWII, Hungary saw some of its former territory restored. Between 1938 and 1941 it regained Northern Transylvania from Romania and a large part of the southern Czechoslovak lands.\(^{45}\) The restoration of these parts to Hungary and with it the return of ethnic Hungarians to Hungary proper, however, was short lived. As WWII went on, Hungary became occupied in 1944 by the Soviet-Union. The signing of the Paris Peace treaties in 1947 meant that Hungary lost all the territories it had gained and the pre-1938 borders were restored, thus creating a ‘second Trianon Trauma’. The political power realities of the post WWII world saw Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Romania amongst others become part of the Communist system of states in Eastern Europe, de-facto becoming satellite states under Soviet Russian rule. This situation continued to be until the collapse of the Soviet-Union between 1989 and 1991.

As has been put forward in the introduction, the fate of the minorities is somewhat concealed by the realities of the Cold War period. The communist ideology did not allow for an ethnic divide in society.\(^{46}\) The communists regarded the socio-economic class divide as the most important divisive line, and treated the issues of minorities accordingly. Members of minority groups were seen as equal citizens like any other. Except for the class enemies, every one was considered to be a part of a homogenous entity, where every one was equal and shared the same goals and interests.\(^{47}\) Discrimination was put to a stop; however, taking into account the past, the relations between Hungary, the ethnic Hungarians and the Romanian and Czechoslovak governments remained strained. The treatment of minorities continued to be a topic of controversy, and assimilation policies in Romania and Czechoslovakia were resumed during the Cold War period.\(^{48}\) The politicisation of ethnic problems in both countries gained momentum and increased again only after the collapse of the Soviet-Union.

The implementation of assimilation policies on all sides, depending on who was in power, have not helped and in fact aggravated the grievances between the ethnic Hungarian groups and the Romanian and Slovak national groups. After the collapse of the Soviet-Union,

\(^{45}\) Romania, an axis power too, was forced by Germany to cede Northern Transylvania to Hungary, to which it complied.

\(^{46}\) The Soviets were, however, actively involved in the ethnic division of its empire, as long as it served the stability of the empire. The territorial ethnic division only concerned the Soviet Union, not the Soviet satellite states in CEE. See also note of 1 of this study.

\(^{47}\) Bakker, p50.

\(^{48}\) Bakker, p39- 40 and p50.
these historic hostile perceptions came to the fore once more, as this contributed to the political split along ethnic lines in both countries. The existing ethnic division became even more visible and ‘a thing of politics’ with the democratisation and nationalising of both the Romanian and Slovak state.

**Post-communist democratisation**

The collapse of the Soviet-Union after a series of revolutions in the CEE countries between 1989 and 1990, was complete on December 31st 1991, when all official Soviet institutions had ceased operations and the individual republics assumed the central government’s role. For both Slovakia and Romania this meant a complete reorientation in political, geographical, economic and social areas, both domestically and internationally. This revolution period in most CEE countries was characterized by a mobilisation against and a rejection of communism, the communist party and the communist system. The embracement of democratic aspirations resulted in a transition from a communist one-party system to a multi-party parliamentary democracy.

The post-communist countries had a completely different starting point for democratisation compared to the older Western democracies, which had known a gradual evolution of the democratic system. Post-communist democratisation was sudden and started in a very different context from which it was to be built up. It inherited a political landscape which had known just one party that stood above the law instead of the other way around, was highly centralised, had known no real, active and critical civil society and had a clientele based power, which resulted in a top-down controlled society. The control of local government by the centre meant that no mechanism for popular, bottom-up political input existed, which effectively prevented new political actors to join central government.

The new form of representation set in motion the formation of new parties as elections, and therefore votes and voters, became the new key to political power. The top-down organisation of society and the inheritance of the communist institutions as a starting point for democratisation meant that party formation was done by existing elite actors, as they were the only ones with enough political and institutional experience to be able to take the post-communist societies through this transition. Leadership was thus provided by reformist communists, dissidents, religious leaders and military leaders. Other leaders, who were quite

49 Civil society initiatives were prohibited. There was no free press or freedom of association; censorship was strict; existing civil society groups were controlled and monitored by the state. Thus no real experience with bottom-up social activism existed for the masses. See: Zoltan Barany, Robert G. Moser, ed., *Ethnic politics after communism*, New York, 2005, p109.

successful in gaining a place in the new democratic system and could count on a loyal base of support and votes, were the leaders of the organised ethnic minorities.\textsuperscript{51}

A wide variety of parties developed and entered the political scene. According to Frances Millard, Professor in the Department of Government at the University of Essex, new parties formed broadly along three lines: ideological parties, electoral parties and populist parties.\textsuperscript{52} The first set of parties aims to represent a specific niche in the pool of voters, swaying voters to vote for them on the basis of a certain ideology or group identity. Examples are liberal, social, Christian-democrat, peasant or communist successor parties. Ethnic parties are also counted amongst these parties as they too represent and try to command a specific set of votes. The second set of parties is characterized as catch-all and office seeking, as they try to maximize their vote on the basis of a more ambiguous, ideologically weak programme. Examples of these kinds of parties are the Democrat or Republican parties in the USA, who represent large parts of the population. The third set of parties, the populist or leader parties, usually emerge as a result of the disillusionment with current parties, and use a specific rhetoric to gain the trust of the voter.\textsuperscript{53} As will be seen, in both Slovakia and Romania these populist parties were quite successful in the beginning of the post-communist democratisation period.

The first elections were mainly anti-communist in character as voters mostly voted against the communist successor parties and for the opposition parties; and although voters had a negative association with the word ‘party’, the turn-out was usually high.\textsuperscript{54} The first decade of Eastern European democratisation saw many parties come and go, split and merge; usually showing the same faces, the same politicians, however new people did enter the political arena and join the elite. As parties developed, they gained a clearer identity and could boast a certain history; they could also gain and rely more and more on the trust of voters, who knew what they would be voting for.\textsuperscript{55} Where most parties had a difficult time establishing themselves as credible parties and rely on a stable set of votes, the Christian-

\textsuperscript{51} The size and concentration of this minority group is important, as are the provisions for representation, a high degree of ethnic consciousness and leaders available to represent the ethnic vote (for more on this argument see Stephen van Evera, \textit{Hypotheses on Nationalism and War}, in Brown, p26).

In the CEE countries, most notably the Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania, and the Turks in Bulgaria were able to organize this way.

\textsuperscript{52} Millard, p48.

\textsuperscript{53} Millard, ch3, p48; A kind of ‘Trust me’-politics is employed by leaders of these parties, where the usually charismatic leader, promises to tackle issues by saying for example: Trust me I will deal with the Hungarians; or: I will deal with the economy, reduce inflation, create jobs. I’m not like the other, you can trust me.

\textsuperscript{54} Millard, ch3, p100.

\textsuperscript{55} Millard, p134. Millard strikingly calls the phenomenon of the endless splitting and merging of parties until a clear identity developed to which the leaders and their voters stuck: \textit{party tourism}. 

Page | 25
democratic and ethnic parties had no difficulty and were indeed quite successful in commanding a stable vote.\textsuperscript{56}

Overall it can be said that there was a consensus among the ruling elite, including the minority elites, to take the post-communist regime change in the direction ‘back to Europe’. The most important concerns for the new governments therefore lay with fulfilling a dual transition of society, meaning a simultaneous change of the economic and political system, and state-building.\textsuperscript{57} This move ‘back to Europe’ also entailed the granting of extensive rights to minorities as was required by the international organisations like the CE, OSCE, NATO and the EU. The democratisation thus also provided and had to provide ethnic minorities with the means to create parties. All of these processes entailed trial and error, with voters punishing some parties and leaving others in power and making the parties themselves learn to trust one another as credible partners in coalitions.

One striking characteristic of this period is, what Brubaker has called, the nationalisation of the state. This nationalisation of the state conflicted with the democratisation and supranational integration or Europeanisation goals of the elites. The hand that was responsible for giving minorities more rights was the same as the one taking them away in order to protect the core nation or majority culture. Thus practice on paper and in reality conflicted somewhat. These conflicting processes of supranational integration and nationalisation of the state are what we turn in the next section.

\textbf{Nationalising states}

‘A state of and for a particular ethno cultural ‘core nation’ whose language, culture, demographic position, economic welfare, and political hegemony must be protected and promoted by the state’\textsuperscript{58}

It should be clear that each CEE country made a clear break with the old communist system and, for the first time since WWII, gained complete control again over their ‘own nation-states’, handing the national elites the power of central government. Apart from the general consensus of moving ‘back to Europe’, and the dual transition, a state-building process developed, which was nationalising in character.

\textsuperscript{56} Millard, p108. 
\textsuperscript{57} Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland forged a cooperation agreement in the city of Visegrad, in order to help each other to ‘return to Europe’. The Visegrad Declaration thus set out the following objectives: to restore the sovereignty of the states, to do away with the vestiges of totalitarianism, to establish parliamentary democracies, to create modern market economies, and to achieve full participation in the European political, security, economic and legal system. Available at: \url{http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=940} 
\textsuperscript{58} Brubaker (1996), p 103.
Brubaker identifies these states as nationalising states instead of nation-states to emphasize the fact that these states are yet ‘incomplete’ and ‘unfinished’. As key elements Brubaker identifies that there has to be a sense of ‘ownership’ of the state by the core ethno cultural nation (exclusive of the minorities), which is distinct from the citizenry as a whole (including the minorities), and a ‘compensatory’ project of using state power to promote the core nation’s specific interests, which have not been served before.  

These elements both presented itself in post-communist Romania and Slovakia as national elites were very much concerned with creating and maintaining a unitary nation-state. Both states very clearly identify themselves with an ethno cultural core nation and actively promote this, as chapter three will show in more detail. One example, however, to illustrate this point is the way in which both countries have included the ‘ownership of the nation’ in their newly found constitutions. The Romanian constitution of 1990 states very clearly that: ‘National sovereignty resides with the Romanian people, who shall exercise it through its representative bodies and by referendum’ (Title 1, article 2). The opening sentence of the Slovak constitution of 1993 starts with ‘We the Slovak nation...(having struggled) for our national existence and our own statehood...’. This view is enhanced by declaring Slovak as the sole state language (article 6).

Most minorities in the CEE countries were granted or already possessed citizenship and had access to representation in government. The promotion of the core nation however was of concern to the minorities. Most notably the bigger minority groups, like the Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania, were therefore quick to politically organise themselves around their ethnic identity, creating minority ethno parties. Simultaneously, and as a direct result of this nationalising character of the state, majority nationalistic parties, alongside the ideological parties as described above, were founded and met with considerable success. The relationship between these two antagonistic party types, as both parties promote and/ or defend a different culture within the same state, can be described as a dialectical one: perceptions of threat often generated a spiral of mutual fear and anxiety.

This in turn, to go back to the Brubaker/ Kelley framework, was worsened by the actions of the external homeland Hungary, who agitated the Slovak and Romanian governments which the latter two saw as meddling in internal affairs and a breach of the

59 Ibid. p103-104.
60 Available at: http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?id=371
62 Millard, p234.

The context in which these parties operate is important. Perceptions of understanding and trust would result in a reverse situation.
principle of sovereignty; the greatest concern being a possible secession of the ‘Hungarian’ part of their states, even though Hungary repeatedly declared it respects the existing borders and values friendly relations with its neighbours. The other actor in the framework, the international (European) institutions, have simultaneously taken on and influenced national politics by taking a strong position to promote minority rights, which it justified mainly as a lesson from the war in Yugoslavia.

This is where we come back to the paradox of the supranational state versus the nationalising state, which was mentioned earlier. The paradox here is that both processes have taken Romania and Slovakia in two opposing directions. On the one hand both countries have been trying to create a unitary nation-state and on the other hand, under pressure of complying to certain standards needed for integration with the international institutions, recognizing and putting into place measures of protection for the minorities within their borders, thus effectively creating multinational states.

The international dimension: minority rights in the 1990s

After WWI the predecessor of the United Nations (UN), the League of Nations, was very much concerned with minority rights and minority protection. However, this never made much practical difference; minorities continued to be under threat of assimilation policies, as the account above for example has shown. After WWII it was the UN, who took up the task of creating human rights law and developing the rights of people of minority groups.

Conflicts in former Soviet-Union republics and satellite states and especially the war in Yugoslavia, laid bare the concern with regional political stability, human rights and refugee flows, which put minority rights and protection back to the top of the international agenda. The supranational institutions like the EU, OSCE and the CE began to develop and use international policy instruments, instruments of soft diplomacy.

The CE thus drew up the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML) in 1992, which has as its main goal the protection and promotion of the historical

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And in the:

64 For a more elaborate discussion on models of state, e.g. civic states, bi- or multinational states, hybrid states, see: Brubaker (1996), p105.

65 The League of Nations did not provide for credible mechanisms to punish countries that did not comply to minority rights and minority protection
regional and minority languages in Europe. The 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) was another convention created by the CE, which aims at making its signatories respect the rights of national minorities, undertaking to combat discrimination, promote equality, preserve and develop the culture and identity of national minorities, guarantee certain freedoms in relation to access to the media, minority languages and education and encourage the participation of national minorities in public life.

The EU started using minority rights as one of the central conditionality criteria in the 1993 Copenhagen criteria for EU-accession, which had to be fulfilled in order to be able to obtain membership. The OSCE created an actual and effective office to deal with minority issues, namely the OSCE office of the High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM). The HCNM took up the task of signalling possible ethnic conflict and trying to ease tensions between minorities and majority governments by acting as a go-between and use behind-the-scenes diplomacy. The HCNM was effective as he was backed by the real power of the OSCE.

The problem of these organisations developing strategies to deal with minority issues simultaneously was that they all set specific standards which could conflict, they had to develop new tools and used slightly different terminology; a certain ad hocery was thus visible, which was highly confusing to the CEE states joining these organisations and perhaps gave room for not acting or stalling on implementing them. As the concepts of minority rights and minority protection developed in the fora of these organisations, so too did the division of roles played by each of the institutions. They tried to work together more and more, with the EU currently taking the lead, in order to create the same standards, which was also meant that less confusing standards had to be complied to by the CEE states. The international and European institutions have thus created powerful policy instruments to influence national actors’ behaviour. Putting down norms and using incentives has been an effective tool to make states comply with certain standards of minority protection.

The policy instruments mentioned have different ways of influencing the behaviour of national and state actors. To put it broadly one can assert influence through positive or negative incentives or a combination of both. The most important incentive used is membership conditionality, which makes candidate member states comply with certain conditions before being admitted into the supranational institutions mentioned. A positive

66 See: http://www.coe.int/aboutCoe/default.asp for goals and mission objectives.
67 Ibid.
68 See note 5.
incentive is used here (you get something if you comply), but can turn negative if one does not or cannot comply and will not receive the reward, or indeed might be punished. Another form of conditionality used is aid conditionality, promising different forms of aid in exchange for fulfilling certain conditions. An example of negative incentives involving punishment is the use of sanctions. Another, more neutral but effective tool is monitoring and the writing of regular reports, a policy tool used frequently by the EC since 1998. These public reports serve as a tool to measure behaviour over-time and have the power of rewarding or punishing through influencing reputation, in other words on how a country is perceived by others, and how one country compares to another.69

International institutions have not taken on all ethnic issues, and the effectiveness of the tools used is disputed.70 Mainly, because, as mentioned earlier, there is no universal agreement yet on how to deal with minority issues, if there is a universal approach at all; the institutions have shown inconsistency, are criticized for being vague on the definitions used (e.g. what is a minority). What is sure, however, is that the behaviour of states has been influenced, as the case studies below will show. By putting minority protection high on the international agenda, it was made sure that it was to be taken seriously. So too for the CEE countries who wanted to integrate with the Western institutions and wanted to ‘move back to Europe’.

Conclusion
This chapter has dealt with the history of the Hungarian minorities and how they came to be minorities in present day Slovakia and Romania. The history of enmity between Slovakia and Romania on the one hand and Hungary on the other has been revealed and explained. After that two important processes have been described: 1) the unique post-communist democratisation which was very distinct from, for instance, western democratisation, and made possible for ethnic and nationalistic parties to appear on the political scene, with considerable success; not in the least because of 2) the process of the nationalisation of the state, which made national and cultural symbols important ‘things of politics’ and helped antagonise majority and minority groups. Both processes will feature in more detail in the case studies below. The last topic dealt with in this chapter was the rise of minority protection on the international political agenda, which was to influence the countries that wanted to

69 For an elaborate discussion of normative pressure and conditionality see for example: Kelley (2004); or Will Kymlicka, National Minorities in Post-communist Europe: The Role of International Norms and European Integration, in Bardany, ch7, p191-217.
70 Ibid.
integrate with these institutions and showed the paradox of supranational integration versus the nationalising state, of minority rights versus the promotion of the core nation.

It has to be clear that several processes and powers are involved in the development of possible ethnic conflict and minority protection. Corresponding with the frameworks described in chapter one, the position and interests of the four actors have been mapped out, just as the role of the political and cultural/perceptual factors. The next chapter will go into more detail and give an account of how the protection of minorities and development or containment of ethnic conflict has worked in Slovakia and Romania, and how it might still be of concern today.
3 The case studies: Slovakia and Romania

Introduction

This chapter features the two case studies of Slovakia and Romania, in which the theories, definitions, processes and history as outlined in the previous chapters will, one way or another, implicitly or explicitly, be brought together. The general concern lies with ethnic conflict in these countries and the question if there should be any worry about a major outbreak of ethnic conflict and/or violence. In line with the main question and the theoretical frameworks presented, the focus will lie on the role of the four actors mentioned concerning minority issues, whereby the political factors and cultural/perceptual factors will receive the closest scrutiny. For both Slovakia and Romania this means that four topics will be dealt with: 1) national politics and ethnic representation, 2) cultural, language and education issues, 3) external pressure and relevant international issues concerning the cases, which will mostly entail issues relating to and pressure from the external actors Hungary, the EU, CE and the OSCE; and where this was the case 4) accounts of actual outbreaks of conflict or violence in everyday life. These topics will be dealt with in a chronological fashion, whereby the issue or event will be named in the general chronological context and explained in greater detail immediately after that, thus moving from issue to issue and event to event.

The general historic situation and the general post-communist situation and democratising and nationalising processes have been explained in the previous chapter; however, before going into the four topics, a short country specific pre-1989 account for both states will be given.

3.1 Slovakia

The Slovak nation: a short history

‘We have been dominated by other people for 1,500 years,’ ‘We are discovering our identity, where we came from. It was prohibited under (communist) Czechoslovakia.’ ‘All Slovaks are responsible for our small country; we need to time to learn to manage our state.’ - Jan Gábor, Director at the Directorate General for European Affairs

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71 Quoted in: Slovaks still trying
The Washington Times, August 1, 1996.
Mr. Gábor then served as a director-general, dealing with minority affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1993-1997).
Slovak nationalism was given teeth for the first time during the Slovak uprising against the Hungarian rulers in 1848, which resulted in the creation of the Slovak National Council and the Slovak secession from the Hungarian Kingdom in that same year; this however lasted only fourteen months, as the Slovak lands were retaken and again incorporated in the Austria-Hungary dual Monarchy. Following WWI and the dissolution of Austria-Hungary the Slovaks formed a union with their Slavic neighbours, the Czechs, to form Czechoslovakia. The creation of Czechoslovakia was approved by the Allies as they saw the new medium sized state as a geostrategic counterbalance force in Central Europe, countering Austria, Hungary and Germany. This union, however, was not a wholly uncontroversial as the numerically dominant Czechs had initiated the union; as the lead nation the Czechs did not give the Slovaks the autonomy requested upon signing the union documents. The interwar period was thus characterized by growing discontent among the Slovaks towards the Czechs, as the Slovaks felt the need for more autonomy. With the rise of Nazi Germany the Slovak situation changed again.

From 1939 until 1945 the Slovaks once more enjoyed some autonomy as a German satellite state, after the signing of the Munich Agreement. After WWII, however, the Czechoslovak state was restored as the Munich Agreement was nullified by the Allied powers. In 1948 the re-established Czechoslovakian state became a communist state dominated by Soviet Russia, when the Czechoslovakian communists took power. In 1969 the country formally split into a federation of the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic. After the ‘velvet-revolution’, the peaceful collapse of communist rule and the breaking away from the Soviet-Russian influence in 1989, Czechoslovakia became a free country once more. Following the 1992 elections, severe disagreements between Czechs and

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72 For more on the history of Slovakia, see for example R.R. Palmer, Joel Colton, Lloyd Kramer, A history of the modern world, Boston, 2007.

73 The search for Slovak autonomy or a Slovak nation-state is an interesting case in itself. Having always been ruled or dominated by other ethnic majorities explains in some ways the nationalism present day Slovakia. See for instance: Naoki Kousaka, The Status of Slovakia in the Inter-War Czechoslovak Republic, Human Affairs, v10, 11, p76–86, 2000; or: Alois R. Nykl, Czechoslovakia or Czecho-Slovakia?, Slavonic and East European Review. American Series, v3, no.4, p99-110, 1944.

In the declaration of the Czechoslovakian state, the Czech initiator and first president of the new state Tomáš Masaryk said:

‘We claim the right of Bohemia to be reunited with her Slovak brethren of Slovakia, once a part of our national State, later torn from our national body, and fifty years ago incorporated in the Hungarian State of the Magyars, who, by their unspeakable violence and ruthless oppression of their subject races, have lost all moral and human right to rule anybody but themselves.’

Taken from and available at: [http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/czechstate_declaration.htm](http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/czechstate_declaration.htm)

74 This Pact was signed by Britain, France, Germany and Italy, and was designed to appease German expansionism. Germany gained Sudetenland, which they had occupied before the Munich talks started. As another consequence, Czechoslovakia was split in two, becoming Bohemia-Morovia and Slovakia.
Slovaks over economic issues eventually led to a split of the Czech and Slovak parts of the federation into two separate successor-states. On the 1st of January 1993, after the ‘velvet-divorce’, a fully independent Slovak state came into existence.

The first steps toward a new nation-state
After the ‘velvet-revolution’, new parties formed in Czechoslovakia to compete in the free elections of 1990. Four ethnic Hungarian parties (see annexes, table 4) formed to represent the interests of Hungarians, although the largest of these four parties, Coexistence, at first aimed at representing all minorities. These parties worked in coalitions, despite their ideological differences, in defence of the prevailing and overarching Hungarian identity. The Hungarian parties continued to represent the Hungarian minority after the creation of the independent Slovak state and succeeded in mobilising the ethnic vote. The newly created state in fact made the Hungarians more visible as a group, as they used to represent roughly 3% of the overall population in Czechoslovakia and now constituted about 10% of the total population of the new state. The moderating influence of the Czech parties on the rising Slovak nationalism disappeared after the Czechoslovak split, which made the reasons for the Hungarians to stick together even more important.

Slovak nationalist rhetoric was already visible in post-communist Czechoslovak politics, as an electoral tactic and not in the least because of the dream of breaking away and creating a fully independent Slovak state for the first time in history. This surging nationalism was of concern to the Hungarian minority group as the nationalistic rhetoric created an ‘us-versus-them’ situation, in part to strengthen the identity of the majority group; taking into account the antagonistic history, and being organised as a group, the Hungarians in the newly created state were the most obvious ‘them’ to help form the Slovak feeling of ‘us’. It is not very surprising, however, to see national interests as the focal point of Slovak politics, when one considers that the Slovaks just abandoned communist rule and had never been the majority ethnic group in a state; thus creating the feeling of having a nation-state for themselves which was to be protected, as the various issues in this case will show.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the constitution of the Slovak Republic also called for concern on the part of the ethnic Hungarians and other minority groups. Although the constitution provided for many specific rights for minorities (such as the right to establish educational and cultural institutions, the right to be educated in their mother tongue,

75 For data on the elections and coalitions formed see: http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections/
Coexistence: Együttéles. See also note 217 and 218 for more on the four ethnic Hungarian parties.
76 Kelley, p116.
the right to participate in the solution of matters concerning them), it also stated that ‘the exercise of rights by citizens of a minority....may not threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic or discriminate against other citizens’, thus creating a legal loophole to overrule or restrict certain minority provisions.77

**The Mečiar governments: Difficulties, tensions and international integration**

Vladimir Mečiar, the leader of the biggest Slovak party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), became the main figurehead and prime minister of the Slovak nationalistic governments until 1998, when, as will become clear, the more moderate, but still somewhat nationalist opposition formed a government together with the Hungarian coalition. Mečiar led Slovakia into independence with his minority government. After the 1994 elections a nationalist coalition was formed between HZDS, the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the Slovak Workers’ Front (ZRS); the Hungarian parties stood together in opposition as the Hungarian Coalition (MK).78

The governing style of the Mečiar governments led to a series of controversial decisions and laws and created immediate tension. The main struggle between the central government and the minority parties revolved around political and cultural issues, such as restrictions on the use of minority languages, the right to education in a minority language, the use of cultural symbols and restrictive territorial and administrative reorganisation. A clear pattern developed with the Hungarian political parties calling for more autonomy, self-determination and more far reaching demands on either of these topics as central government tried to restrict them. The antagonising actions on both sides thus created a spiral where perceptions of certain policies or demands called for protection against one another: the Slovak majority acted against the perceived threat of possible secession and the Hungarian minority against assimilation and restriction of cultural expression.79

In 1990 the Slovak National Council passed a law on the Official Language of the Slovak Republic, which put restrictions on the use of minority languages in official dealings. It was permitted to use minority languages in official dealings, when at least 20% of the local population was of that minority group, however, only if all parties involved in a certain public administration affair were of that minority.80 Also, public documents were always to be drafted in the Slovak language. A 20% threshold is quite liberal; however, the Hungarian

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78 HZDS: Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko; SNS: Slovenská národná strana ; ZRS: Združenie robotníkov Slovenska; MK: (Hungarian) Magyar Koalíció, (Slovak) Maďarskej koalície
79 Bakker, p135-136.
80 Bakker, p53.
minority feared territorial and administrative shifts which would lead to local minority populations below 20% of the total. The issue of language and language laws would become a recurring problem and a source of tension as will become clear below.

In local politics Hungarian representatives had successfully organised referenda to the restoration of the historical (Hungarian) names of municipalities, which had been renamed after Slovak heroes following the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia after WWII. Also, local Hungarian representatives started putting up Hungarian language public signs and placing smaller Hungarian place-name signs underneath the Slovak signs. These actions, together with Hungarian demands for lowering the minimum population share for official use of a minority language and the right to education in Hungarian, in turn provoked the nationalist government and the SNS in particular. As a part of the Official Language Law a decree was passed to nullify the local referenda on bilingual signs, and the signs that were already in place, were taken down. The law also required for non-Slovak females to write their surnames in official documents using the Slovak suffix ‘ová’ according to Slovak grammar.

In January 1994 a political Hungarian minority meeting was organised in the Southern Slovak town of Komárno, with some 3,500 Hungarian people present. This meeting was held partly as a reaction to government language policy restrictions and to discuss central government policy proposals concerning administrative and territorial reorganisation of the ‘Hungarian part’ of Slovakia, which were to be in operation by 1996. Tensions flared once more as Slovak leaders warned not to hold this meeting, with president Kováč declaring that: 'Displays of nationalism and intolerance on one side create a nationalist response on the other.’ The meeting was held and the main outcome, drafted as the Komárno Proposal, was a demand for the creation of one to three self-governing provinces in the south of the country.

As stated, these proposals were to counter government plans included in a broader administrative reform that would divide the areas inhabited by ethnic Hungarians along north-south axes, which would reduce Hungarian representation at local and national level. Other issues discussed were matters concerning the cultural and educational infrastructure and the legal status of local self-government. The reaction of the Slovak government and press was harsh as they condemned the demands. Their main problems with the demands were the

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81 Bakker, p75 and p109.
82 A Slovak town near the border with Hungary; 80% of its population are ethnic Hungarians
84 Minority to fight Slovakia plan
85 Bakker, p111.
concern with Slovaks becoming a minority within these self-governing provinces and their fears for outright secession; in the words of President Kováč: ‘Most Slovaks understand this as a first step to declaring an independent region that will later be joined to the Hungarian republic’.  

The rising tensions and failure to accommodate the Hungarian minority became a problem and interfered with the desire of Slovakia to join NATO, EU, OSCE and the CE. The recent outbreak of violence in Yugoslavia created strong demands of these institutions toward the Slovak government in regard of minority rights. Before being admitted to the CE and OSCE in 1993, and because of strong pressure from the Hungarian government, the CE asked the Slovak government to adopt two laws: one was to give the Hungarian minority the right to use bilingual signs; the other was to allow minorities to use their own forms of their names. The Slovak government said it would comply with these conditions and was admitted to the CE and OSCE, before actually adopting the laws. The failure to make the adoption of these laws obligatory and thus use just normative pressure instead of conditionality, gave the Slovak government the opportunity to stall on actually passing these laws. Despite critical reports and visits from CE officials and the OSCE HCNM the Slovak government did not comply on the promised policy changes.

The paradox revealed in chapter two - between supranationalisation or ‘moving towards Europe’ and nationalisation of the state - showed as the Slovak government toned down somewhat so as not to displease the West, in particular the EU and NATO to which Slovakia still was no party. The EU considered the events in Slovakia to be jeopardising its EU membership ambitions and said it could change or terminate the support and cooperation programmes involved in the association agreements. The signing of the Hungarian-Slovak Basic Treaty is the main example of the Slovak government mitigating and responding to

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86 *Ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia Are Demanding Self-Government*  

87 Kelley, p123.

88 Hungary was already admitted to the CE in 1990 and threatened to use its veto to prohibit the admission of Slovakia.

89 See for example: Letter from the HCNM to Minister of Foreign Affairs Jozef Moravcik, Den Haag, 8 November 1993, reference: no 1320/93/L.
Available at: [http://www.minelres.lv/count/slovakia/931108r.htm](http://www.minelres.lv/count/slovakia/931108r.htm)

89 Slovakia did join the Partnership for Peace programme of Nato in 1994; the association agreement with the EU was signed in 1995.

90 EU Bulletin 1995. The EP resolution read: *If the government of the Slovak Republic continues a policy which does not comply with elementary principles of democracy, human rights and minority rights and the state of law, the EU will have to reconsider its programmes of assistance and cooperation within the European Association Agreement- which will have to be suspended*, Quoted in: Geoffrey Pridham, *The European Union’s Democratic Conditionality and Domestic Politics in Slovakia: The Mečiar and Dzurinda Governments Compared*, Europe-Asia Studies, Vol. 54, no. 2, March 2002, p225.

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international pressure. The main problem around this friendship treaty was the inclusion and acceptance of the CE Recommendation 1201, which provided for a whole range of minority rights including references to autonomy. The signing of this treaty was regarded as a pre-condition for Hungary and Slovakia to join NATO and the EU, which made the Slovak government sign it in 1995. The pressure from the EU, NATO proved successful in the signing of the treaty, however the actual ratification of the Basic Treaty was delayed until March 1996. Mečiar, had had to make a deal with its ultra nationalist coalition partner SNS, before actually being able to sign the treaty. This deal included support on passing a few pieces of legislation which were against the spirit of the treaty. One was passage of a controversial law on the Protection of the Republic (or Penal Code). This law forbade ‘demonstrations with subversive intentions’ and the ‘spreading of false information damaging’ to Slovak national interest. The other was a new controversial language law, the 1995 State Language Act, which would, like the 1990 language law, regulate the use of Slovak as the official language of the country. This time, however, the language law was more restrictive as the 20% threshold was dropped altogether, thus making no provisions for the use of minority languages in public life at all.

The EU was not happy with these laws and clearly linked these issues with EU membership when it called on the Slovak government to abandon these laws. Hungary briefly made the situation worse, when it issued a declaration after a conference on ‘Hungarians and Hungarians living abroad’, saying that ‘the formation of autonomy is a basic condition for the maintenance of Hungarians living abroad’. The SNS perceived this as a threat and proof to the need of the legal defence of the Slovak national interest through the Penal Code. The language law was adopted; the Penal Code was modified and moderated.

91 Article 11 states that ‘in the regions where they are in a majority the persons belonging to a national minority shall have the right to have at their disposal appropriate local or autonomous authorities or to have a special status, matching the specific historical and territorial situation and in accordance with the domestic legislation of the state.’ Available at: http://assembly.coe.int/documents/adoptedtext/ta93/erec1201.htm
92 Hungary-Slovakia pact agreed
93 Subversion law causes Slovak uproar
The Independent (London), March 27, 1996.
94 Slovak uproar over free speech
The Independent (London), March 27, 1996.
95 Kelley, p124.
96 West Says Slovakia Falls Short of Democracy
97 Kelley, p125-126.
after heavy protest both in Slovakia and outside and the most controversial amendments were rejected by parliament in February 1997.98

The Slovak-West and Slovakia-Hungary relations thus deteriorated as Mečiar prepared for the upcoming elections in 1998. His only concern was with re-election by any means, in a country suffering from economic setbacks. This explained his anti-Hungarian behaviour somewhat, as it appealed to the Slovak nationalist sentiment among a large pool of voters and served as drawing attention away from the economic situation.99 The adoption of the controversial 1995 language law (the Penal Code ceased to be an issue) continued to be a major obstacle towards integration with the West. However, despite criticism from OSCE, CE and EU officials, the Mečiar government, showed no intention of changing this law.100 The EU again reminded Slovakia that it had to comply to a minority policy corresponding with the demands laid down in the Copenhagen political criteria with EU membership, when the German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, a few weeks before the Slovak elections, said that: ‘the EU will not admit any new members who have not solved their policy towards ethnic minorities’.101

To make the message even clearer, the European Commission issued its agenda 2000 in 1997, which, apart from other general policy strategies, gave an opinion on the preparedness for membership of the ten applicant countries from CEE. This opinion stated that the EU was ready to start negotiations with Hungary, Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, which excluded Slovakia from the first wave of candidate countries and thus put pressure on Slovakia to comply with the conditions set by the EU.102

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99 Setback for Slovak PM

99 Slovakia Uses Language in Ethnic War

99 Slovaks protest as their freedoms are whittled away fear freedoms are under threat; New anti-subversion law confirms fears of drift towards totalitarianism
The Independent (London), April 1, 1996.


101 West Says Slovakia Falls Short of Democracy

102 Cited in: Kelley, p131.

Another issue and example of Mečiar’s ‘by-any-means’ tactics to win the upcoming elections, was the adoption of a controversial electoral law right before the elections, which was designed to weaken the opposition and the Hungarian parties in particular. After the adoption of the new territorial administrative division in 1996, which resulted in the territorial fragmentation of the Hungarian minority, Mečiar and his governing coalition partners devised a new electoral law which required for each of the parties working together in a coalition to overcome a 5% threshold of the total votes. Again, despite heavy criticism from the international institutions’ concern with democratic credibility, the Slovak government did not give in.103 The Hungarian parties were therefore left with no other option than to merge into one party: the SMK-MKP.104

The Hungarian Coalition Party joins the government in 1998
The Slovak electorate recognised the importance of EU and NATO membership and as such punished the Mečiar governing parties for putting this on the line by stalling or not complying with the standards set by the EU and NATO. This did not mean voters were necessarily concerned with the conditions set on minority rights issues, but also other political and economic standards, which would benefit Slovakia and its deteriorating economy. Although HZDS did win the elections, they and their possible coalition partners still lost enough votes to put them in opposition. This meant that the second placed and more moderate Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) was given the task of forming a coalition for government.105 The new prime minister and leader of the SDK, Mikuláš Dzurinda, succeeded in forming a four-party coalition, one of which was the SMK-MKP. The Hungarians were given the chance to govern for the first time and improve the conditions for the Hungarian minority. The inclusion of SMK-MKP into government was twofold: the extra party was needed to form the majority government coalition and inclusion of the ethnic minority party would give credibility in improving its relations with the West.106

The newly formed Dzurinda-government thus made every effort to improve relations with the West, after the growing isolation caused by the Mečiar government, by giving top

103 Deadline for Slovaks to meet democratic tests
104 Strana maďarské koalície – Magyar Koalíció Pártja. SMK is the Slovak abbreviation, and MKP the Hungarian abbreviation of the same name: the Hungarian Coalition Party. Therefore SMK-MKP, SMK or MKP are used alternately, but mean the same thing.
105 SDK: Slovenská demokratická koalícia. The SDK formed as a coalition of five parties in 1997 with the aim of presenting a united front against HZDS.
106 See election results: http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections/
priority to meeting the EU’s political conditions. This proved to be a very difficult task as the Prime Minister had to juggle issues between the demands of many parties as the passage of a new minority languages law showed. Due to the inclusion of the SMK-MKP and the pressure from the international institutions, and the EU in particular, the formulation of a new language law was put on the government agenda. The proposals for this law included the restoration of the 20% threshold for usage of minority languages in official dealings, which was in line with OSCE minimal recommendations and EU demands.

The SMK-MKP pushed for a 10% threshold and actually accused the other governing parties of trying to please Brussels, instead of meeting the minority’s demands. The HZDS and SNS, now in opposition, also expressed their concern for obviously different reasons as they organised a demonstration against the proposed law, which attracted a crowd of about a thousand protestors to Bratislava. Also, a petition was started to collect signatures for a referendum on the language law. The government was determined not to wait for the opposition to collect enough names and passed the bill, without support of the SMK-MKP, who stood by their demands for a more liberal law.

Membership waits and beyond
The years after the 1998 elections were characterized by integrative measures, such as the adoption of the new language law, taken by the Slovak government in order to obtain EU and NATO membership. The European Union was pleased with the way the new Slovak government tackled minority issues and other political criteria for accession, and decided to invite Slovakia to the EU Accession talks in Helsinki in December 1999. Slovakia continued to receive praise on implementing minority rights in the EC’s regular progress reports, for instance in the 2001 Report where it was stated that: ‘Significant efforts in further developing and putting into practice approaches to protect minority rights were taken in the reference period, notably in implementing relevant Government strategies’. The report added its satisfaction with the signing of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2001, however it also stated that: ‘there remains, however, the need for reinforced implementation of existing minority language legislation and for adopting further necessary legislation’.

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107 Kelley, p133.
110 Ibid. p98.
The road to EU accession in 2004, despite the praise received, was not a smooth one. Minority related issues, apart from other areas such economic or judicial reform, remained important. The strength of the governing coalition was tested on several occasions in 2001 for instance on the issue of constitutional change. In order to obtain EU and NATO membership, constitutional change was necessary in order to fulfil certain requirements. One of the requirements was the decentralisation of the public administration, which led to a discussion on how this was to be filled in. The Hungarian party saw this as an opportunity to strengthen local power, which it had lost after the 1996 administrative reform, whereas the opposition parties, mainly the SNS and HZDS, did not want to give the Hungarian minorities more power. The major amendment to the Slovak Constitution, concerning this decentralisation, was adopted in February 2001, despite a narrow vote. As a result of this amendment, however, a new Law on Local Public Administration providing for devolution of government prerogatives to the new regional entities was passed by the Dzurinda government in April 2001. The parliament adopted this law in June, but established the number of the regions at eight, rather than twelve, as proposed by the governing coalition. The SMK-MKP was afraid this might be disadvantageous to the Hungarian minority and threatened to leave the coalition. They finally refrained from doing so, because the EU and NATO warned about the consequences of a step like this. The EU and NATO feared that withdrawal from government might hinder the vital continuation of reform, as it would leave the governing coalition without a parliamentary majority.

Another major test came in January 2002 when a new law, adopted by the Fidesz dominated Hungarian parliament in Budapest in 2001, was implemented, despite heavy criticism from the CE Venice Commission. This Status Law or Preference Law allowed for Hungarians living in the six neighbouring countries- Slovakia, Romania, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine- to apply for a Hungarian identity card, which made it possible for them

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111 Ibid. p15.
112 Hungarian party in Slovakia temporarily withdraws from ruling coalition
Slovakia’s Hungarian coalition party considers options.
EU official warns Slovaks against early elections
113 Fidesz: centre-rightwing party. Fidesz campaigned for the 1998 elections with the promise that Hungarians across borders would receive dual-nationality.
See: Buren niet gerust op Hongaarse ambities
The Venice Commission or European Commission for Democracy through Law is an advisory body of the CE concerning constitutional law issues. The Status Law was criticised in the ‘Report on the Preferential Treatment of National minorities by their kin states’. See http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2001/CDL(2001)095-e.asp
to temporarily work, study, travel more easily and even claim health care in the mother country; various educational benefits could also be received, provided the children go to a Hungarian language school.\textsuperscript{114} The Status Law created strong reactions from Slovakia, arguing that it interfered with the principle of sovereignty over its own citizens and that it would not accept Hungarian Law on its territory.\textsuperscript{115} The reference to a ‘united Hungarian nation’ was especially unacceptable for Slovakia considering the past, as it also questioned the effect of this law on the loyalty of its Hungarian citizens to the state.\textsuperscript{116} In the EC 2001 Regular Report on Hungary’s Progress Toward Accession, it was stated that ‘the Law <...> will not be applicable without the adoption of implementing decrees. Hungary will therefore need to comply with the above principles and hold the necessary consultations in order to agree with its neighbours also as regards future implementing legislation.’ The dispute was solved through the downscaling of this law through amendments, making the law more culturally focused and removing many of the benefits.\textsuperscript{117} An agreement was signed at the end of 2003.\textsuperscript{118}

Perhaps because of the nationalist tension resulting from this Status Law row, fears existed that Mečiar might return to government in the parliamentary elections in September 2002. These fears however were quickly squashed as both the EU and NATO declared that the return to power of Mečiar and the HZDS would jeopardise membership;\textsuperscript{119} and with the NATO and EU summits on membership approaching fast, in November and December respectively, the Slovak elite was anxious to have a government in place before that. The importance of EU and NATO membership thus made most parties reluctant to form a governing coalition with the HZDS.

Before the admission to NATO (29th of March) and the EU (May the 1st) in 2004 Hungary once more thwarted the Bratislava government when the World Federation of

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Hungary 'Status Law' irks neighbours}
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Verdeeldheid laait op in Oost-Europa; Hongarije wekt ergerenis}
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ethnic tensions rising in the east}
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Slovakia reaches deal with Hungary}
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{EC 2001 Regular Report on Hungary’s progress towards accession, p22 and p91.}
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Slovakia's EU hopes hinge on election}
Hungarians, a Hungarian civil organization operating as an NGO, initiated a successful petition for a referendum on the idea of granting ethnic Hungarians outside Hungary the possibility of dual-citizenship. Fidesz, this time in opposition, politicised this referendum as an electoral tactic as it supported the idea. Eventually the referendum failed as the threshold was not passed; however, it did briefly feed the already uneasy relationship between Hungary and Slovakia.

Where the bilateral relations between Hungary and Slovakia were tense, signs of easing tension within Slovakia were visible. The inclusion of the SMK-MKP in the governing coalition in 2002, for instance, opened the way to accommodating the Hungarian minority with the opening of a Hungarian-language university in Komárno in January 2004. The proposal for a Hungarian language university was refused in 2001 by the Slovak government; however, in its National Programme of Development of Education and Instruction (November 2002) as regards minority education, the government stated that it would focus on ‘establishing a university for educating persons belonging to the Hungarian national minority with a view to eliminating the differences in the level and structure of education’.

In 2003 a manifesto for the establishment of the university was approved by government. The Slovak parliament then adopted a law about the actual creation of the university, and thus opened the way to the opening of the J. Selye University. The state-funded university contained only three faculties: an economical faculty, a reformed theological faculty and a pedagogical faculty; the latter being of most importance to the Hungarian minority as this faculty would produce teachers for the Hungarian-language primary and secondary schools.

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120 Referendum over rechten Hongaarse minderheden
Referendum over staatsburgerschap verdeelt Hongarije
121 Oppositie droomt weer van Groot-Hongarije
Opkomst bij Hongaars referendum te laag
122 Hungarian University officially set up in Slovakia
Available at: [http://origin.rferl.org/content/article/1143079.html](http://origin.rferl.org/content/article/1143079.html)

Available at: [http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4254e2224.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4254e2224.html)

124 Minority language education in Slovakia
Mercator: European Research Centre on multilingualism and language learning
Available at: [http://www.mercator-research.eu/minority-languages/Language-Factsheets/minority-language-education-in-slovakia](http://www.mercator-research.eu/minority-languages/Language-Factsheets/minority-language-education-in-slovakia)
The minority-majority relations entered a quiet period after obtaining EU membership, until tensions flared once more in 2006, when new parliamentary elections were held and a series of incidents occurred, which were explained in ethnic terms and will be described below. The elections, held in June 2006, were won by the left-wing populist Direction-Social Democrats (Smer-SD) party led by Robert Fico. Smer-SD was founded in 1999 and soon became the biggest centre-left party, as the electoral victory in 2006 showed. The elections also meant the return of the nationalist HZDS and ultranationalist SNS to government, who were invited by Fico to form a government.

The inclusion of SNS to the government was heavily criticized by the Party of European Socialists, a political group in the European Parliament, because of extreme nationalist statements of Jan Slota, the leader of the Slovak National Party, statements like ‘Hungarians are a cancer on the body of the nation’ or when he called on Slovaks to ‘get in their tanks and flatten Budapest’ and subsequently suspended Smer-SD’s membership. Then, as mentioned, a few incidents occurred quite suddenly after the elections. Short clips appeared on the internet showing Slovak nationalists burning the Hungarian flag. Serious anti-Hungarian and anti-Slovak sentiments were uttered in Slovak and Hungarian football stadiums (a 11-meter banner was held up at a football match in Slovakia saying ‘Death to all Hungarians’); and things turned even uglier as verbal abuse, intimidation and physical attacks on ethnic Hungarians were reported, allegedly for speaking Hungarian in public. The attack on an ethnic Hungarian student became especially controversial when Fico and the Interior Minister Robert Kaliňák at a press conference in September announced that, after investigation by the police, the attack was thought to be a set-up and made up.

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125 Smer-SD: Smer- sociálna demokracia; Smer meaning ‘Direction’ (the Third Way) in Slovak.
126 Attacks on ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia on rise
   The Irish Times, September 2, 2006.
   Slovakia sets an extremist challenge for Europe
128 Nedelsky, p225.
The incidents provoked a strong reaction from the Hungarian government as the Slovak ambassador was summoned to Hungary's foreign ministry to protest against the attacks. The Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány called on Fico to condemn the attacks and growing anti-Hungarian sentiment, which he did not do. Moreover, Slovakia accused the Hungarian government of overreacting to the incidents.  

Tension continued to wax and wane until a similar row and war of words occurred in 2008 resulting from two separate issues. In October the Hungarian government filed a complaint with the European Parliament concerning the use of Slovakian place names in a local history textbook written for the Hungarian minority. Another, more serious issue was the violence and riots in the Slovak town of Dunajská Streda, which harbours an ethnic Hungarian majority, resulting from a football match between DAC Dunajská Streda and Slovan Bratislava. Again a diplomatic row broke out between Hungary and Slovakia as the Slovak police was accused of using excessive force against Hungarian supporters. In turn protesters showed up in front of the Slovak embassy in Budapest. This row finally ended after a series of accusations from one side to another.

In the summer of 2009 an old political dispute arose again as the Slovak parliament passed a new language law, which allowed for fines of up to 5000 Euros for using a minority language in public services. It would apply in cases where the minority forms less than 20% of the local population. This led to a demonstration of ethnic Hungarians in Bratislava as they claimed this was another attempt of the government to suppress the Hungarian language and culture. Hungary also involved itself in the matter and protested on behalf of the ethnic minority. This time the OSCE was also drawn into the dispute and tried to ease the tension. The HCNM did acknowledge however that ‘the amendments to the State Language Law pursue a legitimate aim and are - overall - in line with international standards’. But added that ‘Some elements, however, raise or - depending on the implementation - might raise issues of compatibility with international standards and with the constitutional principles of the Slovak Republic’. 

129 Nedelsky, p224.  
130 Hungarian minority protests against Slovak textbook Pravda (Slovakia), October 9, 2008.  
English summary text found on http://www.eurotopics.net/  
Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8248097.stm
Slovakia once more aggravated relations with its minority after parliament passed a patriotism law in March 2010, drawn up by the SNS party in the government coalition. This law would require for every Slovak school, including the Hungarian Slovak schools to play the Slovak national anthem every Monday and hang a Slovak flag in every classroom. The law was eventually vetoed by the Slovak president Ivan Gašparovič, even though he was in favour of the law, because the schools did not have enough money to pay for the flags. The law was thus send back to parliament to be amended in September 2010.\textsuperscript{134} The law was a response to the anti-Slovak sentiments rising in Hungary, as Hungary prepared for elections in April.\textsuperscript{135} Right after the elections in Hungary, where Fidesz claimed an overwhelming victory, Prime Minister Viktor Orban pushed for a law to grant Hungarians dual-citizenship. This law was passed in May 2010, again sparking an angry response from neighbouring Slovakia.\textsuperscript{136}

**Conclusion**

The processes of democratisation, supranational integration and the nationalising of the state have had profound effects on the situation of minorities in Slovakia. In Slovakian politics three periods can roughly be discerned: the nationalising ‘Mečiar’ period between 1990 and 1998, the integration ‘Dzurinda’ period from 1998 till 2004 and the post-membership period from 2004 till now. The first period revealed the first difficult steps of democratisation. Also, the paradoxal processes of supranational integration and nationalising of the state went underway, with the latter prevailing over the other. This is not very surprising as Slovakia had only just been established as a nation-state. This situation changed in the second period, when the nationalists were removed from government and focus shifted in favour of Europeanisation. This shift occurred mainly because of the growing isolation of Slovakia as a result of the Mečiar government policies, with the voters recognising and valuing integration. The integrative measures taken in this period have also been in positive for the minorities.

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\textsuperscript{134} OSCE minorities commissioner discusses amendments to Slovakia's language law  
Available at: http://www.osce.org/item/38979.html

\textsuperscript{135} National Identity Bill Divides Slovakia  
Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/26/world/europe/26ihl-slovakia.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2

\textsuperscript{136} Slovakia defiant over language law  
Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8162643.stm

**Pandora’s passport**  
Hungary extends citizenship beyond its borders; Slovakia retaliates. Nasty.  
The Economist, June 3, 2010.  
Available at: http://www.economist.com/node/16283329?story_id=16283329
The third period revealed that, despite the successful integration, the nationalisation of the state is still underway. Slovakia is still caught in the paradox. It appears that it depends on who is in government which decides what side of the paradox the pendulum swings to. Public support and the elites are thus divided along these nationalising and integrative lines, putting the ethnic parties, as a necessity, on the side of the integrators.

To turn back to the Brown framework the ethnic Hungarians have been granted important cultural rights and can count on participation in various administrative levels, including the government. However, deep trust issues still exist between the minority, majority and the external homeland Hungary. The elite, and therefore elite politics, has played an important role in antagonising the ethnic minority and majority be it for electoral gain or heartfelt believes of protecting the minority cultural identity or the newly created nation-state respectively.

The roles of Hungary and the international institutions, as the Brubaker-Kelley framework suggested, are very important in this regard. The pressure of both actors has helped the Hungarian minority tremendously in their cause of gaining minority rights and protection. The actions of the external motherland Hungary have at the same time worked counterproductive, as they have fed the spiral of mutual fear and distrust between the two countries. The oversensitive reactions to, what Slovakia sees as internal affairs, have, in the eyes of some parties, only made the cause of protection of the Slovak nation against Hungarian culture more urgent. The role of the fourth actor, the international institutions with their norms and demands, thus looks to be the key in turning the spiral of mutual anxiety into a spiral of cooperation, understanding and trust. They have to credibly keep monitoring and condemning ‘bad behaviour’ and keep guaranteeing the political and cultural factors as mentioned above.

Ethnic issues in Slovakia are mostly dealt with in the political arena, and ethnic conflict and tension is mostly visible on the elite level. There are some examples of bottom-up ethnic conflicts, such as the rows between football supporters belonging to both ethnic groups. However, most conflicts seem to stem from elite-level actions, antagonising and feeding the existent animosity. The main responsibility thus lies with the elites in both Slovakia (minority and majority) and Hungary regarding the ethnic issues.


3.2 Romania

The Romanian nation: a short history

After the Crimean war (1853-1856) the principalities of Wallachia and Moldova, which both harboured a majority of ethnic Romanians, gained autonomy within the Ottoman Empire and united to form Romania. This autonomous principality was recognised as an independent state in 1878, and became the Kingdom of Romania. It was from this time onwards that Romanian nationalism began to develop, which was based on hostility and exclusion.\(^{137}\) Romanian nationalism was wary of and directed against the Slavs (mainly imperial Russia) and Hungarians, who ruled the Romanians on the perceived Romanian soil of Transylvania. This principality of Transylvania, which harboured large numbers of ethnic Romanians and was part of Austria-Hungary, remained firmly in the hands of the Hungarians, who constituted the land-owning upper class and aristocracy. However, following WWI and the defeat of the axis powers the kingdom of Romania grew even bigger in size, when it annexed the ethnically diverse territory of Transylvania (containing many Hungarian, German and other minorities) and Bessarabia (the present day Republic of Moldova) and Bukovina (part of present day Ukraine). This ‘Greater Romania’ was recognised as the Romanian state by the allied powers after the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty (or Treaty of Trianon).

In the interbellum period Romanian nationalism soared as Romania wanted to strengthen its place in the community of nation-states. Externally this meant that Romania emphasised its independence vis-à-vis other nation-states as was demonstrated by the signing of the Balkan Pact in 1934. This pact was a treaty signed by Romania, Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, with the goal of maintaining the geopolitical status quo in the region after WWI.\(^{138}\) Internally nationalism was demonstrated most clearly by the rise of fascist movements, who mobilised the ethnic Romanians against other national minorities. During WWII Romania lost the territories gained in the aftermath of the First World War. After the war Romanian control was only re-established in Transylvania as Soviet Russia took control of Bessarabia and Bukovina. The post-war Soviet occupation led to the formation of a Communist People's Republic in 1947 and the abdication of the king. The communist party


\(^{138}\) The text of the Balkan Pact can be viewed at: [http://www.rastko.rs/istorija/diplomatija/pbs_e.html](http://www.rastko.rs/istorija/diplomatija/pbs_e.html)
almost immediately started a policy of Romanianisation, of which the forceful merging of the Hungarian language Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca with the Romanian language Babeș University in 1959 serves as the best example.\textsuperscript{139} In 1965 the Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party Nicolae Ceaușescu took power and ruled Romania until his government was overthrown in December 1989. Ceaușescu’s reign continued the politics of Romanianisation and was further characterised by the forming of a personality cult around himself. His politics of national communism entailed, internally, a policy of ‘ethnic homogenisation’, which meant a variety of policies to do away with ethnic differences.\textsuperscript{140} Thus Hungarians for instance were denied minority provisions, such as education in Hungarian and the use of bilingual signs. Also resettlement of Romanians into Transylvania took place, diminishing the proportion of Hungarians in various towns and cities.\textsuperscript{141} It needs to be said though, that despite the importance of the Hungarian identity, both the Hungarian and Romanian people were at that time more concerned with their economic situation and the oppressive regime than ethnic issues.\textsuperscript{142} Externally, Romania was following an independent foreign policy, despite being counted as one of the Soviet satellite states. Ceaușescu maintained relations with Israel and Western states, which ran contrary to the foreign policy of the Warsaw Pact states.\textsuperscript{143} Ceaușescu became an increasingly popular figure for the USA and its allies as he was actively challenging the Russian Soviet supremacy, although his internal policies were not supported.

**A bloody revolution and post-cold war democratisation**

Where Czechoslovakia and the other Soviet dominated CEE countries disposed of communism by a ‘velvet-revolution’, Romania met with a violent uprising. The 1980s in Romania were characterised by a severe economic situation, poverty and a major shortage of goods creating a growing bad mood amongst the people. As a sign of things to come a strike


Cluj-Napoca was called Cluj until 1974, when the city celebrated 1850 years since its first mention as Napoca. The communist party under leadership of Ceaușescu officially added Napoca to the cities’ name, supposedly to underline the Roman-Dacian origin of Cluj which predated the Hungarian or even German origin of the town’s name, Kolozsvár or Klausenburg.

\textsuperscript{140} National communism is one of many types of communism. This type of communism combines the (communist) elements of social revolution with nationalism and nationalistic ideas.

\textsuperscript{141} Brubaker (2006), p116.

For more details on the consequences of Ceaușescu’s policies on the Hungarian minority, see for instance: Rudolf Joó, Andrew Ludányi eds., \textit{The Hungarian minority’s situation in Ceaușescu’s Romania}, New York, 1994.

\textsuperscript{142} Brubaker (2006), p117.

\textsuperscript{143} The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance or Warsaw Pact was the Eastern equivalent of NATO. Romania joined the Pact in 1955, but limited its participation to some extent.
in Brașov in 1987 grew into a large anti-communist riot, which was put down by force. In December 1989 a demonstration emerged in Timișoara, when the Hungarian reformed pastor László Tőkés was accused by the government of inciting ethnic hatred and making critical comments against the Ceaușescu regime and was to be evicted. His followers took to the streets, with others joining in; this protest triggered the violent uprising in Bucharest. The ethnic protest thus, ironically, led to the fall of Ceaușescu and the communist party in Romania and the creation of a democratic state.

In the aftermath of the revolution the National Salvation Front (FSN), led by Ion Iliescu and other former members of the Communist Party, established an interim government and took control of the state institutions and, compared to Slovakia, a young, but already well-established nation-state. Iliescu assumed the role of interim president and Petre Roman became the interim prime-minister. A number of other parties soon formed too; the ethnic Hungarians formed the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians or Romania (UDMR-RMDSz) to represent Hungarian interests. This ethnic alliance party was internally constructed in such a way, that all those who represent the Hungarian minority in one way or another were included. All of these various Hungarian platforms and organisations had a democratic voice in the Congress, from which the persons were chosen to become members of the Council, who in turn would act as the representatives on the governmental level. In this way the UDMR-RMDSz could act and function as a party in the central government.

The catch-all-(Hungarians)-party concerns itself mostly with two main goals. One is cultural autonomy, meaning the preservation of the Hungarian culture within Romania, the official status of the Hungarian language and the possibility of education in this language on various levels. The second goal of the UDMR-RMDSz is gaining territorial autonomy, meaning general decentralisation for Romania as a whole and actual autonomy in the Székely Lands (see Map 3), which harbours the largest concentration of ethnic Hungarians.

The Iliescu led interim-government was three months in office when the first inter-ethnic conflict occurred. In the city of Târgu Mureș, a city north-west of the Székely lands, violent clashes between ethnic Hungarians and Romanians erupted.

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144 FSN: Frontul Salvării Naționale
145 UDMR-RMDSz: Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România (in Romanian) Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség (in Hungarian)
Soon after the fall of Ceaușescu political demands for minority-language schooling were articulated by the Hungarian minority. The number of Hungarian language schools dwindled under the Ceaușescu regime, as more and more schools were forced to close or merge with Romanian schools. The demands were laid down with the new government and the actual ‘unmixing’ of two high-schools, in a Romanian and Hungarian school was approved by the Ministry of Education in late January 1990. Although this did not meet with any significant protest from Romanians elsewhere, in Târgu Mureș the unmixing did meet with resistance and eventually led to bloody street fighting between ethnic Hungarians and Romanians, leaving six dead and hundreds injured. The fighting was put to a halt by the military after two days. Perhaps the turbulent times after the revolution and the untested resilience of the new government to deal with violence led the tension to turn into a bloody fight. This episode in any case proved to be the only violent clash between then and today, leaving ethnic issues to be fought over in the political arena.

In May 1990 free elections were held in Romania for the first time after fifty years. The big winner was the FSN, which was transformed into an actual party and could be characterised as catch-all, winning 66.31% of the votes. As most parties one way or another favoured democracy and market reforms, voting was mostly based on personalities. The FSN thus relied on the popularity of the man who led Romania after the fall of the communist regime and needed no specific programme to attract voters. Ion Iliescu became the official President of Romania. The UDMR-RMDSz, relying on the ethnic vote, gained 7.23% of the votes and became the second biggest party in the country. Due to the overwhelming support for the FSN the government was formed by this party only.

The events of Târgu Mureș made the government act swiftly and soon after the cabinet was installed, regulation expanding minority-language education was issued. Although the UDMR-RMDSz was not happy with the content of the regulation passed - in the words of Erno Borbely, a newly elected Hungarian Deputy: ‘The education law of Ceaușescu was actually better than this one, though its implementation was terrible’ - it was a sign that minority-rights were on the agenda and that the government was committed to granting rights instead of taking away and resisting minority demands. Apart from following a policy of

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147 Ibid.
148 An incredible total of 71 parties competed; most parties however gained almost no votes. Apart from UDMR-RMDSz another Hungarian party competed: The Independent Hungarian Party (Partidul Independent Maghiar) who only got 2578 votes, 0.02%. See http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections/ or annexes table 6.
149 Evolution in Europe: Romania’s Hungarians Shun Rulers’ Coalition
accommodation instead of assimilation, to quell the ethnic tension, another major incentive for the expansion of minority rights can be found in the will of the Romanian elite to ‘return to Europe’.

In 1991 a new constitution was ratified causing concern among the Hungarian deputies, who voted against it. The main concern, as explained in chapter 2, was with the sentence ‘national sovereignty resides with the Romanian people, who shall exercise it through its representative bodies and by referendum’ (Title 1, article 2). Although the constitution also provided for provisions protecting national minorities, the Hungarian deputies still questioned the ambiguity of perceived contrasting sentences in the Constitution.\textsuperscript{150}

In September that same year the government fell after a series of protests organised by the Miners Unions, called minerias. Miners went to Bucharest to protest against the government for not living up to the economic promises made. The result of this protest was the holding of new elections in 1992. The issue of economic reform also led to a rift in the FSN, when Petre Roman won the majority of votes at a party congress concerning the way the reform programme was to be conducted.\textsuperscript{151} The progressive part of the FSN stayed on under the same name. The conservative faction, under leadership of Iliescu, split off to form a new party: the Democratic National Salvation Front (FDSN).\textsuperscript{152}

\textbf{Elections, nationalism and ‘moving back to Europe’}

The 1992 elections formed the basis for ethnic tensions as parties and their leaders relied more and more on anti-minority rhetoric to mobilise the nationalist vote; this rise of nationalism so soon after the fall of communism clearly demonstrates the nationalising tendencies and the nationalising of the state, just as happened in Slovakia. The FSN, just before it split, portrayed the ethnic Hungarians as a threat to the country, with Roman suggesting that Romania was confronted with a Hungarian plot.\textsuperscript{153} Iliescu accused the newly formed Romanian Democratic

\textsuperscript{150}Minorities had very easy access to representation as Romania provided minorities with arrangements to gain a single seat if they were not big enough as a group to ever secure a seat. The Hungarians, however, did not have this problem.

\textsuperscript{151}Reformers win in Romanian Front

\textsuperscript{152}FDSN: Frontul Democrat al Salvării Naționale
In 1993 it took the name of Party of Social Democracy in Romania, (PDSR: Partidul Democrației Sociale în România) when it merged with the Socialist Democratic Party of Romania, the Republican Party and the Cooperative Party, which in 2000 would become the present-day PSD.

\textsuperscript{153}Romania threatened by twin nationalisms;
Convention (CDR) of ‘handing over Transylvania to the Hungarians and Hungary’.\textsuperscript{154} Also two more radical nationalist parties entered the political arena and met with considerable success: the Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNR) and the Greater Romania Party (PRM).\textsuperscript{155} The PUNR, which became the 4\textsuperscript{th} biggest party after the 1992 elections, was led by the mayor of Cluj-Napoca in the Székely region, Gheorghe Funar, who was renowned for his very strong nationalist stance in favour of ethnic Romanians. This was demonstrated by his actions as mayor such as forbidding bilingual shop signs and street names, and restricting Hungarian educational facilities or suggesting that young ethnic Hungarians were armed and trained in Hungary for a civil war.\textsuperscript{156} The PRM, led by Vadim Tudor, became the 6\textsuperscript{th} largest party and, as the name of the party suggests, is based on the ideal of a Greater Romania. This Greater Romania ideal is mainly focused on regaining Moldova, but is also wary of Hungary and the perceived irredentist goals of the ethnic Hungarians.

Another controversial issue arose just before the elections when the interim Prime Minister Teodor Stolojan, who took over from Roman when the FSN split, dismissed the ethnic Hungarian prefects of the two Transylvanian counties Covasna and Harghita, which harboured a majority of ethnic Hungarians, to be replaced by Romanian prefects. In Romania instead of electing prefects, the government is responsible for the appointment of prefects. The dismissal of the two Hungarian prefects, just before the elections caused quite a stir, for instance leading to a symbolic funeral for Romania’s democracy in the Szekler town of Miercurea-Ciuc conducted by Hungarians.\textsuperscript{157} The issue of the prefects continued to play a role until after the 1996 elections when the matter was finally resolved. As a result of the inclusion of the UDMR-RMDSz in the 1996 governing coalition, three prefectures were given to Hungarian candidates.\textsuperscript{158} More on the 1996 elections will feature below.

The 1992 elections were won by Iliescu’s party, giving him a second term in office. In parliament his party could count on the support of PUNR, PRM, and the ex-communist Socialist Workers' Party (PSM).\textsuperscript{159} Iliescu’s government soon expressed the will to ‘move

\textsuperscript{154} CDR: Convenția Democrată Română. This electoral alliance of several political parties of Romania formed to challenge the powerful FSN more effectively.

\textsuperscript{155} PUNR: Partidul Unității Naționale Române; PRM: Partidul Romania Mare

\textsuperscript{156} Romania’s Dilemma

The Irish Times, October 5, 1992.

\textsuperscript{157} Romania’s leader sacrifices the Hungarian pawn:

The government’s stirring up of ethnic passion in Transylvania could bring it gains in next month’s elections.


\textsuperscript{158} Kelley, p148.

\textsuperscript{159} PSM: Partidul Socialist al Muncii
back to Europe’ and applied for EU, CE and NATO membership. The will to join the Euro-Atlantic structures led to an easier stance on minority rights issues. This resulted in the signing of the European Convention on Human Rights and the creation of a Council for National Minorities, which would monitor and advice on minority affairs. Although the HCNM praised the work done by the Council, he still urged Romania to continue working on a Law on Minorities and an Education Law, which would form the basis of inter-ethnic cooperation and minority-education respectively. In his letter to the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, Teodor Meleșcanu, in September 1993 he stated that: ‘Even though the Romanian Constitution has a number of Articles laying down principles regarding the position of the minorities, there is obviously a need to elaborate them in greater detail in the form of a law on minorities.’

Romania was given the go ahead to join the CE in September 1993 and worked to draft and pass legislation to comply with CE and HCNM recommendations. Meleșcanu stated in his letter to the HCNM that ‘the Council for National Minorities is preparing a draft law on minorities’ and ‘there are good chances that the Law on Education will be counted upon by the parliament in the next couple of weeks’. Despite promises made very little happened. A draft Law on Education was only debated on by the Romanian parliament in July 1994 and finally adopted in 1995 on which more will be said below. The Law on Minorities failed all together when the PUNR, PRM and PSM joined the government on the 1st of March 1994 after months of pressure demanding ministerial posts. On the other hand the Romanian government did ratify European Convention on Human Rights in June 1994 which could be seen as an important step in Romania's moves towards European standards of democracy, minority rights and minority protection.

In September 1994 ethnic tension rose once more when a bronze statue of the 15th-century Hungarian King Matthias in Cluj-Napoca became the unlikely object of a political battle between Romanian nationalists and the country's Hungarian minority. The statue was to be removed for an archaeological excavation. Below the statue was supposed to be a Roman

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160 Romania joined the OSCE in 1973.
161 See: Remarks to the Meeting of Romania’s Council for National Minorities by the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel Bucharest, 18 August 1993. Available at: http://www.osce.org/item/15484.html
163 Letter to HCNM Max van der Stoel Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor Meleșcanu Bucharest, 18 September, 1993. Available at: http://www.minelres.lv/count/romania/930918a.htm
forum which would help to illustrate a theory that Romanians, who regard themselves as the
direct descendants of the Romans, have a claim on Cluj-Napoca that predates the Hungarian
presence. The symbolism surrounding this statue made the Hungarian minority perceive the
removal of the statue as a threat to destroying, piece by piece, the Hungarian cultural heritage,
strikingly called the nationalisation of public space by Brubaker. The symbolism surrounding this statue made the Hungarian minority perceive the removal of the statue as a threat to destroying, piece by piece, the Hungarian cultural heritage, strikingly called the nationalisation of public space by Brubaker.164 Thousands of ethnic
Hungarians thereto blocked the Romanian archaeologists for two weeks from starting the
evacuations.165 The problem for the Hungarians was, in the words of László Tőkés, ‘<...> not
the excavation, <...> that’s just the tip of the iceberg. It’s the revival of Romanian
nationalism.’166

The police eventually started to patrol the square on which the statue stood and the UDMR-
RMDSz called off the demonstrations, which put the fuse out of the rising ethnic tension.

As with Slovakia the issue of signing a bilateral treaty with Hungary regarding
agreement on borders and maintaining good relations, became obligatory for future EU- and
NATO membership.167 Thus talks with Hungary started in 1994. As with Slovakia, the
inclusion and adoption of the CE Recommendation 1201, especially paragraph 11 which
mentioned territorial autonomy (see note 95 in this study), became a problem. Moreover,
angry responses were provoked, when Marko Bela, leader of the UDMR-RMDSz asked
Hungary to include in the talks demands for a ‘special status’, including more control over
educational and cultural matters, in areas with compact Hungarian populations’.168 This
caused Funar to react angrily, saying that ‘after autonomy would come annexation’ and that
‘it is all part of Budapest’s master plan to take control again’.169 After pressure of the OSCE,
NATO and EU through linking this issue with EU and NATO membership, the Treaty of
Understanding and Co-operation and Good Neighbourly Relations was signed and ratified at
the end of 1996.170 However, the demands by Bela mentioned above were left out.171

165 A Battle for Identity Divides Transylvania;
Hungarians Decry Romanian Nationalists
166 Quoted from: Ibid.
168 Romania rejects ‘special status’ for its Hungarians
169 Angry mayor shows his colours;
Gheorghe Funar, who is a serious patriot, insists there are no Hungarians in Romania
The Independent (London), September 23.
170 Romania/Hungary: Historic Basic Treaty Signed Today
RFE/RL, September 9, 1996.
Available at: http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1081535.html
171 Ibid.
Despite positive signs in 1995, such as the signing of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the entering into force of the Europe-agreement, more minority related rows started.\textsuperscript{172} The adoption of the Education Law in September met with resistance from the Hungarian minority, who regarded the law as discriminatory and proposals for amendments were submitted by the UDMR-RMDSz.\textsuperscript{173} The HCNM also criticised the ambiguity of the law and recommended ‘that a general revision of the Law should be undertaken in the beginning of 1997’ because he asserted that ‘after a law has been implemented for some time, unforeseen weaknesses and deficiencies become visible. That certainly applies to a complicated law such as the Romanian Law on Education.’\textsuperscript{174}

The elections of November 1996 saw a turn around in nationalist tendencies as CDR won, mainly because of a weak economy and the promise of speedy reforms, defeating the former FDSN turned Romanian Party of Social Democracy (PDSR) and FSN turned Social Democratic Union (USD).\textsuperscript{175} The CDR supplied both the president, Emil Constantinescu, and the Prime Minister, Victor Ciorbea. A government was formed which included the CDR, USD and, significant in Romania’s bid to join the EU and NATO, the UDMR-RMDSz.

The inclusion of the Hungarian coalition party and the upcoming NATO and EU summits, in July and December respectively regarding possible membership, sped up the will to resolve some minority related matters. Just before the NATO summit amendments to the 1995 Education Law were adopted in the form of a decree (which would have to be confirmed as actual law afterwards) which provided for instruction in the mother tongue at all levels of education and abolished the provision that minorities must study subjects as history and geography in Romanian.\textsuperscript{176} Moreover, the new decree would entitle members of minorities to

\textsuperscript{172} The text for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities is available at: \url{http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/157.htm}

The Europe Agreement with Romania in itself does not mention minority rights (only in a small sentence on page 1: ‘Recognising <...> including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, operates a multi-party system with free and democratic elections <...> ’). For the full text see: \url{http://www.ena.lu/europe_agreement_establishing_association_between_communities_member_states_romania_febbruary_1993-020302617.html} The text, however, does refer to standards of democratisation, human rights and minority protection. For instance:

Title II, General principles, Article 6: Respect for the democratic principles and human rights established by the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe <...> and constitute essential elements of the present association.

\textsuperscript{173} Kelly, p152.

\textsuperscript{174} Letter to Teodor Meleşcanu

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

The Hague, 26 February 1996. \url{http://www.minelres.lv/count/romania/960226r.htm}

\textsuperscript{175} See election results at \url{http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections/}

PDSR: Partidul Democratiei Sociale din Romania

USD: Uniunea Sociala Democrată

\textsuperscript{176} Kelley, p152.
deal with the administration and obtain birth, marriage and death certificates in their own language in areas where they account for over 20% of the local population. Also amendments were made to the 1991 Law on Local Public Administration providing for more decentralisation.

Despite these important steps regarding minority rights, Romania, according to the EC Agenda 2000 opinion issued in July 1997, was not deemed ready to join the EU in the foreseeable future and was thus excluded from the first round of accession talks. Regarding the political criteria, to which minority rights provisions belong, the opinion stated that ‘the current improvement in Romania, following the arrival in power of a new government, indicates that Romania is on its way to satisfy the political criteria’. The main obstacles were economic reform and insufficient progress in adopting and implementing the EU Acquis Communautaire. NATO also excluded Romania from the first round of talks for similar reasons.

The parliamentary negotiations on the above mentioned decree on education law and how to transform this into law continued in the second half of 1997. In a secret voting in the senate in December and despite appeals from President Constantinescu it was decided that the separate university education in minority languages was banned, and history and geography was to be taught in Romanian after all. Upon this decision, and seizing the political opportunity of the upcoming EU Luxembourg Summit in that same month, the UDMR-RMDSz threatened to leave the governing coalition, thus internationalising the issue, embarrassing the CDR and creating an image of Romania not taking minority rights seriously. Internally, this issue made tensions flare, when Hungarians once more voiced their demands for more autonomy. Although Imre Fodor, the ethnic Hungarian mayor of Târgu Mureș, watered down this demand somewhat when saying that: ‘We are not demanding physical or geographical separation, but administrative self-rule’, it still fuelled the political crisis and irritated the Romanian politicians.

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178 Ibid. (no page).
179 Ibid. p114.
180 Ibid.
181 Romania Steps Up Efforts To Secure Spot in NATO
182 Kelley, p153.
183 Hungarian threat to Romanian coalition
184 Hungarians and Romanians At Odds in Transylvania
Then a period followed where the HCNM involved himself to get this issue solved. Officials met several times in the first half of 1998 and various recommendations were made by the HCNM. The HCNM made visits in August 1998 and in June 1999, when eventually a compromise solution was made: the Hungarians were granted the right to education in Hungarian in Universities and a private funded Hungarian University was to be set up, funded mostly by the Hungarian government. In exchange it was decided that history and geography were still to be taught in Romanian.

In December 1999 a striking example of nationalisation revealed itself when a history book ‘History Manual for Class Twelve’, issued by the Ministry of Education, became the source of contention. This Romanian history book written by Romanian historians did not spark any ethnic tension, but shows how important history is to a nationalising nation. Politicians and other public figures became involved in condemning this book for being anti-national and not being patriotic enough; moreover, Adrian Năstase, then vice-president of the PDSR (see note 152), described the textbook as being a result of ‘Hungarian revisionism and the radically homogenising internationalising’. The discussions were held along to two issues: the supposed support of the coordinator of the book by external forces, mainly Hungarian ones; and the CE recommendation 1283, which was said to be taken ‘to literally’. Without going deeper into this issue, it still reveals the obsession with national history and importance of a national narrative.

Toward accession: poverty reduction and reform

In October 1999 the Commission recommended starting the accession negotiations with Romania through its second Regular Report on Romania's Progress towards Accession.

After the Helsinki European Council's decision in December 1999 Romania was cleared to
start the actual accession negotiations, which began in February 2000. The pro-EU and pro-NATO attitude of the Romanian government thus saw itself rewarded. The processes of ‘moving towards Europe’ was fully underway, but at the same time nationalisation continued. The elections in November 2000 revealed this clearly when the ultra-nationalist PRM came second, winning 19.48% of the votes. The winner was the PDSR, winning 36.61% of the votes, which brought Ion Iliescu back as president of Romania (beating Vadim Tudor of the PRM in the second vote) and made Adrian Năstase prime minister. Even though the PDSR was not a pro-Hungarian party, the UDMR-RMDSz was still invited to join the governing coalition. This was done in a bid to increase credibility with the EU and NATO, which was needed as the former government failed to deliver on the political and especially economic reform. Also, good relations with Hungary were valued as Hungary was an important economic partner for Romania. The main concerns for the new government thus lay with economic reform and staying on track for integration with the West. In the words of the new foreign minister, Mircea Geoană and revealing the urgency to join the Euro-Atlantic structures: ‘It’s only a small exaggeration to say that this is a last chance for Romania to stay on track to join the European Union and NATO’.

The gains for the UDMR-RMDSz for supporting the PDSR were clear as it was in a good bargaining position to transform some of their demands into reality. Năstase agreed on restitution of church properties, Hungarian language faculties and Hungarian language broadcasts. Also, the Hungarians were allowed to display their flag and sing their national anthem on certain occasions. Furthermore a new Law on Public Administration gave minorities the right to communicate with the local administration in their mother tongue, provided that 20% of the local population were of that minority; and the public signs and public inscriptions in such localities were to be posted in both Romanian and the minority tongue.

194 Millard, p240.
As with Slovakia, the adoption of the Status Law by the Hungarian government created a lot of tension. However, unlike the Slovaks, the Romanian government sought to resolve this matter with quiet diplomacy. On Romania’s initiative the matter was brought before the Venice Commission to research the legality of this law. Although Hungary went ahead in implementing this law on the 1st of January 2002, a Memorandum of Understanding between Hungary and Romania was signed, which would ease some of the provisions made in the Status law.\textsuperscript{196} Important in this regard was the linkage of this issue with NATO membership, when it was promised in the Memorandum that: ‘with a view to the 2002 Prague Summit and welcoming the progress of Romania in meeting the accession criteria, the Republic of Hungary supports the decision for Romania to become a member of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation’.\textsuperscript{197}

Romania worked hard to stabilise its economy and improve on adopting and implementing the measures needed to gain access to the EU and NATO.\textsuperscript{198} One of such measures involved amendments to the Constitution, which were approved by 89.7% of the voters in a referendum in 2003, and enshrined the right for minorities of a local community to use their own language when dealing with local authorities; national minorities were also granted the right to use their mother tongue in court proceedings.\textsuperscript{199} The hard work paid off when Romania finally joined the NATO in March 2004, a few months before the new presidential and legislative elections.

Most parties in the 2004 elections were concerned with gaining EU membership and based their programmes on achieving this; this meant focusing on anti-corruption measures and economic, political and judicial reform, rather than relying on nationalist votes as with previous elections. The PSD won the elections once more, be it narrowly, but did not succeed in forming a government, thus leaving the second placed and new Justice and Truth Alliance (DA) under leadership of Traian Băsescu to form a government. UDMR- RMDSz was once

\textsuperscript{196} CE parliament Resolution 1335, Strasbourg, 2003.
\textit{Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of Romania Concerning the Law on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring Countries and Issues of Bilateral Co-operation, 22nd of December 2001.}
Available at: src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no4_ses/documents546_550.pdf
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{198} See GNP Growth for Romania at http://go.worldbank.org/DSJIQO9170
\textsuperscript{199} Romanians vote for new constitution
See articles 32, 120 and 128 of the Romanian constitution, which deal with education, the right to use minority language in public dealings and in courts respectively.
Available at: http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?id=371
more invited to complement the governing coalition, along with another new party, the Romanian Humanist Party (PUR).200

The decision for the target date for Romania to join the EU was made at the Brussels European Council summit of December 2003, and was set at the 1st of January 2007. After a positive EC progress report in October 2004, it was confirmed at another Brussels European Summit in December 2004 that Romania was on track to join.201 In 2005 the Accession treaty with the EU was finally signed and in the last progress report it was confirmed that Romania continued to make progress in fulfilling the obligations of membership by 1 January 2007.202 Externally things went well for Romania; internally however much was still left to be done. Regarding minority rights two more important laws were adopted: one in 2005 on national minorities hiring preference in regions where they constitute over half of the population, other qualifications being equal; and a law 2006 to set aside positions for Hungarian and Romani speaking police recruits.203

Despite going into the right direction an ethnic row started in September 2006 when the voting for passage of a draft law on national minorities, initiated by the UDMR-RMDSz, was postponed for the fall session as the opposition feared that the draft would grant minorities’ cultural autonomy.204 The decision to postpone angered the Hungarian representatives and they retaliated by revealing their plan to obtain autonomy for the Szeklers. In the words of Marko Bela, the deputy prime minister and leader of the UDMR-RMDSz: ‘the Hungarian community wants to acquire several forms of autonomy; first of all, cultural autonomy and, on the other hand, administrative-territorial autonomy.’205 This issue, with the

200 DA: Alianța Dreptate și Adevăr; an alliance consisting of the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal or PNL) and the Democratic Liberal Party (Partidul Democrat-Liberal or PD-L). PUR: Partidul Umanist Român; changed its name into Conservative Party of Romania (Partidul Conservator or PC) in May 2005.
202 Brussels European Council, 16-17 December 2004
203 Presidency Conclusions, p3: ‘The European Council noted with satisfaction that progress made by Romania in implementing the acquis and commitments entered into as regards, in particular, Justice and Home Affairs and Competition, has made it possible to close formally all of the outstanding chapters with this candidate on 14 December 2004 and accordingly looked forward to welcoming it as a member from January 2007’
204 EC Monitoring report on the state of preparedness for EU membership of Bulgaria and Romania, Brussels, 2006.
206 Ethnic Hungarian deputy PM’s dismissal sought over Szekler autonomy plans
208 Hungarian alliance pushes forward with autonomy plans amid heavy criticism
Hungarian minority showing their teeth, was eventually dropped as the overriding goal of EU accession took the heat of these rows. Even more so when the EC announced on the 26th of September that Romania was cleared to join the EU on January the 1st 2007, which was a momentous occasion in Romania.\textsuperscript{206}

**After the EU accession**

Four months after joining the EU the internal political turmoil showed as the government was dissolved. An ongoing row, mainly about anti-corruption measures, between the President Traian Băsescu and the Prime Minister Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, led to the decision by the latter to pull the plug on the governing coalition. The president was even suspended for alleged constitutional violations and an impeachment procedure was set in motion, which eventually failed.\textsuperscript{207} Tăriceanu thus dismissed the pro-Băsescu ministers of the PD-L, dissolving the Alliance, and a new minority government was formed without elections. The Romanian political arena would stay in turmoil until new elections were held in November 2008. Meanwhile, Romania once more showed their ongoing commitment to supranational integration and subsequently protection of minorities, when the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was ratified in January 2008. The provisions of the Charter would apply to no fewer than twenty minority languages used on the territory of Romania.\textsuperscript{208}

The 2008 elections were barely won by the PSD/PC Alliance, winning 33.09\% of the votes, as the DP-L won 32.36\% of the votes. Eventually, the DP-L was given the chance to form a government and mid-December a coalition of DP-L and PSD was approved by parliament, leaving the UDMR-RMDSz (winning 6.17\% of the votes) out of government for the first time since 1996.\textsuperscript{209} The ultra-nationalist PRM won only 3.57\% of the votes, revealing that voters were more concerned with other issues than nationalist programmes. However, in March 2009 an incident showed that nationalism could still be used to divert attention of other problems, when the president provoked the Hungarians in Harghita and Covasna, who were celebrating the Hungarian national holiday, when he waved the

\textsuperscript{206} Bucharest Daily News, September 26, 2006.
\textsuperscript{207} Bulgaria and Romania breathe sigh of relief as Brussels says yes
Financial Times (London), September 27, 2006.
\textsuperscript{208} Romanian PM dissolves coalition amid inter-party clashes
\textsuperscript{209} European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Strasbourg, 1991.
List of declarations made with respect to treaty No. 148
Available at: http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/Commun/ListeDeclarations.asp?NT=148&CM=&DF=&CL=ENG&VL=1
\textsuperscript{210} Romanian parliament approves new coalition
The Irish Times, December 23, 2008.
constitution and the Romanian flag in his hand while speaking about the ‘ethnic cleansing’ committed by Hungarians on Romanians in the region.210

Ten months after the elections the Government fell again; the PSD left the coalition in protest against the sacking of the interior minister.211 In a vote of no confidence the parliament did not back the Prime Minister Emil Boc in staying on with a minority government.212 In December a new government was formed between the DL-P and the UDMR-RMDSz.

The serious economic decline amidst the international financial crisis led Romania to apply for an IMF loan in 2009 and resulted in deep government spending cuts. In the beginning of 2010 this cumulated into a mass-protest in Bucharest.213 What is striking is that the economic crisis has not led to politicians playing the ethnic card, and the Romanians show their anger with the government, rather than turning frustration into ethnic hatred. Another issue showing Romania’s pre-occupation with the economy was the implementation of a new passport law in Hungary. Where the new law sparked angry responses from Slovakian politicians, the Romanians remained silent.214

Conclusion

Romania was the only CEE country to experience a violent overthrow of communism in 1989. Already then did the country face deep economic problems, which are still troubling the state today. After the fall of Ceauşescu, the processes of democratisation and supranational integration went underway. The nationalisation of the state and ethnic divisions also showed when parties formed along ethnic lines and ran on nationalistic programmes. However unlike Slovakia, and despite the violent ethnic clashes in Târgu Mureş, politics in Romania have been less focused on nationalisation of the state, and more on ‘moving towards Europe’ and economic development. This is not surprising as Romania, compared to Slovakia, was already

210Rekindled nationalism
Cotidianul (Romania), March 16, 2009.
Available at: http://www.eurotopics.net/en/archiv/results/archiv_article/ARTICLE46949-Rekindled-nationalism

211Romanian government falls apart
BBC News, 1 October 2009.
Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8284565.stm

212Romanian government falls on vote
Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8305307.stm

213Mass protest grips Romania;
Demonstration: 20,000 march in Bucharest
The Daily Herald-Tribune (Canada), May 20, 2010.

214Hungary's passport law is a diversion
a reasonably well-established nation-state. Throughout the post-communist period Romania has shown pragmatism towards implementing minority rights; not in the least because minority protection was a prerequisite for integration within the Western institutions, which shows the importance of the international institutions as an actor mentioned in the Brubaker-Kelley framework.

Looking back at the underlying factors of conflict named in the Brown framework (see Table 1, p 10 of this study), there does not seem to be cause for deep concern; however, close scrutiny of the above mentioned factors on this case is advised and should be an ongoing exercise, especially for the international institutions. The inclusion of the UDMR-RDMSz in various governments has shown the non-discriminatory way of dealing with minority groups in Romanian society; the Hungarians have not been excluded and proved to be and were accepted as stable coalition partners, who were able to make some of their demands heard. Cultural demands, like minority language education and the use of language and symbols in minority dominated areas, have thus to some extent been granted.

All this does not mean that animosity does not exist, and minority provisions have always been implemented easily. On the contrary, Romanians and Hungarians share a problematic history of animosity as a result of assimilation policies in the past: magyarisation before WWI and Romanianisation in the interbellum and communist periods. Hard political battles have been fought on ethnic related issues after 1989. Ethnic tension grew among the political actors of the ethnic Hungarian and Romanian elites, as well as between ethnic Hungarian civilians and their Romanian counterparts, whenever sensitive minority legislation was discussed or other issues came to the fore, like the double-passport issue instigated by Hungary.

Another source of contention was Romania’s very slow way of adopting and implementing the necessary legislation, which on more than one occasion revealed a major discrepancy between paper and reality. Tension also grew towards new elections, when politicians tried to sway voters with nationalistic rhetoric, which shows the importance of elites in their ability to aggravate tension; the 1992 and 2000 elections serve as the best examples. Mistrust of the majority actor toward the minority actor exists as regards the Hungarian demands for autonomy, be it culturally or territorial-administrative. These demands, which correspond with Brown’s third political factor, inter-group politics, make Romanian politicians question the loyalty of the ethnic Hungarians towards the Romanian state. The various comments made by politicians and issues like the excavations underneath
the Statue of King Matthias in Cluj-Napoca stand as a testimony to the animosity between Romanians and ethnic Hungarians and reveal the importance of identity.

The importance of the international institutions showed as the various Romanian governments have been most concerned with supranational integration. The question if minority rights would have been implemented regardless of external pressure remains speculative. However, the pressure exerted and the will of the Romanian governments to integrate with these institutions has certainly helped the implementation of minority rights tremendously in the last two decades. The compliance with minority standards set by these institutions and the constant close scrutiny of minority related issues has helped and still helps to let ethnic Hungarians participate in Romanian society, without having to fear assimilation. Moreover, the Hungarians can hold on to their cultural identity through provisions such as minority language education on all levels.

The role of the bilateral relations between Hungary and Romania has been less extreme than was the case with Slovakia. Compared to Slovakia, the relations of Romania with Hungary were good. When rows did start they were dealt with pragmatically and behind the scenes. The reasons for this may be found in the different histories and the earlier-mentioned fact that Romania was an already established state, whereas Slovakia only just entered the community of states.

Toward and after accession the main problem remained the dire state of the economy. It seems that economic problems diverted attention away from ethnic issues; the economic problems were never explained in ethnic terms. This does not mean ethnicity could not become a problem in the future. Romania and the international institutions need to keep guaranteeing political inclusion and cultural rights, or else the proximate causes for conflict as identified by Brown might come to the fore. Also, the international institutions need to guard the geopolitical stability in the region and let states accept the borders as they are. The elites of the minority group, the majority group and Hungary need to continue to work together pragmatically, in order to create trust which eases ethnic tensions. This means that unnecessary use of rhetoric and symbolism needs to be avoided.
4 Conclusion

The history of the main actors in this study, Slovakia and Romania on the one hand, and Hungary and the ethnic Hungarian minority groups in Slovakia and Romania on the other, has revealed the animosity and even hostile relations between them, and how this has come to be. The communist period put the conflictual behaviour out of sight, for it only to return after the collapse of communism.

After the collapse of communism in 1989 the two post-communist countries Slovakia and Romania faced many challenges. Both CEE countries chose to re-join the West and Europe. In order to do so, they both had to go through major societal and political changes, comprising economic reform and democratisation. Moreover, many legal norms, rules and treaties had to be implemented and signed, in order to comply with the norms and demands as laid down by the international institutions Slovakia and Romania wanted to join. The promises made to change certain laws or, in the case of minority rights, to provide for certain provisions in exchange for membership, proved to be unsuccessful, as was experienced by the CE and OSCE. The Slovak government in particular was able to stall on or come back on promises made. The linkage of these criteria by institutions like the EU and NATO and actually demanding certain provisions to be implemented before being taken to the next round of talks toward membership, proved to much more successful.

The paradoxical processes of nationalisation of the state versus supranationalisation, and the unique post-communist democratisation, as described in chapter two, made both countries develop slowly, being constantly wary of change and protective of its majority identity. Change, however, was wanted and change was the price to be paid for integration. As described in chapter three, the Hungarian minorities in both Slovakia (see ch3.1, p32) and Romania (see ch3.2, p49) gained more and more rights and protection, and were able to participate fully in society and government, thus excluding discriminatory political institutions as a possible underlying cause for conflict as identified by Brown (see table 1, p10). However despite these rights and minority representation (even in government), psychological tension and actual conflictual behaviour of either the minority or majority group, or the external homeland Hungary, have on more than one occasion revealed itself.

The conflicts, however, were mostly fought over cultural issues and were restricted to the political arena. They were triggered by sensitive topics on the national agendas, and antagonising actions and rhetoric by politicians, usually around election dates. The role of the elites, who operate in the political arena, is therefore important and it is the elites that share
the biggest responsibility in containing ethnic conflict. This thus reveals the importance of the factors of inter-group and elite politics as proximate causes of conflict as described in the Brown framework in chapter one (see table 1, p10).

The importance of elites does not mean that animosity does not exist between civilians of both ethnic groups; however no major mass-triggered conflict has developed on this level in either country (exempting the violent ethnic protest in the Romanian city of Târgu Mureș in 1990, see p51). Major rallies or demonstrations were held only occasionally and were usually triggered by elite actors and their antagonising actions. Violent ethnic conflict was rare as most of the times conflicts were fought with words. And it is most certain that no state-backed violence has occurred; just as the ethnic Hungarians have refrained from violence against the state. It is however the persisting feelings of animosity and the strong sense of identity on both sides, which are capitalised on by political actors; symbolism thus still proves to be an effective tool to mobilise people along ethnic lines. To go back to the Brown framework and the proximate causes of conflict (see table 2, p11), the most likely source for conflict thus lies with bad leaders and to a lesser extent with bad neighbourhoods. The first meaning the antagonising actions of national politicians (including the leaders of the minority in some cases), the second referring to actions conducted by Hungary, such as the adoption of the Hungarian Status law (see p42 and p60).

This study has dealt with the general question why no major ethnic conflict has developed in the post-communist countries of Slovakia and Romania. The main question, around which this study was built, was: In how far has integration with the Western organisations dampened the potential for ethnic conflict in Romania and Slovakia between 1989 and 2009 and what has been done in these countries in the field of development of minority protection?

Firstly, it is important to remember that, as shown with the quote put forward earlier in chapter one (see p9): ‘...there are many different kinds of internal conflict. And many different sets of factors bring about different types of conflicts. The search for a single factor or set of factors that explains everything is comparable to the search for the Holy Grail - noble, but futile’. ²¹⁵ This serves as a reminder that ongoing research is needed to explain why for instance Yugoslavia fell apart, where Slovakia and Romania did not. This study has revealed that the potential for conflict in Slovakia and Romania is there. Consistent patterns of ethnic voting can be seen, there are strong senses of identity, politicians

²¹⁵ Brown, p4.
who wish to capitalise on this and persisting feelings of animosity. The role of the international institutions and the pull of membership, which was certainly valued by both countries, has restrained all the actors involved and forced them onto a cooperative path. As a result a lot has been done in the field of minority protection. This development is still ongoing, and although a lot has been achieved, room for improvement on all sides still exists.

The key words seem to be trust, pragmatism and a learning attitude. The international institutions should look closely at the norms and provisions it develops, and should address the ambiguity which surrounds minority protection and rights, such as clarification on definitions used. They should also remain committed to monitoring and, where needed, punishing discriminatory behaviour. Hungary should refrain from publically speaking out on their kin across the border, or should do so at least in a more sensible way as both Slovakia and Romania remain wary of Greater Hungarian ambitions, as expressed by certain groups within Hungary. It should also refrain from adopting legislation aimed to work across borders, unless this can be developed together with Slovakia and Romania by letting them have the possibility to speak out. Slovakian politicians should show more pragmatism and stop nationalist rhetoric, even though votes can be gained from this, and take minority protection serious. The concern with their identity is understandable when one looks at the past. However, their identity and language is not in danger as the very existence of Slovakia, in which Slovaks form a majority, proofs. Romania seems to be on the right path where minority rights issues are concerned, however it should work on bringing promises and legislation on paper and reality closer together. The minorities themselves should continue to cooperate on the political level and work within the frameworks for minority protection provided by the international institutions. Also, they should try and take away majority fears for irredentism and refrain from speaking out on unrealistic goals, which are not supported by the norms as laid down by the international institutions.

This study has dealt with only a part of the whole story. Other possible problems could rise or could be a factor in explaining ‘the ethnic story’ in Slovakia and Romania, such as the economic and social-economic side of the story. Also, questions can be raised concerning the loyalty of the Hungarian minorities towards the Slovak and Romanian states within the realities of the European Union. What, for instance, is the effect of the Schengen Agreements and freedom of movement in the Schengen area on the loyalty of minorities towards the state? What would happen if territorial autonomy, a goal of the Hungarian minorities in both Slovakia and Romania, were granted to the minorities? Could majority nationalism also be a positive feature in politics as it holds the state together as well?
5 Annexes

GENERAL

Map 4. Source: www.stratfor.com

Table 3  Total population Slovakia by nationality, 2001 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population by Nationality</th>
<th>Absolute figures</th>
<th>Relative figures (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovak</td>
<td>4,614,854</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>520,528</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>244,073</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Slovak Statistical Office

Table 4  Vote for Hungarian parties in Slovakia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Stood as</th>
<th>Share of list vote in % (parliament)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>ESWS-MKDM</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>MKM-EGYU, MPP-MOS</td>
<td>7.42, 2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>MK</td>
<td>10.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>SMK-MKP, MLHZP</td>
<td>9.13, 0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>SMK-MKP</td>
<td>11.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>SMK-MKP</td>
<td>11.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>SMK-MKP, Most-Híd</td>
<td>4.33, 8.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ESWS-MKDM: Coexistence and the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement
- MKM-EGYU: Coalition of the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement and Coexistence
- MPP-MOS: Hungarian Civic Party
- MK: Hungarian Coalition
- MLHZP: Hungarian Movement for Reconciliation and Prosperity
- SMK-MKP: Party of the Hungarian Coalition
- Most- Híd: Bridge

The latest census conducted. The new census will appear 2011 on the website to be created: www.scitanie2011.sk

The problem with censuses is defining which individual belongs to which group. It is for instance believed that many Roma minorities also identify themselves as Hungarians.

For more on this topic see: Brubaker (2004), ch2, p28.

MKDM: Magyar Keresztény demokrata Mozgalom; Coexistence: Együttélés; Coexistence was supported by the Hungarian People’s Party (Magyar Néppárt).

MPP-MOS: Magyar Polgári Párt-Mad’arská obcanská strana; this party was formed in January 1992 from the Independent Hungarian Initiative (Független Magyar Kezdeményezés) founded in November 1989.
Table 5  Total population Romania by ethnicity, 2002 Census\textsuperscript{220}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population by Nationality</th>
<th>Absolute figures</th>
<th>Relative figures (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>19,399,597</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>1,431,807</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>849,570</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Romanian Statistical Office

Map 7.  Source: Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad

Table 6  Vote for Hungarian parties in Romania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Stood as</th>
<th>Share of list vote in % (parliament)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>UDMR-RMDSz</td>
<td>7.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PIM</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>UDMR-RMDSz</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>UDMR-RMDSz</td>
<td>6.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>UDMR-RMDSz</td>
<td>6.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>UDMR-RMDSz</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>UDMR-RMDSz</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- UDMR-RMDSz  Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania
- PIM  Independent Hungarian Party

\textsuperscript{219} Most-Híd (‘Bridge’ in Slovak and Hungarian respectively) was founded in 2009 and competed for the first time in the 2010 elections. Their main goal is promoting inter-ethnic cooperation between ethnic Hungarians and Slovaks.

\textsuperscript{220} The latest census conducted. The new census will appear 2011.
6 References

6.1 Books


Mayer, R. J. *Conflict management: the courage to confront*, Columbus, Ohio, 1990.


6.2 (Online) Articles
    [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no4_ses/contents.html](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no4_ses/contents.html)
    [http://www.ce-review.org/99/2/kopanic2.html](http://www.ce-review.org/99/2/kopanic2.html)


http://www.ecmi.de/jemie/download/JEMIE04Walsh30-07-01.pdf

### 6.3 General documents and Internet sources

**Online News Articles**

BBC News  
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/

New York Times  
http://www.nytimes.com/

Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty  
http://www.rferl.org

The Economist  
http://www.economist.com/

Lexis Nexis Newportal  
Any of the other news articles used in this study have been and can be found through this database.

**Slovakia**

Slovak Constitution  

Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic  
http://www.statistics.sk/

Slovak Census 2001, population by nationality  

Czechoslovak declaration of independence  
http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/czechstate_declaration.htm

Treaty on Good-neighbourly Relations and Friendly Co-operation between the Republic of Hungary and the Slovak Republic
EU enlargement key documents

The Visegrad Declaration

**Romania**

Romanian constitution
http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?id=371

National Institute of Statistics
http://www.insse.ro

Romanian Census 2002

EU enlargement key documents

Balkan Pact
http://www.rastko.rs/istorija/diplomatija/pbs_e.html

Hungary and Romania: Treaty of understanding, cooperation and good neighbourliness

**Hungary**

The Treaty of Trianon

**Council of Europe**

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992)

CE Recommendation 1201 (1993)
http://assembly.coe.int/documents/adoptedtext/ta93/erec1201.htm


CE Recommendation 1283

Venice Commission

**European Commission**

EC documentation on the fifth EU enlargement

EC Agenda 2000
European Union

EU Documentation


EU enlargement

OSCE

OSCE resources: online databases and documents library
http://www.osce.org/resources/

OSCE HCNM country recommendations
http://www.minelres.lv/osce/counrec.htm


General sources

http://www.electionguide.org
http://www.eurotopics.net
http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections/
http://www.nationalismproject.org
http://www.worldbank.org
http://www.mercator-research.eu
http://www.unhcr.org
http://www.stratfor.com