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**ZSUZSA CSERGŐ, OGNEN VANGELOV AND  
BALÁZS VIZI\***

**Minority Inclusion in Central and Eastern Europe: Changes  
and Continuities in the European Framework**

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The question of how governments deal with ethnic diversity is fundamental to the future of peace and democracy in Europe.<sup>1</sup> The way this question is articulated and addressed has changed significantly, as European governments and social actors respond to problems of regional security, domestic political contestation, and economic well-being. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the collaborative efforts of European organizations – primarily the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the European Union (EU) – provided a historic opportunity for the development of common European standards about minority inclusion across the whole spectrum of political and economic rights and opportunities available to state majorities. Europeanization – which involved the deepening of transnational institutional structures in member states, the enlargement of the EU to include an increasing number of countries from the former Soviet bloc, and the diffusion of European norms and practices in the EU and its neighbourhood – had a profound impact on the evolution of state-minority relations across the continent. Although Europeanization reaches all aspects of life in EU member and aspiring member states, the governance of ethnic diversity has evolved in diverse directions across the continent, rather than gradually converging toward common standards.

The requirement for state institutions to guarantee ‘respect for and protection of minorities’ was one of the main EU membership criteria adopted by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993.<sup>2</sup> Thus, minority protection became an important goal of the European integration project. A fundamental tension underlying this goal, however, has been that ethnic minorities are viewed both as vulnerable in majoritarian nation-state structures and as potentially threatening to the stability of states and to European security (Kymlicka, 2008). Influential scholars have argued that EU integration contributed significantly to the pacification of interethnic relations in the region (Kelley, 2006; Jenne, 2015). Yet a major question remains unanswered: can the advancement of Europeanization lead to a de-securitization of minority claims? In other words, does the greater entrenchment of European norms, institutions, and practices enable actors to move beyond the traditional security paradigm in which

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<sup>2</sup> European Council (1993) Presidency Conclusions. Copenhagen European Council – 21-22 June 1993. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop_en.pdf) (accessed December 27, 2017).

minorities feature as risks? This special issue of *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics* offers important insights about this question. Employing the concept of minority inclusion as a broad category for describing the diverse spectrum of laws, policies, and practices that define state-minority relations, we focus on changes and continuities in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) one decade after the completion of the EU's major 'Eastern Enlargement' project of 2004-2007, which provided European actors and institutions with unprecedented leverage for influencing state constitutions and policies in Eastern Europe.

The central argument of this introductory essay is that the processes of Europeanization have not fundamentally altered the notion that minorities constitute a security threat, but they have created important building blocks for de-securitization. A decade after the completion of the first round of EU enlargement, governments in CEE continue to employ traditional nation-state policies, justifying them as necessary for the protection of ethnically conceived (titular) majority nations. Against that backdrop, minorities are easily framed as sources of internal and external threats. Given the prevalence of activist kin-states in the region, large ethnic minorities with kin-states present major challenges. Other minorities are also framed as risks. Roma, for instance, are commonly associated with poverty and crime and are perceived as threats to the socio-economic well-being of the nation. Since the heightening of the 'European refugee crisis' in 2015, refugees from war-torn countries have featured significantly in protectionist nationalism, framed as both security risks (potential sources of terrorism) and risks to the integrity of national cultures. Meanwhile, in the absence of a robust and common European minority rights regime, the terms of minority inclusion remain up for grabs in ethnopolitics 'on the ground,' as actors adapt to local institutional settings. Therefore, Europeanization has only an indirect impact on the conditions for effective minority participation in public life, and potentials for minority political agency vary greatly across the region. Still, the common European framework offers an opportunity for political actors to move beyond a zero-sum perspective on state-minority relations.

We present our argument as follows. First, we provide a *critical Europeanist perspective* on the inherent tensions of the security paradigm that has defined European approaches to minority protection. Second, we discuss the need for effective minority participation (i.e., minority political agency) in the design of minority policy regimes. Finally, we highlight key insights from the five articles included in this issue about the consequences of that paradigm, the need for new approaches, and the building blocks for change toward more democratic state-minority relations.

### ***1. Security Concerns and the Evolving European Minority Regime***

The rich body of scholarship about the evolution of European norms and institutions related to minority protection places great emphasis on the formative role of security concerns. The association of ethnic minorities with regional security has a long tradition in Europe (Tesser, 2013). Already in the context of the post-World War I peace settlements, various Central and South-Eastern European states assumed responsibility for the protection of minorities under the League of Nations treaty

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system. Those obligations remained selective (affecting only specific states and minorities) and could not stop nationalist and chauvinist policies and territorial revisionism from escalating into another devastating global war. As Jenne demonstrates, however, the mediation processes under both the League of Nations and the post-1990 European integration framework offer ingredients for a security regime under which majority and minority actors can engage in peaceful democratic contestation (Jenne, 2015). Indeed, the current post-1990 period requires such a framework. Nationalist mobilization has again become a key feature of institutional and social transformations across Europe. Instability and insecurity have emerged in many areas of everyday life; and drastic change often leads to the reinforcement of collective (national, ethnic, or religious) identities, which can provide a sense of rootedness and security (Hale, 2004). Electoral competition enables both national majorities and minorities to articulate contrasting claims that reveal or reinforce inter-ethnic conflicts (Cordell, 1999; Snyder, 2000).

Scholars highlight security as a motivation for drafting legal instruments and creating transnational organizations focused on minority issues, particularly the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe High Commissioner on National Minorities (OSCE HCNM; see Kemp, 2001). Others emphasize perceived security threats as drivers of minority policy in state centers (Schulze, 2017). As a legacy of earlier state transformations, most large ethnic minorities in CEE have kin-states across the border, which heightens concerns over regional security and state sovereignty. Brubaker's 'triadic nexus'— involving a national minority, a nationalizing state in which that minority is situated, and the minority's kin-state across the border — has become an influential model for describing such settings (Brubaker, 1996). Smith has pointed out that the EU framework has transformed these relationships into a 'quadratic nexus' (Smith, 2002). European integration created incentives for de-securitizing state-minority relations (Csergő and Goldgeier, 2004). However, state centers keep the traditional security paradigm alive, as political parties employ nationalism (including cross-border nationalism) as an effective instrument for electoral mobilization and party-building (Waterbury, 2010; Joseph, Toperich and Vangelov, 2016).

Nonetheless, contestation has remained generally peaceful in CEE. Stroschein has compellingly demonstrated that 'ethnic struggles' in non-violent settings can evolve into forms of deliberation about the meaning of democratic citizenship (Stroschein, 2012). The European framework has provided opportunities for such contestation to change from the zero-sum approach characteristic of traditional nation-state projects to a different understanding of minority mobilization: as contestation about the terms of political inclusion in a multi-ethnic democracy (Salat, 2003). European actors were in a unique position in their negotiations with CEE actors during the 1990s. They leveraged membership conditionality in coveted Western institutions to seek the deep institutional, ideological, and social changes necessary for EU membership. EU enlargement extended the EU's 'governance and boundaries,' as well as its 'soft governance,' to CEE societies (Friis and Murphy, 1999: 214). Compliance with the *acquis communautaire* enabled an unprecedented degree of penetration of common European standards at various levels of governance (De Witte 1993; 2000; Toggenburg, 2001; Schwellnus, 2001; Olsen, 2002; Sasse, 2004; Rechel, 2009). In

particular, conditionality and compliance involved changes in minority policies in candidate states (Grabbe, 2001; Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005). Beyond legal adaptation, the process also generated ideational effects in the region (Favell and Guiraudon, 2011).

Although no consistent normative framework for minority rights claims emerged, EU institutions had to give a meaningful interpretation of ‘respect for and protection of minorities,’ which formed part of the Copenhagen accession criteria. Against the backdrop of state collapses and new state formations in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, European organizations concentrated on conflict prevention, and the meaning of minority protection remained closely tied to concerns about regional security. The EU’s monitoring of minority rights also reflected a pragmatic and security-focused approach (Sasse, 2008). Still, during the enlargement decades EU institutions developed an increasingly professionalized approach to interpreting minority rights. Political stability remained a primary consideration, yet both the European Commission and the European Parliament anchored their decisions and recommendations in emerging international minority rights law – primarily the Council of Europe’s 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), and major statements and recommendations adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in.<sup>3</sup> In the process, the ratification of the Framework Convention became a tacitly accepted precondition for EU accession (Vizi, 2017). Recognition of the catalogue of minority rights established in the FCNM and in OSCE documents developed into the main reference point for European actors when assessing the situation of minorities in the enlargement process.

Although the EU lacks explicit competence in promoting minority rights protection within the Union, scholars find it plausible that the FCNM, as part of the European human rights regime, may become an external reference for EU institutions when interpreting minority rights within the context of EU law and policies (Guliyeva, 2010; Hillion, 2008). Galbreath and McEvoy (2012) argue that the powerful political involvement of the European Union in extending existing international minority rights norms during the accession process has increased the effectiveness of the emerging European minority rights regime. The overlap and close co-operation between the different international organizations involved – i.e., the CoE and its FCNM Advisory Committee; the OSCE and its High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM); and the EU – have generated a more consistent interpretation of minority rights at the international level.

The purpose and proper instruments for international minority rights protection are debated. State practices differ significantly on the interpretation and implementation of minority rights, and most international documents on minority rights are legally non-binding soft-law instruments. Many aspects of minority rights

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<sup>3</sup> OSCE HCNM (1999) *The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life*. The Hague: HCNM Office.

OSCE HCNM (2008) *The Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations*. The Hague: HCNM Office.

OSCE HCNM (2012) *The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies*. The Hague: HCNM Office.

norms are also contested among EU member states, and they do not enjoy unanimous recognition. Several European states are reluctant to make commitments in this area. For example, while all EU member states are part of the CoE, France has not signed the FCNM and Belgium, Greece, and Luxemburg have not ratified it. Moreover, despite the recognition of ‘its rich cultural and linguistic diversity’ and ‘the respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities,’<sup>4</sup> the European Union applies ‘double standards’ in this field: while the ‘protection of minorities’ constitutes an accession criteria for candidate states, member states, including new EU members that made commitments before accession, remain unaccountable for minority protection. The problem of holding member states accountable for the non-implementation of minority protection commitments remains unsolved.

Scholars have critiqued European minority rights instruments as ineffective, partly because they are ‘conceptually unstable’ (Kymlicka, 2008); and partly because the existing mechanisms for monitoring their implementation are insufficient for ensuring change on the ground (Schwellnus, 2006). Calls for improvement emphasize the need to go beyond legal protection to address problems of minority empowerment (Malloy, 2014). From that perspective, the right to preserve minority identity, economic opportunities, and effective participation in public life are important; minority protection should be a ‘transversal and shared objective to be realized by different actors and instruments in a combined approach’ (Palermo and Woelk, 2003: 7). Hoch-Jovanovic (2014) argues for both top-down and bottom-up Europeanization. This would involve referencing minority rights in EU law and reinforcing human rights commitments, including the commitment to protecting diversity through the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Together with the CoE instruments, such reinforcements are viewed as helpful in constructing a European regime that compels state centers to improve the design and implementation of policies concerning minority inclusion. An important notion underlying these critical approaches is that minority members should be regarded not merely as recipients of policies designed for them but as participants of policy design and as actors that influence policy outcomes; in other words, as political agents.

## *2. Toward Democratic Minority Political Agency*

Under international law, the right to participation in public life is a well-established and widely recognized right of minorities (see FCNM Art. 15, OSCE Copenhagen Document para. 35, OSCE HCNM Lund Recommendations, etc.). It is broadly acknowledged that, beyond equality before the law, protection from discrimination, and the right to have their views heard on general political issues affecting the larger political community (such as taxation, social benefits, etc.), minority members have additional needs associated with their group identification. Effective political participation for minorities requires not only the articulation of special needs but also the ability to shape the rules and institutions associated with

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<sup>4</sup> Article 3. (3) and Article 2, respectively, of the Treaty on the European Union, Official Journal C 326, 26/10/2012 P. 0001 - 0390.

them – ‘from lobbying at one end to making decisions at the other’ (Ghai, 2010: 615). Thus, international soft-law instruments stress the importance of ‘effective participation’ for minorities in public life – participation that involves not only the ‘presence’ of minority representatives but also their ‘influence’ on the outcome of decision-making (Verstichel, 2010: 75). International monitoring bodies, including those in the United Nations (UN), OSCE and CoE, struggle with the question of how the ‘effectiveness’ of minority political participation can be operationalized and implemented.

European integration has expanded the space for minority participation in multiple political fields – domestic politics; cross-border politics involving kin-states; and European institutions, particularly the European Parliament. However, the new opportunity structures are accessible only to politically resourceful and well-organized minorities, and there is great variation across the CEE region in the ability of minorities to construct political agency (Csergő and Regelman, 2017). Domestic institutional conditions, including institutional legacies and minority organizational resources, matter greatly in each setting. The significance of the ‘rules of the game’ in domestic settings is highlighted particularly well by the failures of Roma inclusion. The European Commission actively promoted transnational policies to address the problems of Roma marginalization, including European-level consultation mechanisms (e.g., European Roma Summits organized in 2008, 2010, and 2014) and the monitoring of state practices in the use of European Structural and Investment Funds for Roma-related projects. These efforts, however, have had limited impact on the ground, due to the absence of domestic mechanisms of implementation (Vermeersch, 2017).

Political inclusion can pose significant challenges to democratic governance in multi-ethnic states everywhere, and CEE state centers have addressed challenges by reinforcing majority ownership over the state. Brubaker’s concept of the ‘nationalizing state’ is helpful for describing this type of government, which is prevalent in CEE despite the advances of Europeanization (Brubaker, 1996). The terms most commonly used for describing minority policy regimes – ‘assimilation;’ ‘integration;’ and ‘accommodation’ – remain controversial. Majority and minority perspectives often conflict over the question of which term describes either the realities or the desired model of state-minority relations. In states and societies characterized by ethnic cleavages it is difficult to find a suitable label for a minority policy regime that can accommodate both minority and majority claims. Marko provides a useful outline of different scenarios, from solutions that offer minorities institutional equality through autonomy to those that promote national unity through assimilationist policies (Marko, 2008). ‘Assimilation’ has little appeal to minority political actors. The idea behind assimilationist aspirations is that ‘ethnic groups have to give up their different cultural and/or political behaviour in order to be treated equally’ (Marko, 2008: 271). McGarry and O’Leary (1997) describe the difference between ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’ in that the latter is aimed at creating a common civic, patriotic identity, while ‘assimilation’ aims ‘to maintain a common ethnic identity through the merging of differences into a single melting pot’ (McGarry and O’Leary, 1997: 17). Kymlicka and Norman (2000) propose the term ‘multicultural integration’ for the creation of a new, ‘transcendent,’ identity, which democratic states can nurture without eliminating

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existing cultural differences between subgroups; but the term remains unspecified. 'Integration' is widely used in political discourse, and is adopted as an official model in many CEE states, but the meaning of the term is contested. From a minority perspective, the notion of a shared identity designed by nationalizing state centers can become suspect as a code word for assimilation. 'Accommodation' is also broadly used as a minority-friendly category; but the notion of minority control over ethnic institutions makes it controversial for those who mistrust separate minority institutions as sites of counter-state nationalism. The different treatment, and institutional separation, of members of a minority from members of a majority can also be viewed as a source of inequality (Barry, 2001); or as a threat to national unity. Meanwhile, the policies adopted and implemented on the ground in most cases combine various elements of assimilation, integration, and accommodation. 'Asymmetric accommodation' is a useful category for the policy approach that became prevalent in CEE states during the EU accession process, combining titular majority nation-building with various degrees and forms of support for minority political organization (Kiss and Székely, 2016).

### *3. Lessons from Central and Eastern Europe*

The articles in this special issue offer a closer look at the consequences of the security-centered approach, and on sources of change in minority inclusion in CEE. Timofey Agarin focuses squarely on the impact of securitization in a broad comparative assessment entitled 'From nation-states into nationalizing states: the impact of transformation on minority participation in the Baltic States.' He argues that EU actors and titular majority elites in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania shared the notion that a combination of security concerns and the need to compensate titular nations for decades of subordination under the Soviet Union legitimized the primacy of majority entitlements over minority rights. In Agarin's account, the main formal democratic structures have been stable and in compliance with EU membership conditionality from quite an early stage of Europeanization; yet compliance with 'European standards' did not substantially deter majority elites from pursuing traditional nation-state policies. A zero-sum logic, and the security perspective - involving geopolitical uncertainties about Russia, and uncertainties about the loyalty of Russophone minorities - continue to define state policies, which represent a top-down prescriptive approach to minority integration. As a result, minorities have yet to gain equal access to democratic rights and political and socio-economic resources, and they have increasingly turned to social institutions (e.g., cultural institutions and churches) as sites of identity construction and interest formation. Agarin argues for the significance of minority participation in public institutions, and he highlights the role of political elites as drivers of continuity or change in this respect. His analysis suggests that political elites can become agents of change if they choose to re-frame dominant perceptions about the legitimate place of minorities in public life.

Ognen Vangelov's article, entitled 'Stalled European Integration, the Primordialization of Nationalism, and Autocratization in Macedonia between 2008 and 2015,' is a case study about the instrumentalization of threat in a deeply divisive nation-building project in Macedonia, as a consequence of failed EU accession.

Following the Greek veto on Macedonia's EU membership aspirations, the diminishing prospects of Euro-Atlantic integration provided an opportunity for the government of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski to introduce a nationalist project framed as a necessity for the survival and well-being of an ethnic Macedonian nation, which needed protection from external (Greek and Bulgarian) and internal (Albanian minority) threats. Vangelov calls this a project of 'primordialization' and employs process tracing to demonstrate how its pursuit by the Gruevski political camp redefined the Macedonian political environment. The process generated a deep intra-ethnic cleavage among Macedonians and undermined democratic institutions, with severe consequences for ethnic pluralism. This analysis also suggests, however, that reengaging in NATO and EU accession processes could provide Macedonia with the incentives necessary to tame divisive nation-building and reinforce democratic institutions for the management of complex inter-ethnic relations.

Huub van Baar and Peter Vermeersch combine frame analysis, visual theory, and insights from governmentality studies in a critical assessment of the way perceptions of risk associated with a minority limit the success of European efforts aimed at minority inclusion. In their article entitled 'The Limits of Operational Representations: Ways of Seeing Roma Beyond the Recognition-Redistribution Paradigm,' the authors focus on European strategy toward Roma minorities. They describe this strategy as a balancing act between *redistribution* (to address socio-economic marginality) and *recognition* (of ethnic specificities). They argue that this strategy has major limitations rooted in the underlying 'operational representations' of Roma – which focus on Roma as a 'risk' in the societies in which they live. Van Baar and Vermeersch claim that these representations provide powerful frames for the way Roma become publicly 'visible' and 'governable' – as minorities strongly associated with poverty and extra-institutional activities. The authors call on scholars and policy-makers to challenge the current operational Roma representations, and they offer examples of a possible way forward, toward more 'fluid and contestable' representations.

Karolis Dambrauskas provides an ethnographic study of 'ordinary Poles' in Lithuania, focusing on how minority members adapt to the constraints of an 'ethnic democracy.' In his account, securitization may work in favour of majority-minority moderation, but it also sustains a (risky) status quo in which 'ordinary Poles' find the state's minority policies ineffective. The puzzle motivating Dambrauskas' research is the following: although Polish minority members have continuously expressed discontent about their status, and Lithuanian governments have failed to address the roots of discontent or even to engage in a serious dialogue about Polish claims, inter-ethnic conflict has remained peaceful in Lithuania. Dambrauskas finds that the fragmentation of the Polish minority contributes to the status quo by weakening the effectiveness of minority elites to negotiate claims. As another important element of the explanation, Dambrauskas identifies a shared perception among Lithuanians and Poles of the threat from Russia, particularly since the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea. Russia is perceived as a different kind of kin-state than Poland, which joined the EU and NATO together with Lithuania. Although Lithuania's Polish and Russian-speaking minorities are of similar size, Poles have become less strongly associated with the notion of security.

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Kiss, Székely and Barna, in 'Factors Affecting Turnout among Ethnic Minority Voters: The Case of Hungarians in Transylvania,' offer a micro-level analysis of minority voting, which has become the predominant form of minority political action in CEE. The authors rely on survey data to identify key determinants of ethnic bloc voting among the Hungarian population in Transylvania. Their primary finding is that voting behavior among this minority population is habitually driven. In other words, ethnic bloc voting has become a routinized act, based on the assumption that the dominant ethnic party is the only realistic choice. The authors also find that the capacity of the dominant ethnic party to mobilize Hungarian ethnic voters strongly depends on 'ethnic embeddedness.' This study shows yet another consequence of security-driven understandings of state-minority relations. In an environment where the politics of nation-building is assumed to follow a zero-sum logic, and minority voters do not expect mainstream majority political parties to advocate for minority interests, the choices of those minority voters become constrained: they can either vote for the ethnic minority party or abstain from voting. In that socio-political context, the authors argue, the stakes of electoral campaigns change as well. Rather than articulating and contesting minority interests and goals, minority electoral campaigns focus on mobilizing a sufficient number of votes to ensure the minority party's continued presence in the state parliament.

Together, these articles shed light on major challenges that political actors in multiethnic societies face if they aim to move beyond the securitized understanding of minority protection and create minority policy regimes that are both legitimate (broadly acceptable) and sustainable. Developments in CEE provide invaluable lessons in this regard. The process of Europeanization has not been able to eliminate long-standing and socially embedded perceptions about the zero-sum logic of nation-building and replace it with multiethnic understandings of democratic citizenship. Nor has Europeanization resulted in a coherent minority policy regime for adoption and implementation across the continent. Yet the impact of transnational integration seems to become more effective in those policy areas where a stronger normative framework emerges at the EU level (e.g., anti-discrimination). Moreover, the ability of minority actors to mobilize democratically in multiple fields decreases the ability of state centers to design minority politics in a top-down process. Thus, the contributions of this special issue highlight the need for both European actors and the actors on the ground to find new and adaptive ways to create a more democratic paradigm for state-minority relations.

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**OGNEN VANGELOV \***

**Stalled European Integration, the Primordialization of Nationalism, and Autocratization in Macedonia between 2008 and 2015**

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**Abstract**

In recent years, a kind of democratic failure appeared in the previously successfully democratized region of post-communist Europe. Problems of democratic deficit, and the deterioration of democracy have been increasingly observed in countries that had earlier been considered 'success stories' of democratization. One such case is Macedonia, a country that managed to separate peacefully from Yugoslavia amidst bloody civil wars in the neighborhood and managed to democratize and sustain democracy. Although Macedonia exhibited problems of ethno-national contestations during the period of transition, its democratic development continued in spite of the brief inter-ethnic conflict in 2001. If this success story had continued as predicted, it could be cited as a positive example of how democracy can be consolidated despite ethno-national contestations. However, from 2008 Macedonia began regressing democratically, gradually slipping into competitive authoritarianism. This article examines the process of autocratization in Macedonia through an analysis of how an exogenous shock enabled internal formative events in that the ruling regime headed by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski commenced a process of primordialization of nationalism. This in turn produced a severe intra-Macedonian cleavage, along with further strains in Macedonia's inter-ethnic relations, giving an opportunity to the ruling party with its chief Nikola Gruevski to capture state institutions and consolidate a competitive authoritarian regime.

*Keywords:* Autocratization; Exogenous Shock; Formative Events; Primordialization; Nationalism; Competitive Authoritarianism.

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## *1. Introduction*

In recent years, a significant deterioration of democratic government has been observed in a number of countries in post-communist Europe, where earlier developments created widespread expectations for increased democratic consolidation. Reports about regress in democratic standards have emerged from various parts of this region, including new EU member states – most prominently Hungary (Czigler, 2012; Gyarfasova, 2013; Müller, 2014). Regress to authoritarian policies has also been observed in successor states of the former Yugoslavia that had established democratic institutions and aspired to EU membership – most visibly in Macedonia (Žornaczuk, 2014; Abazi, 2014). These developments signal a regional pattern of autocratization that challenges earlier expectations about democratic consolidation in this region. Much of the literature on democratization in post-communist Europe has identified the European Union as an imperfect, yet still significant facilitator of democratic development in countries aspiring to membership and those that become EU members (Levitsky and Way, 2005; 2010). The failure of countries to progress toward democratic consolidation has been in the focus of scholarship on Russia and former Soviet states that remained significantly tied to Russian political development. Thus, important questions remain unexplained: are countries that were considered ‘success stories’ of democratization for a significant period shifting to authoritarianism? If so, what are the sources of such a shift?

Existing literature on democratic regress and the breakdown of democratic regimes has identified several contributing factors, most notably elite fracturing and polarization (Stepan and Linz, 1978; Simon, 1978; Bermeo, 2003), economic factors (Svolik, 2008), and institutional opportunities (Crenson and Ginsberg, 2002). The aim of this article is to explore the way nationalism features in the process of autocratization, through a case study of Macedonia’s gradual slippage into competitive authoritarianism, brought about by the right wing ruling elites in Macedonia that have ruled the country since 2006. The process of autocratization that has crystallized in Macedonia also seems to become palpable in other previously democratized countries in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Hungary, and more recently Serbia and Poland (Somun, 2014; Strzelecki and Skolimovski, 2016). Macedonia emerged as an independent state from the violent collapse of Yugoslavia with a democratic government (Daskalovski, 1999). Even though it was considered an unlikely democratizer (it suffered an inter-ethnic violent conflict in 2001, and has had continuous identity disputes with some of its neighbours), Macedonia underwent significant democratization (Levitsky and Way, 2010). Against this precarious backdrop, Macedonia was considered a Balkan success story in democratization; it became a European Union candidate for full membership in 2005, and was on its way to join NATO in 2008. Yet, after its stalled NATO and EU accessions in 2008 due to Greece’s objections, Macedonia has seen a gradual but steady democratic regress which transformed its democracy into a political system that resembles what Levitsky and Way (2010) call competitive authoritarianism. The central feature of competitive authoritarianism is the lack of a reasonably level playing field between the incumbents and the opposition, thus the competitive component of the electoral process is severely compromised. I find this concept to be useful for capturing the significance of

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autocratization in Macedonia. The analysis in this paper, *inter alia*, demonstrates how the level playing field between the incumbents and the opposition has been systematically and profoundly disrupted, and how nationalism became a significant framing instrument in this process.

I argue that Macedonia's autocratization, or slippage into competitive authoritarianism, has been triggered by the indefinite stalling of Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic accession caused by the Greek veto in 2008. The Greek veto became the enabling factor for Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and his government to commence a zealous process of what has been known as 'antiquization',<sup>1</sup> and what I call the *primordialization* of Macedonian nationalism, a form of nativism grounded in the idea of ancient rootedness. Primordialization unfolded through government programmes and strategies that together formed a comprehensive campaign designed to appeal to ethnic Macedonians as heirs of Alexander the Great's kingdom. Although the process has been largely referred to as 'antiquization' and sometimes compared to fabrication of national myths of origin and a glorious past elsewhere in nationalist, elite-driven nationalizing policies, I find that the term 'primordialization of nationalism' better captures this process in Macedonia since it signifies the (re)construction of the Macedonian ethno-national identification with myths and narratives that stretch further back to antiquity, in parallel to already existing national myths, with the purpose to infuse a new sense of ethno-national self-identification among ethnic Macedonians. Political elites justified this campaign as an effort to defend the country's name from Greek demands for its re-naming; but in the process Macedonia became re-conceptualized internally as a state that belonged primarily to members of a Macedonian ethno-nation, with roots in antiquity. The discourse and policies associated with this new identity (paradoxically branded as ancient) seems to have had a strong echo in a part of the Macedonian populace, while opponents were labelled as traitors and enemies of the nation. This strategy engendered a deep political and identitarian cleavage among ethnic Macedonians, while further straining inter-ethnic Macedonian-Albanian relations.

The Greek veto of 2008 at the same time significantly limited the EU's leverage in Macedonia in terms of accession standards conditionality. Since Macedonia was already a candidate to become a full member of the EU since 2005, the veto on the beginning of accession talks has largely prevented EU institutions from overseeing the democratic practices and processes in Macedonia through the accession negotiations in a more direct manner, and thus to quell the autocratization tendencies of Gruevski's government at the onset of this process.

In this process, nationalism was both cause and effect, demonstrating the recursive quality of human action (Beissinger, 2002: 9). In the first phase of this process, nationalist contestations in Macedonia came to surface with the dissolution of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Antiquization is a term coined by architectural historians to refer to the Renaissance practice of giving a city the appearance of ancient Rome or Athens through the introductions of structures organized in the classical mode. These were occasionally temporary, as in the case of the 'cérémonies à l'antique' - public events of a political content - but more frequently permanent. This phenomenon became visible in Rome and Florence and in the other major Italian towns around the fifteenth century and spread through the cities of the north - Lyon, Paris, Antwerp and London - throughout all the world, up to our times.' (Tzoni Alexander and Liane Lefavre, 1986, as cited in Vangeli, 2009: 24).

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Yugoslavia and the creation of the independent Macedonian state. The source of nationalism at that time had been the debate about whether Macedonia should be a 'nation state' of the ethnic Macedonian people, or a state shared with its ethno-national minorities, particularly the Albanian minority, which at the time made up 23 per cent of the population. The debate was amplified by immediate external challenges to Macedonian existence as a nation, with control over its own national attributes, such as name and language, from Greece, and to some extent also Bulgaria. These challenges instilled fear and uncertainty among ethnic Macedonians. Nonetheless, during this period Macedonian ethnic nationalism did not become a dominant feature in Macedonian politics. The political elites at the time were intent on creating a liberal/civic constitution and compromised on important demands made by ethnic minorities. The moderation of Macedonian ethnic nationalism during that period was reinforced by fear from a possible spill-over of the horrifying 'ethnic conflict' war in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and later Kosovo. Another major incentive for moderation was the overwhelming political consensus in the country on the goal of joining the post-communist democratizing countries lined up for EU membership.

However, the nature of Macedonian ethnic nationalism changed significantly after the violent Macedonian-Albanian conflict in 2001, and acquired the crucial boost after the Greek veto for Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration. In this period, Macedonian ethnic nationalism shifted from a majoritarian nationalism, which was primarily concerned with inter-ethnic Macedonian-Albanian relations, into an identitarian nationalism defined by policies of primordialization, as manufactured by the right-wing ruler, Nikola Gruevski, and his party Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO - DPMNE). This nationalism focused on the homogenization of a Macedonian ethnic nation, the survival and well-being of which needs to be actively defended from both internal (Albanian) and external (Greek and Bulgarian) threats. This nationalist project engendered a deep intra-ethnic identitarian cleavage, in which the electorates were turned into camps divided, *inter alia*, over issues of identity. The camp supporting Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski became the one associated with this new, primordialized (ancient rooted) identity, whereas the camp opposing it (the Social-Democratic led opposition) was branded enemies of the nation as it was resolutely against such identitarian engineering. The transformed nationalism instrumentalized by Nikola Gruevski could only be successfully propelled after the Greek veto in 2008. These developments, though initially viewed as temporary reactions to outside pressures, led to a steady deterioration of democracy, ultimately resulting in the consolidation of a competitive authoritarian regime.

In other words, the transformed nationalist narrative enabled ruling elites to capture state institutions, fuse them with the ruling party and embark on a steady installation of an authoritarian regime in the country. As Brubaker (1996) contends, exogenous shocks can trigger formative events within the country, such as the process of primordialization of nationalism. The exogenous shocks together with the domestic formative events then put a strain on fledgling democratic institutions. On the one hand, the boundary between majority and minority social and political fields solidified, and on the other hand, a deep intra-Macedonian political and identitarian

cleavage was created. This process weakened the ability of social actors to build cross-ethnic resistance and intra-ethnic cooperation and the preservation of the social contract, which would be necessary to counter the regime's authoritarian policies. The weakness of cross-ethnic and intra-ethnic social resistance enabled political elites to take control of (formerly) democratic institutions.

After defining the concept of autocratization and explaining its usefulness in the post-communist context, I will analyze and demonstrate how the inter-ethnic (Macedonian-Albanian) conflict of 2001<sup>2</sup> triggered the growth and mobilization of Macedonian ethnic nationalism. Then, I will discuss post-violence attempts to achieve democratic consolidation, illustrating how the hardening of ethno-nationalist boundaries and the newly created intra-Macedonian identitarian cleavage triggered and fueled by the Greek veto to Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration attempts contributed to the failure of those efforts and to the rise of competitive authoritarianism. I will conclude the discussion with implications for democratic theory building and avenues for future research.

## *2. Defining Autocratization*

In general terms, autocratization can occur in any democratized country, with various levels of democratic consolidation. Failed democratization, on the other hand, can occur when an authoritarian country experiences a regime change through multiparty elections, but subsequent governments fail to build and consolidate democratic institutions, and in some cases strengthen and consolidate authoritarianism. In other words, countries with failed democratizations have never reached the point of consolidating their democratic institutions. Although sometimes the line between the two types of transition can be unclear, it is important to analytically define it as this distinction can help us in properly tracing the processes of democratic progress and regress, especially in more recently democratized societies.

An influential category for classifying the countries that failed to reach democratic consolidation is 'hybrid regime', which suggests that a country is neither democratic nor authoritarian but a mixture of the two types. Larry Diamond (2002) claimed that even in the 1960s and 1970s there existed multiparty, electoral systems that were undemocratic, such as Singapore, Mexico, Malaysia, Senegal, South Africa, Rhodesia and Taiwan (Diamond, 2002: 23). Yet, he proposed a typology that divides democracies into 'electoral democracy' (in the minimalist, Schumpeterian terms) and 'liberal democracy' (Diamond, 2002: 25), and a typology that divides nondemocratic regimes with multiparty electoral competition into 'electoral authoritarian', 'pseudo-democratic,' or 'hybrid' regimes (Diamond, 2002). Levitsky and Way (2010), however, contend that regimes characterized by the minimally democratic element of electoral competition, but lack a reasonably level playing field between the incumbents and opposition fall in the authoritarian rather than the democratic spectrum. The incumbents' abuse of state institutions inevitably leads to the violation of the fairness of the electoral process, which in turn affects several other criteria that are necessary

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<sup>2</sup> The conflict ended with a redefinition of the Macedonian constitution through the Ohrid Framework Agreement, enhancing the statehood and position of Albanians in Macedonia and introducing a special kind of power-sharing/consociational model.

for a country to be considered a democracy, such as free elections, protection of civil liberties, and a reasonably level playing field (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 7).

Thus, autocratization is characterized by a process whereby the polity had previously established and sustained at least the basic standards of democracy and where the reasonably level playing field between the incumbents and the opposition did exist, but at one point these standards began deteriorating and the polity either downgraded its democracy or slipped into an authoritarian model of governance.

### *2.1. Incomplete Democratic Consolidation and Slippage into Competitive Authoritarianism*

For analytical clarity I will use Guillermo O'Donnell's (1994) concepts of first and second democratic transition in order to establish that a country democratized, sustained and started consolidating democracy, and subsequently regressed. Such a distinction is critical, because an analysis based on a premise of a failed democratization may yield erroneous identification of the sources of an existing authoritarian rule.

According to O'Donnell, the establishment of a democratic government does not necessarily lead to a democratic consolidation, such that democracy, as in Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz's (2001) terms, becomes 'the only game in town' (Stepan and Linz, 2001: 94). The first democratic transition from an authoritarian regime only opens the way for a much more complex and longer 'second transition'. The second transition occurs when a democratically elected government becomes an *institutionalized* and *consolidated* democratic regime. O'Donnell asserts, however, that there is no guarantee that new democracies would complete a second transition or that they would not possibly regress to authoritarianism. A democratic government becomes consolidated when a set of democratic institutions become the focal points of decision-making processes. Furthermore, policies and strategies of various government agents 'must embody the recognition of a paramount shared interest in democratic institution building' (O'Donnell, 1994: 53). In other words, second transition obtains when broad political elites and populations have internalized the notion of resolution of problems by democratic means. Societies where democratic governance has become robust and institutionalized are able to provide a crucial level of mediation and aggregation between structural factors, individuals and the diverse groupings under which society organizes its multiple interests and identities (O'Donnell, 1994: 59). Such institutionalized democratic governance serves as a channel of mediation and articulation of interests. Both formal political institutions and intermediary institutions are part of such an institutional structure that enables social actors to articulate, debate, deliberate or negotiate with each other. The solidification of majority and minority social and political boundaries in Macedonia disrupted the completion of this process; however, this disruption is not necessarily a result of the post 2001 institutional change formalizing power-sharing institutions, but rather the way these institutions have been used.

In contrast, a situation whereby a democratic government has sustained at least basic democratic standards for several consecutive elections after the first transition, and has entered but has not managed to complete the process of the

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second transition will be here called an incomplete democratic consolidation. Countries characterized by an incomplete democratic consolidation, such as Macedonia in the 1990s and early 2000s, exhibit democratic albeit wobbly governance; the democratic institutions are mostly able to manage political conflict, but in political deadlocks sometimes foreign mediation is sought; independent judiciary and other checks and balances do exist but can sometimes be susceptible to political or business pressures; and, more importantly, an influential segment of political leaders and elites have not fully embodied the assumed shared interest in democratic institution building. Additionally, some of the political elites perceive the democratic institutions as a nuisance and as a necessary evil. If an opportunity arises, such political elites circumvent democratic procedures or attempt to influence the independent branches of government, such as the judiciary. In short, countries with an incomplete democratic consolidation, such as Macedonia, are, to an extent, able to provide a level of mediation and aggregation between structural factors and diverse groupings, but the essential institutional checks and balances are not fully immune from partisan influences.

When autocratization occurs in democratized societies, formal democratic institutions mostly remain in place, but the line between the ruling party and the state becomes blurred. As a result, the level playing field between the incumbents and the opposition is disrupted and when this disruption is sustained, competitive authoritarianism ensues (Levitsky and Way, 2002). In competitive authoritarianisms the opposition faces immense impediments in the process of political competition and its likelihood to acquire similar social or economic resources is very low, rendering meaningful competition unlikely. Notwithstanding, Levitsky and Way (2002) point out that although competitive authoritarianisms fall short of democracy, they also fall short of full-blown authoritarianisms. This is so because although incumbents in such regimes may manipulate formal democratic rules, they are unable to completely eliminate them (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 53). Because of the persistence of formal democratic institutions, the opposition in these regimes can still pose challenges to the autocratic incumbents (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 54). These regimes also differ from the regimes where electoral institutions exist but yield no meaningful contestation for power<sup>3</sup>, which according to Levitsky and Way should be classified as full-scale authoritarianisms (Levitsky and Way, 2002).

Macedonia, after its independence from Yugoslavia, with its several democratically elected governments transitioned steadily to democracy throughout the 1990s, but was unable to complete the second transition. It managed to navigate Macedonian-Albanian inter-ethnic tensions against a highly volatile backdrop – it was impaired by a series of exogenous shocks that triggered major events of ethnic mobilization domestically, such as wars in the neighborhood, conflicts over Kosovo's status, Greek trade embargos and its obstructions to Macedonia's international recognition and legitimacy, all accompanied by a serious economic downgrade. These developments, however, did not systematically compromise democratic processes in that volatile period, and did not require robust international mediation on internal affairs. Although a number of ethnic Albanian grievances persisted – such as equitable

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<sup>3</sup> Such as Egypt, Singapore, and Uzbekistan in the 1990s.

representation of Albanians in state institutions and civil services, and the right to higher education in their mother tongue – political elites continued working on such issues through institutional democratic mechanisms, despite highly divisive conditions. Macedonia's political leaders can largely be credited for this outcome, as despite deep divisions and rifts, they resorted to compromise instead of hardline policies.

### *3. Challenges for Completing the Second Transition, Conflict and Collapsing Social Contract*

#### *3.1. The Military Conflict of 2001*

In April 2001, Macedonia became the second republic of former Yugoslavia (after Slovenia)<sup>4</sup> to sign the Association and Stabilization Agreement with the European Union as a first step to accession.<sup>5</sup> This event was expected to pave Macedonia's way to full democratic consolidation and EU membership. However, in February-March that year democratic stabilization and consolidation was suddenly disrupted with a violent conflict, which also marked the beginning of solidification of the inter-ethnic tensions in the country.

In February 2001, Macedonia and FR Yugoslavia signed a treaty on the demarcation of the international border between the two countries (including the border with Kosovo), supported by the international community (Bideleux and Jeffries, 2007: 426). The agreement tightened border control through more frequent patrols, sparking clashes between Macedonian patrols and ethnic Albanian smugglers from Kosovo (Bideleux and Jeffries, 2007). At the same time, Kosovar-Albanian guerrillas from the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK) captured the village of Tanuševeci on the Macedonian side of the border, which marked the beginning of the inter-ethnic conflict in Macedonia. A new Albanian paramilitary was created bearing the same acronym as the UÇK in Kosovo, with the meaning 'the National Liberation Army.' At the early stages of the conflict, the international community (NATO, EU and the US) called the insurgents thugs and terrorists and voiced full support for their military defeat by the Macedonian democratically elected government ('Macedonia on a Brink...' 2001; see: Bideleux and Jeffries, 2007: 428). However, the intensified conflict in the following months and spread into wider north-western territories in Macedonia, and at one point in June 2001 combat action reached the outskirts of the capital city of Skopje. The rhetoric of the international community changed meanwhile, urging Macedonian and Albanian political leaders to commence negotiations on constitutional changes and to offer amnesty to UÇK insurgents (Bideleux and Jeffries, 2007: 434).

The protracted conflict disrupted the democratic process and consolidation. A state of emergency was never declared; however, in May 2001 President Trajkovski visited Washington to obtain support for a grand coalition in Macedonia uniting all

<sup>4</sup> Slovenia signed an Association Agreement with the EU in 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Council of the European Union (2001) *Stabilisation and Association Agreement Between the European Communities and Their Member States, of the One Part, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, of the Other Part*. 26 March, Brussels. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1HhCmFe> Accessed: 18-03-2015

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major parties, winning support from President George Bush for the government's strategy to resolve the conflict through dialogue and through addressing grievances (Bideleux and Jeffries, 2007: 431). The Social Democrats agreed to join the government, thus the ruling coalition expanded to 96 out of 120 members of parliament, and a grand government coalition was formed, comprising the two large ethnic Macedonian parties, VMRO-DPMNE and the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, as well as the two largest ethnic Albanian parties, the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) and the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) (Bideleux and Jeffries, 2007: 432). President Trajkovski's efforts were in line with his compromise-driven policies in an attempt to avert a looming all-out civil war.

### *3.2. Culmination of Conflict*

The military conflict intensified in May and June 2001, and in some instances heavy artillery was used. The turning point in the conflict occurred when the UÇK took control of Aračinovo (a village at the capital's periphery with an Albanian majority) in early June, and threatened to shell Skopje, the nearby Skopje Airport and the largest oil refinery in the country (Bideleux and Jeffries, 2007: 435). Such a scenario would bring the country into a full-blown civil war. On June 21, Macedonian police and army forces started an assault on the village using heavy artillery and helicopters. The international community, and particularly NATO, responded to the crisis by arranging a convoy of buses from Kosovo to transport around 350 UÇK fighters and about 200 civilians out of Aračinovo, supplying several trucks to transport UÇK weapons, apparently to another rebel stronghold further to the north (Naegele, 2001).

This event additionally deepened Macedonian-Albanian divisions, since many Macedonians saw NATO's involvement in Aračinovo as taking a side in the conflict and tipping the scale in favour of the Albanians (Petroska-Beska, 2001). Soon after the UÇK fighters were evacuated, news spread that NATO had 'saved the terrorists,' and thousands of angry Macedonians, including hundreds of armed reservists, protested in front of the Parliament and then stormed the building demanding President Trajkovski's resignation, which was a point when anti-Western sentiments among ethnic Macedonians reached their height (Jovanovski, 2001). Many assumed radical elements from within the VMRO-DPMNE were behind the protest, presumably incited by Interior Minister Ljube Boškoski (Jovanovski, 2001), who later stated for the media that the evacuation of Aračinovo had been arranged 'under pressure from the [international community after] every other house waved a white flag' (Naegele, 2001). This event solidified perceptions among many ethnic Macedonians that NATO and the international community were now treating both the Macedonian government and the 'terrorists' as two sides in a conflict. Moreover, many ethnic Macedonians saw threats of aid restrictions from the international community as threats detrimental to the interests of ethnic Macedonians and favorable to ethnic Albanians (Petroska-Beska, 2001).

### *3.3. The Ohrid Framework Agreement: Constitutional Changes and Formalized Power-Sharing*

Fighting decreased in July 2001, and the realization that violence did not really achieve much had started to take root on both sides (Jovanovski, 2001). Negotiations continued between the Macedonians and the Albanians represented by their political parties under the auspices of President Trajkovski and with the involvement of facilitators from the US and EU. The Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) was negotiated over seven gruelling weeks and signed in the city of Ohrid on 13 August 2001 by representatives of Macedonia's four main political parties.<sup>6</sup> The Agreement ended the military conflict and its stipulations became constitutional amendments adopted in Parliament in November 2001 (Dimiskova, 2001). The 15 new amendments modified several important articles of the Constitution defining the nature of the state, including the Preamble, where symbolically Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Roma, Bosniaks, and Vlachs received a more equal recognition, defined as peoples of Macedonia. Albanian was introduced as the second official language in defined circumstances, and Albanians were guaranteed equitable representation in civil services. Among important constitutional changes was the power-sharing (consociational) provision in Parliament, where the ethnic minority of over 20 per cent of the country's population (namely the Albanians) received an effective veto right to be applied to a range of laws including the new constitutional provisions for the use of symbols and new provisions for local government. These rights were an extension to already existing linguistic, educational and cultural rights from the 1991 Constitution.<sup>7</sup>

Although the Ohrid Framework Agreement addressed many of the grievances of the Albanian ethnic community in Macedonia, the violent conflict of 2001 appears to have been the single most intense formative event solidifying the interethnic conflict. Many ethnic Macedonians had suspicions about the long-term viability of the state with its new constitutional design. They saw the Agreement as a consequence of their perceived military defeat and it having been imposed by outside factors (Gromes, 2009). Macedonians harbored even deeper suspicions about secessionist intentions of their fellow ethnic Albanian citizens. This resentment did not seem to diminish over time, as seven years later 70 per cent of the ethnic Albanians believed that the Agreement provided a good long-term solution for Macedonia, while only 30 per cent of Macedonians agreed.<sup>8</sup> Such a development illustrates that a second democratic transition would be increasingly cumbersome. That is to say, a large portion of the population, along with influential elites mostly from the right wing spectrum, had

<sup>6</sup> International Crisis Group (2001) Macedonia: Filling the Security Vacuum. *Balkans Briefing*. Skopje-Brussels, 8 September.

<sup>7</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia *Constitution of Macedonia with the Amendments to the Constitution I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX and XXX*. No. 52/1991; No. 1/1992; No. 4/1992; No. 31/1998; No. 91/2001; No. 84/2003; No. 107/2005 Available at: <http://bit.ly/1N8eR2S>

<sup>8</sup> Gallup Balkan Monitor (2008) *Insights and Perceptions: Voices of the Balkans, 2008 Summary of Findings*. Gallup, Inc.

profoundly different understandings and concepts about the paramount shared interest in democratic institution building.

#### *4. Attempts for Post-Conflict Democratic Consolidation*

##### *4.1. Decentralization and EU Candidacy Status*

Following the signing of the Ohrid Agreement in September 2002, the Social Democrats won an overwhelming victory, expressly punishing the previous VMRO-DPMNE nationalist government for its failure to manage the military conflict. The new Albanian Democratic Union of Integration (DUI), which emerged after the conflict, led by former guerrilla leader Ali Ahmeti won 16 seats and became the largest ethnic Albanian party, while the rival DPA won seven. This emerging ethnic Albanian party that immediately became a dominant force among ethnic Albanians was perceived by many Macedonians as a party led by amnestied terrorists. Observer missions characterized the elections as ‘an outstanding improvement in the process and implementation of a democratically based electoral system’, and ‘found no evidence of widespread or systematic irregularity in the balloting process in the six electoral units within Macedonia’.<sup>9</sup> The Social Democrats and Branko Crvenkovski as a returning Prime Minister formed the new government, inviting the DUI as a junior partner, to the dismay of many Macedonians, since Crvenkovski had earlier promised not to invite former guerrillas into government if his party won the elections (Eftoski, 2002). Such a choice, however, was a result of a tacit acceptance of the power-sharing underlying logic – to share the executive with a winning Albanian ethnic party in order to achieve overall stability and government legitimacy.

The new coalition took on the difficult task of implementing the Ohrid Framework Agreement, consolidating institutions and also to bring the democratic process back on its path to consolidation. Government priority was focused on equitable representation, language and education. The adoption of the OFA package of laws on decentralization still remained to be fulfilled (Marko, 2004). The drafting of the bill on decentralization increased the stakes between the coalition partners, since negotiations focused on gerrymandering in ethnically mixed areas, some of which had experienced a military conflict just a few years earlier. The junior Albanian partner insisted on creating a number of municipalities where Albanians would become new majorities in Western Macedonia. The capital Skopje’s boundaries were also changed so that Albanians would constitute over 20 per cent of the population and Albanian would be the second official language in the capital (Marko, 2006). Such gerrymandering was seen by many Macedonians as an attempt to create an ethnically Albanian compact territory in western Macedonia that could potentially become a federal unit. The ruling SDSM, although willing to finalize the OFA implementation with a new decentralization law, only reluctantly accepted such redrawing due to its high unpopularity among a large portion of Macedonians (Gromes, 2009). The

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<sup>9</sup> International Republican Institute (2002) *Republic of Macedonia Parliamentary Election*. Election Observation Mission: Report and Recommendations, September 15. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1ETtbII> Accessed: 21-03-2015

opposition VMRO-DPMNE immediately disapproved of the bill and insisted that this plan would increase ethnic tensions. The ruling coalition's parliamentary majority, however, passed the law on 11 August 2004 (Marko, 2004). A Macedonian diaspora organization, the World Macedonian Congress, had already started to collect signatures for a referendum against the new law, and after the bill became law VMRO-DPMNE stepped in and helped to collect 180,000 signatures<sup>10</sup> (150,000 are required to trigger a referendum) (Marko, 2006).

The referendum campaign began to deepen the rift within the majority Macedonians. Although only 27 per cent of the registered voters turned out (out of the mandatory 50 per cent plus one), resulting in the referendum's failure, over 90 per cent rejected the Decentralization Law. Rumors started to spread that one of the reasons for the referendum's failure was the USA's recognition of the Macedonian constitutional name a day before voting. With the name recognition the US administration purportedly wanted to mollify Macedonian nationalism and encourage Macedonians to reject the referendum by seemingly supporting the Macedonian position in their conflict with Greece over the country's name (Kim, 2005). Although many Macedonians were elated by the US recognition, many others were suspicious and continued to believe that the country was headed to federalization and eventually dissolution (Peshkopia, 2015). Earlier that year, the Macedonian government submitted its application to join the European Union (Beatty, 2004). In December 2005, Macedonia was granted candidate status, mainly as a result of the government's implementation of the OFA and its post-conflict consolidation (Krasniqi, 2005). The European Union had hoped that this status would boost Macedonia's democratic consolidation during preparation for full membership.

#### *4.2. Elections in 2006 and the Greek Veto for NATO Membership*

The EU candidate status, however, was not sufficient for keeping the incumbent SDSM-DUI coalition in power. VMRO-DPMNE under the leadership of its young leader Nikola Gruevski largely consolidated from its perceived success in mobilizing ethnic Macedonians in 2004 against the decentralization law, as well as its relative success in the 2005 local elections.<sup>11</sup> Gruevski presented himself as a reformer and a moderate conservative who ran on a platform of 'economic and national rebirth (Karajkov, 2006),' winning the general election with 45 (out of 120) seats in Parliament. Within the Albanian camp the DUI won 17 and the DPA 11 seats.<sup>12</sup> Albeit with some instances of violence, the elections were characterized as free and fair, fulfilling international standards (Røseth, 2006). VMRO-DPMNE invited the DPA as a junior partner, along with other smaller partners, such as the New Social Democratic party, which had earlier split from the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia. The VMRO-DPMNE and DPA coalition was a breach of the established, albeit informal, norm that the Albanian ethnic party with the largest support among

<sup>10</sup> 150,000 are required to trigger a referendum.

<sup>11</sup> Macedonia Local Elections: Election Summary (2005) *Southeast European Times*, 13 March. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1DZmaZm> Accessed: 20-03-2015

<sup>12</sup> Election Guide (2006). Macedonia, 5 July. Available at: <http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/1452/> Accessed: 15-03-2015

Albanians would be part of the executive. Such a breach signaled VMRO-DPMNE's disregard of the power-sharing arrangement spirit. DUI had insisted it should be part of the executive since it represented the will of the majority of the Albanians (Karajkov, 2006). Such an informal breach further hindered the full democratic consolidation as the DUI considered the government illegitimate (Karajkov, 2006).

The critical juncture, however, occurred at the Bucharest NATO Summit in 2008. Macedonia, along with Albania and Croatia, had been preparing within the NATO Action Plan for full membership; however, Greece vetoed its membership on grounds of the unresolved name dispute (Peshkopia, 2015: 199). This event started a spiral of protracted intra-Macedonian rifts, along with the solidified Macedonian-Albanian divisions. NATO and EU membership had been a national consensus, but the name of the country has been particularly important to the majority population (ethnic Macedonians), considering that a change of the country's name for many Macedonians meant an alteration of the country's identity and, along with its new constitutional design, further deterioration of its capacities for survival and cultural reproduction. Moreover, in strategic terms, Macedonia's NATO membership (and later EU membership) had been the overwhelming consensus among Macedonian and Albanian political factors across the spectrum. The Euro-Atlantic integration, especially for Macedonians, had been seen as the utmost strategic goal in that it would effectively level the playing field between Macedonia and Greece in the resolution of the name dispute later on, while for Albanians this meant security and open borders with their kin in Albania and Kosovo once they integrated, too. At the same time, most ethnic Albanians did not find the country's name of paramount significance; they believed the country's integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures to be more important than whatever the name compromise would be (Peshkopia, 2015: 197; Gromes, 2009: 26). The Greek veto in 2008 deepened the intra-Macedonian rift revolving around the rhetoric of traitors and defenders of national interests, which will be tackled in more detail in the following section. The prior solidification of the inter-ethnic division and the newly formed intra-Macedonian divisions that exceeded the boundaries of political contestations and entered the sphere of identitarian divisions, marked Macedonia's profound challenge to complete the second transition and fully consolidate democratically, since both the inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic social contracts had been gradually collapsing.

### *5. Primordialization of Nationalism and Autocratization*

Macedonia's primordialization of nationalism and autocratization were set in motion after the Greek veto in NATO, when Prime Minister Gruevski called for early elections in June 2008. Unlike in 2006, he ran on a highly nationalistic platform capitalizing on the Macedonians' frustration with the Greek veto earlier that year. He accused the Social Democrats of choosing to sell off the country's name for NATO membership. Gruevski exclaimed that he wanted a triumph, and not just a victory, which he got by winning 63 out of 120 seats in Parliament, the greatest win in the history of the party, while the Social Democrats only won 27 (Auer, 2008). The DUI won 18 seats, confirming its leading position among the Albanians while the DPA garnered 11. Despite VMRO-DPMNE's convincing victory, international observers

called the 2008 election the worst in Macedonia's history as an independent state, due to widespread violence before and on the day of the election, mostly within the Albanian ethnic community (Auer, 2008; OSCE, 2008).<sup>13</sup> Since the DPA had left the coalition with VMRO-DPMNE and decided to be an opposition force before the elections, Gruevski had to invite the DUI as its junior coalition partner. Moreover, DUI was able to secure the double parliamentary majority, a constitutional device requiring a majority of votes from the ethnic minority representatives on a range of legislations. Later in 2008, Greece also blocked the beginning of Macedonia's EU accession negotiations, marking a potential long-term stalling of Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integrations.<sup>14</sup>

Pandering to heightened majority Macedonian nationalism resulting from the Greek vetoes in 2008, Gruevski's government initiated a large-scale reconstruction of the capital city of Skopje in neoclassical and baroque styles in 2010, naming it the Skopje 2014 project. The project featured an eight-story-tall statue of Alexander the Great towering over Macedonia Square (Graan, 2013: 161). This statue was erected as the cornerstone of a larger government strategy to 'strengthen' the Macedonian nation, generating notable discontent and polarization in Macedonian society (Graan, 2013: 162). This project was Gruevski's apparent answer to Greece's vetoes on Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integrations,<sup>15</sup> by introducing a 'national renaissance' project termed by its opponents an *antiquization* of the Macedonian identity (Vangeli, 2011). The antiquization meant a primordialized view of the Macedonian ethnic identity with its roots in the ancient kingdom of Macedonia. This primordialized narrative was to assert Macedonia's name, identity and history domestically and internationally amid Greek challenges and blockages of Macedonia's international legitimacy. On one side, the project's many supporters celebrated the makeover, while opponents of the plan<sup>16</sup> on the other side offered arguments that its mono-ethnic primordialized narrative of Macedonian history would exacerbate ethnic tensions: that its flaunting of Macedonian claims to antiquity would unnecessarily antagonize neighboring Greece; that the implementation of this project bypassed proper public consultation and incurred enormous costs in one of the poorest countries in Europe (Graan, 2013: 162). The project not only turned into another bone of contention between Macedonians and Albanians, but it also triggered a deep intra-Macedonian rift over the Macedonians' identity. Ethnic Macedonians divided into two camps, popularly dubbed 'Ancient' and 'Slavic,' which, as a division tended to replicate itself through political mobilization (Vangeli, 2011: 24). Also, Gruevski's government, with the use of co-opted media, launched a campaign labelling anyone opposing the project a traitor of national interests, a 'Sorosoid'<sup>17</sup> and a Greek mercenary (Brunwasser,

<sup>13</sup> Freedom House (2009) *Macedonia Country Report*. Available at: <http://bit.ly/29RdbII> Accessed: 12-03-2015

<sup>14</sup> International Crisis Group (2009) *Macedonia's Name: Breaking the Deadlock*. *Europe Briefing No. 52*. Pristina-Brussels, 12 January.

<sup>15</sup> The ultimate Greek intent with its vetoes on Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integrations was to force the country to change its constitutional name.

<sup>16</sup> Students, architects, intellectuals, members of Macedonia's NGO sector.

<sup>17</sup> 'Sorosoid' is a derogatory term coined to designate NGOs and activists purportedly supported by the Soros-Open Society Institute in Macedonia.

2011).<sup>18</sup> The Albanian parties have expressed concerns that this nationalist strategy was alienating Macedonia's friends in the EU (Brunwasser, 2011). Albanian leaders have also underlined that the nationalist policies have undermined the foundation of post 2001 Macedonian society and its inclusive model of representation (Vangeli, 2011: 24). Earlier in 2009, Prime Minister Gruevski had issued a public letter to all his supporters calling for a final battle with 'Macedonia's traitors,' 'to cut and prevent their attempts to take our country and citizens hostage again'.<sup>19</sup> The project and the rhetoric of defenders vs. traitors brought the relentless intra-Macedonian rift to new levels, since the attempt to infuse a new feeling of Macedonian ethnic identification with ancient roots and lineage does not entirely resemble the nation building strategies employed elsewhere on the constitution of new nation-states throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Namely, the Macedonian ethnic identification had already been well established after the constitution of the Macedonian republic within Yugoslavia with prevailing national narratives tied to the ancestry of the medieval Slavic culture in Macedonia and the revolutionary struggles for liberation from Ottoman rule in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The incumbent VMRO-DPMNE won the municipal elections in 2009 along with the presidential elections, with Gjorge Ivanov as its candidate. ODIHR reported about credible allegations from all over the country of pressure on or intimidation of citizens, which seriously detracted from the overall quality of the election process. Public-sector employees appeared to be particularly vulnerable to threats that their jobs would be in danger if they did not support the governing party.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, the deterioration of democratic standards became evident following Macedonia's hurdle in NATO and EU integration, when VMRO-DPMNE's government, *inter alia*, began implementing 'national renaissance' or primordialization policies, fueling majority Macedonian nationalism but also triggering a deep intra-Macedonian rift over the Macedonians' identity, thereby not only further solidifying the inter-ethnic divisions in Macedonia, but also creating a new identitarian cleavage within the Macedonians themselves. These policies aimed at reconstructing the country's identity symbolically upon a vision of a Macedonian nation-state with ancient roots. Moreover, these policies enabled Prime Minister Gruevski to assert himself as an authoritarian leader who ignores public debate over divisive policies, cracks down on independent and critical media, and uses the media under his control to stigmatize his opponents as traitors against the national interests.

### 5.1. *Slippage into Competitive Authoritarianism*

Macedonia's slippage into competitive authoritarianism can be observed along several crucial indicators that illustrate the systematic and systemic disruption of the

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<sup>18</sup> SDSM i Sorosovite platenici orkestrirano ja napadnaa svojata zenja na Al Jazeera. (SDSM and Soros Mercenaries Orchestrated an Attack on Their Own Country on Al Jazeera) (2015) *Puls* 24, 19 March Available at: <http://bit.ly/19PNhcT> Accessed: 21-03-2015

<sup>19</sup> Prime Minister Calls for Last Battle with Macedonia's Traitors (2009) *MINA*, 18 November 2009. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1N8eAgy> Accessed: 13-03-2015

<sup>20</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe-OSCE (2009) <http://www.osce.org/odhr/elections/lyrom/37851?download=true> Accessed: 24-03-2015

level playing field between the incumbents and the opposition, such as unfair media access, abuse of state resources and institutions, and harassment of political opponents. Prime Minister Gruevski called yet again for early elections in 2011, allegedly responding to opposition demands. The elections occurred during judicial proceedings against the owner of the most popular private national TV station A1, Velija Ramkovski. Ramkovski had been accused of tax fraud and embezzlement, at a time when A1 TV started to criticize Gruevski's government vigorously. Gruevski and VMRO-DPMNE won the elections with 56 seats, but did not expect the opposition to garner as many as 42 seats in Parliament.<sup>21</sup> In electoral legislation changes, shortly before the elections were held, three more seats were added for traditionally pro-nationalistic diaspora representatives. In its 2011 Elections Report, ODIHR expressed concern that altering the legal framework so close to an election was not in line with good electoral practice, as it affected the timely and consistent implementation of the law. Furthermore, ODIHR reiterated that during the campaign there had been instances of an insufficient separation between state and party structures, contrary to paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.<sup>22</sup> Such lack of separation included misuse of state resources for campaign purposes and partisan rhetoric when candidates acted in an official capacity, which detracted from the overall quality of the election process.<sup>23</sup>

In the domain of the media, Macedonia ranked 36<sup>th</sup> on the Press Freedom Index in 2007 ahead of, or in close proximity to, developed and consolidated democracies, such as the United States (48<sup>th</sup>), Italy (35<sup>th</sup>) and Japan (37<sup>th</sup>). Between 2008 and 2014, Macedonia plummeted by a staggering 87 places, to end up at 123<sup>rd</sup> position, behind The United Arab Emirates (118<sup>th</sup>) and just slightly ahead of Afghanistan (128<sup>th</sup>).<sup>24</sup> In addition, the US Department of State in its 2013 Macedonia Human Rights Report noted that the mainstream media rarely published views opposing the government. The government was the largest purchaser of advertising in the country, making media outlets financially dependent on revenue from the government and therefore subject to pressure not to present views critical of the government. Along with electoral manipulation and control of the media space, VMRO-DPMNE's government has been repeatedly accused of abusing state resources for its political campaigns. Gruevski's government had intimidated judicial institutions over which he had not had full control, such as the Constitutional Court. Political interference, inefficiency, favoritism towards well placed persons, prolonged judicial processes, and corruption characterized the judicial system.<sup>25</sup>

VMRO-DPMNE and Prime Minister Gruevski have been accused of harassing, imprisoning and taking revenge on political opponents on a number of occasions. One such instance was the prosecution of former Interior Minister Ljube

<sup>21</sup> World Elections (2011) Macedonia, 6 June. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1BM5Nsc> Accessed: 23-03-2015

<sup>22</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe-OSCE (2011) <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/83666?download=true> Accessed: 24-03-2015 Accessed: 24-03-2015

<sup>23</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe-OSCE (2011) <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/83666?download=true> Accessed: 24-03-2015 Accessed: 24-03-2015

<sup>24</sup> Reporters Without Borders (2014) *World Press Freedom Index 2014*. Available at: <http://bit.ly/29RzHVK> Accessed: 14-03-2015

<sup>25</sup> US Department of State (2013) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011: Macedonia-Executive Summary. Available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1eDodVg> Accessed: 12-03-2015

Boškovski, arrested just a day after the general elections in 2011 on charges of illegal election campaign financing and misuse of official position.<sup>26</sup> Police allowed journalists to film the arrest, including the seizure of 100,000 euros in cash and a gun from Boškovski's vehicle. Harassment, intimidation and detention continued against political opponents in 2013, such as the arrest of Miroslav Šipović, president of the opposition-led Skopje-Centar Municipal Council, on charges of fraud and embezzlement.<sup>27</sup> Šipović's arrest meant that the opposition coalition could lose its slim majority on the Skopje-Centar Municipal Council, marking a political gain for the ruling coalition.<sup>28</sup> Skopje-Centar is one of only four opposition-administered municipalities and is the most coveted municipality in Macedonia in terms of political symbolism and revenue. It was the municipality through which most of the Skopje 2014 project had been financially realized. In December 2012, unidentified security personnel forcibly ejected the Macedonian opposition and journalists from Parliament, amid opposition attempts to institutionally block the adoption of the profligate 2013 state budget (Čašule, 2012).<sup>29</sup> SDSM thereafter boycotted the Parliament, launched protests against the government, and also threatened to boycott the spring 2013 local elections, which precipitated a major political crisis only resolved by EU mediation.<sup>30</sup>

In an effort to further strengthen his rule, Prime Minister Gruevski called early general elections again in April 2014, along with the regular presidential elections, aiming to secure a simple majority for his party so as to avert 'Albanian political blackmails' (Marušić, 2014a). His party won 61 seats (just one short of a simple majority), while the SDSM won 34, the DUI 19 and the DPA seven.<sup>31</sup> The ODIHR used the strongest criticisms compared to previous reports, stating that biased media coverage and a blurring of state and party activities deprived candidates of a level playing field in contesting the election, contrary to paragraphs 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document and Council of Europe standards.<sup>32</sup> In the wake of voting day the opposition leader Zoran Zaev announced that the SDSM would not accept the election results and accused Gruevski of 'abusing the entire state system'.<sup>33</sup> Later Zaev announced the SDSM would boycott the Parliament, stating that Macedonia was 'a dictatorship in which the voter and the citizens were being controlled'.<sup>34</sup> The boycott continued throughout 2014, and later in the year university students, professors, NGO

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<sup>26</sup> US Department of State (2011) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011: Macedonia-Executive Summary. Available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1CP3cmK> Accessed: 12-03-2015

<sup>27</sup> US Department of State (2013) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011: Macedonia-Executive Summary. Available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1eDodVg> Accessed: 12-03-2015

<sup>28</sup> US Department of State (2013) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011: Macedonia-Executive Summary. Available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1eDodVg> Accessed: 12-03-2015

<sup>29</sup> US Department of State (2013) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011: Macedonia-Executive Summary. Available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1eDodVg> Accessed: 12-03-2015

<sup>30</sup> World Elections (2014) Macedonia, 1 May. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1Iv4XGg> Accessed: 23-03-2015

<sup>31</sup> World Elections (2014) Macedonia, 1 May. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1Iv4XGg> Accessed: 23-03-2015

<sup>32</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe-OSCE (2014) <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/117636?download=true> Accessed: 24-03-2015

<sup>33</sup> Macedonia Opposition Rejects Election Results (2014) *Al Jazeera*, 27 April 2014. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1Bn00KI> Accessed: 18-03-2015

<sup>34</sup> Macedonian Opposition Boycotts Parliament Over Claims of Election Fraud (2014) EurActiv, May 19. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1y6Jv3Y> Accessed: 12-03-2015

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members and members of other civil associations took to the streets to protest against laws largely seen as undemocratic and anti-constitutional. In a series of protests, thousands of students marched against the bill on higher education. Students claimed that the envisaged state, 'external,' exams would hinder freedom of education and abolish university autonomy (Marušić, 2014b). Many professors, human rights activists and student movements from other countries lent their support to the students. Moreover, signaling potential for cross-ethnic resistance to authoritarian government, Albanian students in Macedonia also joined the rallies, which was likely the first such mass rally since independence where both Macedonians and Albanians marched together.

The overarching abuse of state institutions by Prime Minister Gruevski and his VMRO-DPMNE party and the embedded competitive authoritarian nature of the regime was further exposed by a mega wiretapping scandal. In February and March 2015, opposition leader Zoran Zaev accused Prime Minister Gruevski and his counter-intelligence chief, Sašo Mijalkov (Gruevski's first cousin), of orchestrating illegal surveillance of more than 20,000 people for at least four years, including close collaborators and government ministers (Čašule, 2015). Prime Minister Gruevski, precipitating Zaev's public address, announced that Zaev had been charged with conspiring with a foreign intelligence service to topple the government (Čašule, 2015). Zaev began revealing tapped phone conversations of the highest officials, popularly dubbed political bombshells, including conversations between Gruevski himself and his closest collaborators in government, such as Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska, the Minister of Finance Zoran Stavrevski, and other ministers, members of parliament and party members. The conversations reveal alleged wide abuse of public office, large-scale graft committed by upper-ranked government officials, framing political opponents for arrest, financial crime, a take-over of the public prosecutor's office and the courts (including the Supreme Court), and other systematic misdeeds. The conversations reveal far-reaching and deeply entrenched cronyist and clientelist relationships among politicians, entrepreneurs and social actors in all echelons of society. Some of the revealed materials suggest that the Albanian junior coalition partner in government has also been incorporated in such deeply entrenched clientelism and cronyism. Also, the materials suggest that coalition partner relations have been built primarily upon corruptive dealings, as seen in the regular trade-offs for positions in state institutions (including the judiciary) of loyal party members. The authenticity of the recordings was never clearly contested; however, Gruevski, although reluctant to comment on the contents, stated that the tapped conversations had been concocted by an unnamed foreign secret service (Marušić, 2015). The EU characterized the crisis as 'very worrying', adding to concerns that the political glue that held the country's ethnic-Macedonian and ethnic-Albanian communities together was becoming weaker<sup>35</sup>. The EU official remarked that the weaker that glue became, the greater the chance of ethnic conflict (Gardner, 2015). Zoran Zaev and the SDSM, including other smaller political parties, civil organizations and citizens demanded the immediate resignation of Gruevski's government and an

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<sup>35</sup> The glue being the prospect of joining EU and NATO.

establishment of a transitory caretaker government, which would then organize free and fair elections.

In sum, since at least 2011, Macedonia has slipped into a competitive authoritarian manner of governance and Gruevski's regime has been consolidating a deeply entrenched clientelistic regime, widely abusing public office, fusing his family, friends and closest party members with the judiciary, prosecutors' offices and other state bodies that are otherwise necessary to ensure the system of horizontal accountability in a democratic system (O'Donnell, 1998). Such fusion and wide political abuse, along with an almost absolute control of influential broadcast and print media, has severely, systematically and systemically disrupted the reasonably level playing field for political competition between the incumbents and the opposition. The Albanian junior coalition partner has been co-opted within the system of clientelism and cronyism. It appears that such a relationship has temporarily frozen the already solidified interethnic conflict in that both coalition partners have a common interest to support each other in maintaining power.

## *6. Conclusion*

Nationalist conflict has been one of the most salient sources of Macedonia's democratic instability, its inability to achieve full democratic consolidation and its subsequent autocratization. After the first transition in 1990 Macedonia survived as a democratic country; however, it did not manage to finalize its second transition. The outcomes from the Kosovo crisis in 1999 and the ensuing security challenges contributed to the Macedonian-Albanian military conflict in 2001. This development triggered the process of solidification of the inter-ethnic conflict. The implementation of constitutional reforms from 2002-2006 marked the attempt for a democratic consolidation, a period when Macedonia became an EU candidate. However, the intra-Macedonian and Macedonian-Albanian disputes over the process of decentralization with its securitization and ethnicization, further exacerbated Macedonian-Albanian nationalist tensions in that majority Macedonians perceived the constitutional changes as a national defeat and reluctantly accepted the outcomes, while Albanians embraced the constitutional reforms and saw them as an overall victory in their struggles. Such solidification, thus, strongly influenced the ensuing rise and reaffirmation of Macedonian nationalism through its attempt to reject the decentralization law, which consolidated the Macedonian nationalist opposition and helped it return to power in 2006. Greece's veto on Macedonia's NATO membership singlehandedly deepened the intra-Macedonian rift, transforming Macedonian ethnic nationalism into an identitarian intra-ethnic conflict revolving around the rhetoric of traitors and defenders of the Macedonian ethno-nation. The protracted Macedonian-Albanian inter-ethnic contestations and the growing intra-Macedonian rifts marked Macedonia's profound challenge to complete the second transition and fully consolidate democratically. The transformed political and nationalist landscape marked the beginning of autocratization, through the government's implementation of 'nation-renaissance' policies of primordialized nationalism. These policies sealed the inter-ethnic divisions in Macedonia as they attempted to construct the country's identity upon a vision of a Macedonian nation-state with its roots in ancient

Macedonia. Simultaneously, such primordialization policies engendered a deeper rift within the Macedonian majority by creating a new identitarian cleavage, in which the two camps subscribed to different and opposing narratives regarding their national identity. At the same time, these policies and the ensuing nationalist mobilization emboldened Prime Minister Gruevski to assert himself as an authoritarian leader ignoring public debate, cracking down on independent and critical media, stigmatizing and delegitimizing his opponents as traitors against national interests, and prosecuting political opponents, journalists and members of the civil society. Macedonia slipped into competitive authoritarian rule after the elections of 2011 and competitive authoritarianism was especially buttressed after the purge of the opposition from Parliament in 2012, when Gruevski's regime firmly embarked on creating and later consolidating a deeply entrenched clientelistic and cronyist regime, widely abusing public office, clientelizing the judiciary, the public prosecution and other essential checks and balances.

The implications of this case study can be manifold. First, it illustrates the importance of distinguishing between failed democratization and incomplete democratic consolidation in democratizing societies, which allows for a more precise identification of the nature of ongoing processes and problems with governance. Second, this case suggests that the broad semi-consociational institutionalization of ethnic minority rights might not necessarily consolidate democratic institutions, since they could be consensually hijacked by political elites and used for establishing entrenched cronyism and clientelism. The ethno-nationalist conflict can become institutionally trapped and reproduce itself before every electoral round, which can then systemically impede democratic governance and make the society more susceptible to authoritarianism. The patterns of autocratization that of late seem palpable in other previously democratized countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where authoritarian tendencies along with the rise of right wing politics have been observed in countries like Hungary, and more recently in Poland and Serbia, seem strikingly similar to the case analyzed in this study. Also, the case can be illustrative of how exclusive and primordialist nationalism can systematically impede democratic processes and endanger democracy itself in the context of the broader European political crisis with the rise of right wing and nationalistic politics and policies. Lastly, this study can also serve as basis for investigation into how politically contingent 'national renaissance' policies can take deeper social roots within a relatively short period and how they can be used for nationalist mobilization as a means of consolidating authoritarian rule.

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**TIMOFEY AGARIN \***

**Nation-States into Nationalising States: The Impact of Transformation on Minority Participation in the Baltic States**

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**Abstract**

The widely shared perception in the Baltic societies about these countries being national homelands of respective ethno-nations is indispensable for understanding recent political developments in the region. Arguably, the outcomes of the transition from Soviet to European Union member-states have been by far and large positive, forging functioning state institutions and creating polities that are on the forefront of upholding European standards in a range of areas. Much of the debate on the region, my own past contributions included, has emphasised the importance of nation-state-building agendas that have facilitated the transformation of the Russian-speaking population of the region from a formerly dominant nationality of the Soviet Union (SU) into a group that is today a minority in nation-states of Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. Although there are plenty of assessments of how the change in minority members' opportunities has impacted their social, economic and political mobilisation strategies over the decades since the Soviet demise, this article looks at the framework for these groups' participation in public life.

*Keywords:* Nation-state building, Nationalising states, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russian speakers, Polish minority, minority rights in the EU.

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The widely shared perception in the Baltic societies about these countries being national homelands of respective ethno-nations is indispensable for understanding recent political developments in the region. Arguably, the outcomes of the transition from Soviet to European Union member-states have been by far and large positive, forging functioning state institutions and creating polities that are at the forefront of upholding European standards in a range of areas: from economic discipline, to installing (and, in light of more recent challenges in Hungary and Poland, maintaining) independent political and judicial institutions, as well as supporting domestic minority communities' cultural needs. The above suggests that despite initial concerns over the viability of state institutions, in the long run, the Baltic states did become 'normal' members of the EU. Though some concerns remain in different policy areas, the overall design of these states and their political institutions are sufficiently aligned with expectations from member-states of the Union today.

It is with this in mind that the article examines the foundations of the successful story of transition from Soviet to European Union membership of three countries in the region: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Critical assessments of regional dynamics of state-society relations have repeatedly underlined the circumscribed responsibility of the three states toward their minority communities. However, as this article puts forward, the alleged deficits of minorities' involvement in nation-states' political processes and their limited visibility in the public space are, in fact, the norm across the EU member-states. Furthermore, minority marginalisation in the process of nation-state-building has been central to attaining EU membership status for the Baltic countries.

Much of the debate on the region has emphasised the importance of nation-state-building agendas that have facilitated transformation of the Russian-speaking populations from formerly dominant nationality of the Soviet Union (SU) into a group that is today a minority in nation-states of Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. There are plenty of assessments of how the change in minority members' opportunities has impacted their social, economic and political mobilisation strategies since the Soviet collapse. This article looks at the framework for these groups' participation in public life.

I begin with a brief observation of how past relationships of Baltic nation-states with their resident minorities have been presented in the dominant political discourse as a zero-sum game of two nationalisms, that of a majority versus the one of the minority. I move on to discuss how, far from being an independent arbiter during and after the accession process, European actors have been supportive of state institutional design which upheld the interests of the majority, thus implicitly siding against the interests of minority groups. In other words, European actors have been guided by the logic of the 'zero-sum game' and behaved based on the assumption that they ought to take the sides of nation-state builders in this imagined dichotomy of interests. Finally, I outline that resultant from the stance of the European institutions and actors, the opportunities for members of minority communities to participate in public life have been predicated upon the degree of their assimilation into majority public life. Those minority actors who did not blend into the public, majority-dominated landscape have shied away from participation in public life, turning instead to other types of social participation, either via civil society groups or through private engagements, e.g. in

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religious organisations, community support groups, etc. Located outside of the public sphere, these groups remain ‘invisible’ for the public eye. Thus, they are negligible in their contribution to public discussions and political dialogue, and they do not foster interactions between the minority and the state’s political institutions. These hardly form the kind of ‘civil society’ that advocates of ‘democratic consolidation from below’ have in mind when discussing the importance of state-society linkages for fostering more democratic publics overall (I have discussed this previously in: Agarin, 2013; Agarin and Cordell, 2016). I conclude with a discussion of what de facto options there are for minorities’ participation and where the challenges lie for managing ethnic diversity in this region in the future.

### *1. The Baltic States as National Homelands of Majorities*

After the demise of the SU in 1991, the Baltic states emerged in the international arena as sovereign countries, reasserting the political and cultural rights of their majority nations to have a state of their own (Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993). Five decades of Soviet domination in the region provided a controversial demographic legacy with hundreds of thousands of Soviet-era migrants. These communities, however, were not to play any significant role in meeting the expectations of joining Western Europe, nor in assisting members of the majority nations in the state-building process. During the transition, the national governments sought to address the changed demographic situation by introducing legislation to secure the status and increase the use of the state (i.e. titular) languages (Järve, 2002). This aspect of policy-making is usually assessed as ‘redress’ to the titular communities for ‘the discriminatory measures endured under Soviet hegemony’ (Dreifelds, 1988). Thus, the official narrative of statehood across the Baltic states emphasizes the principle of state continuity from the original, pre-Soviet republics to the present, entrusting states to protect their ethnic core nations. This effectively entrenched inequality between the majority titular ethnics, the small groups of ‘historical minorities’, and those who settled in the country during the latter half of the twentieth century. Political elites in the Baltic states have consistently emphasized that their states did not join the Soviet Union voluntarily but were unjustly occupied in 1940 and again in 1944, after the German retreat. All three states, therefore, followed the principle of *ex injuria ius non oritur* (‘law does not arise from injustice’) when creating their legal citizenship frameworks as independent states. This principle substantially affected the political rights of minority, non-titular residents in Estonia and Latvia.

In post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia, only citizens of the pre-war republics and their descendants were entitled to automatic citizenship. In Estonia, only citizens were allowed to vote in the first post-Soviet elections in 1992. As 99.6 per cent of the citizenry declared themselves to be ethnic Estonians, minorities were not represented in the parliament. Since the 1995 general elections, minority representatives have been running on minority party lists or for other parties. Minority parties (including the Constitutional Democratic Party, and the Russian Party of Estonia) were represented in two consecutive parliaments from 1995 to 2003, but since then have failed to collect sufficient votes to enter parliament. Non-citizens can elect, but cannot be elected in municipal and regional elections after a five-year residency period.

Owing to their concentrated settlement patterns, minorities have been continuously represented in regional and municipal administrations across northeast Estonia and areas of Tallinn with large Russian-speaking populations. To some extent, this regional dominance of Russian speaking populations has allowed them to send political representatives into municipal councils and administrations to better look after their interests. However, as the overall political process is geared toward and dominated by Estonian speakers, none of the qualified observers of Estonia's politics have been able to identify a shift toward greater minority accommodation even in these regions dominated by Russian-speaking electorates.

In Latvia, non-citizens are not allowed to vote in either national or municipal elections. Only citizens of the pre-Soviet Latvian state were allowed to vote in the first post-Soviet elections in 1993; unlike in Estonia, these included small numbers of minority citizens. Although over the years naturalization of Russian-speakers has considerably increased their share among the electorate, there was only a slight rise in numbers of Russian-speaking political actors in Latvia, most running on a minority party list (For Human Rights in United Latvia) or an interethnic party (Harmony Centre). The share of Russian-speakers among political elites is significantly lower than their share among the national electorate. This is due to the fact that all individuals running in national, regional and municipal elections in Latvia must demonstrate the highest level of Latvian language skills. Nevertheless, because minorities reside predominantly in urban areas, Russian-speaking political representatives have been elected to municipal bodies and administrations in towns and cities across Latvia (e.g. the mayor of the Latvian capital Riga, Nils Ušakovs, is a Russian-speaker). Administrations across rural Latvia have had negligible numbers of Russian-speakers elected.

In preparation for independence, in 1989 Lithuania's Soviet government passed citizenship legislation allowing all those who resided in the republic's territory to apply for Lithuanian citizenship within two years. When that period expired in November 1991, Lithuania was *de facto* and *de jure* independent from the Soviet Union, and nearly all residents had chosen to become Lithuanian citizens with full political rights. As of 2000, only 0.4 per cent of the country's residents still had no citizenship, divided equally between around 0.2 per cent of those carrying passports of the Russian Federation and residents without citizenship, who did not seek registration for citizenship between 1989 and 1991 (overwhelmingly Roma). Throughout the 1990s, non-Lithuanian citizens were granted the right to elect and be elected at a national level, until changes to Lithuanian electoral legislation in 1999 allowed all residents of the republic (citizens, those without citizenship, and citizens of other states) to vote and be elected in national as well as regional and municipal elections. This has encouraged minority representatives to run for elections regularly in local, national, presidential and European elections on both minority party lists (Polish Electoral Action, Lithuania's Russian Union) and for other parties.

It is crucial to review the political steps undertaken by members of the titular nations in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to consolidate their dominance in politics at large, and impose the view that nation-state-building is inevitable as well as necessary to transition from a communist to a European social order. This will allow us to

consider the options that were available for the minority communities to participate in public life and political process in the Baltics during the transition.

The principle of continuity of statehood – the legal view shared by the Baltic, European and most international organisations and their member-states (Van Elsuwege, 2008) – had allowed the Baltic states to resurrect political institutions of the past, and crucially, to consolidate the view that the states as such were to serve only the citizenry of these countries. While the states were defined as accountable to and serving all of their citizens, the state-citizenry was defined in cultural-linguistic terms as individuals of the ethnic majority community, and members of titular ethnic groups in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania could engage in (re-) building ‘their’ states without considering the preferences of and critical input from any other ethnic communities resident in the Baltics (see particularly: Pettai, 2005).

In this process, a zero-sum game logic came to dominate the political discourses justifying state reconstruction in the region. Within these discourses lay the root of a fundamental conflict dividing public perceptions of the state, its role and its legitimacy until this day: The ‘legitimate national interests’ of the three titular majority nations (i.e., Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians) and the interests of minority populations (e.g., Russian speakers and Polish minorities) have been placed at a loggerhead. The zero-sum logic dominates more than public perceptions, and this is particularly visible in the fact that even some scholarly analyses of the region take it for granted (Jubulis, 2001): Many of these have contributed to the consolidation of perceptions of majority-minority interests as dichotomous, mutually exclusive, and not equally justifiable.

The centrality of the state-bearing nation has been set into stone in Baltic Constitutions. The Estonian case is a penultimate example, where the constitution is ‘established on the inextinguishable right of the people of Estonia to national self-determination [...], which shall guarantee the preservation of the [ethnic] Estonian nation and culture through the ages’ by all the residents of the Estonian state, regardless of their ethnicity.<sup>1</sup> What is more, a constitutional amendment of 2007 had additionally mandated the state with the protection of the Estonian language, *de facto* obliging every diligent citizen of the state to speak it on all public occasions. Yet, the Estonian case is no exception; in the Baltic and more generally post-communist context, constitutions are frequently used to project perceptions of a glorious national past into the future. The state functions as a natural protector of an ethnic nation, which is seen as eternal and contiguous with the state boundaries. The Lithuanian Constitution is a case in point, where the Lithuanian ethnic nation is depicted as having created the state many centuries ago, staunchly defended its freedom and independence, preserved its spirit, native language, writing and customs, fostered national concord across the land, etc.<sup>2</sup> Latvia similarly has aligned the implicit claim of the Latvian (ethno-) nation to tutelage over state institutions as late as 2014 when the Preamble was tacked onto the document. It refers to the Latvian ethno-cultural identity three times: ‘The state of Latvia, which was proclaimed on 18 November 1918, has been established by uniting historical Latvian territories based on the unwavering will of the Latvian nation for its own State and on the inalienable right to

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<sup>1</sup> Estonian Government, n.d.

<sup>2</sup> Lithuanian Government, 1992.

self-determination in order to guarantee the existence and development of the Latvian nation, its language and culture for over centuries, to provide freedom and promote prosperity for the people of Latvia and for each individual.'

The assumption that minority interests presented a fundamental threat to the viability of the reconstructed Baltic states was corroborated by the newly sponsored national historiographies. These presented majority nations as collective victims of Great Power politics, and defined them as 'European' in a sense that delegitimised connections with their Eurasian past and their immediate neighbours. On the one hand, the traumatic experiences of the past have been central to ensuring the Baltic states' concerted efforts to seek, build, and maintain alliances in international forums. With the help of international organisations, Baltic states as 'small states' could countenance 'revisionist ambitions' of the former 'patron power', the Russian Federation and states' vulnerabilities to the geopolitical interests of regional powers, building alliances with other countries and avoid the fate of the past (Lasas, 2004).

On the other hand, the centrality of state restoration in public perceptions of the status of Baltic nation-states has facilitated the return to nation-state-building projects aborted by the Soviet inclusion (Galbreath, 2005). Although this experience of interwar statehood was significantly different in all three countries, they were all marked by the successful establishment of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian states as homelands for the local ethnic majority that asserted its crucial say in domestic politics by out-maneuvring – if not marginalising – minority interests and presenting the cultural, social, economic and political claims of minorities as covert anti-state agendas (Poleshchuk and Tsilevich, 2004). These two aspects of past experiences of the Baltics – the sense of vulnerability to challenges of neighbouring states, as well as the challenge of domestic residents who are not members of the ethnic majority – have influenced decisions about the development of post-Soviet Baltic statehoods in a specific direction.

Perceptions of geopolitical insecurity as well as perceptions of uncertain loyalty of domestic minority groups to their nation-states of residence have often been conflated in practice and in analyses. Despite the extensive examination of the Baltic polities, the effects of guaranteeing privileged access to state institutions for the titular (majority) groups and the long-term impact on the prospects of minority groups' integration have often been left unexplored (Cheskin, 2015). The analyses have tended to reproduce the logic inherent to the statehood restoration argument, suggesting that a state requires a core nation and as such, legitimising the newly (re-) established cultural and linguistic privileges of members of the titular majority (Rupp, 2007). It has been repeatedly underlined by political elites that interests of non-titular groups, and particularly those of communities who found themselves on the territory of the nation-state of the majority as a result of (what was presented in public debate as) 'illegal occupation by the Soviet Union' should not be taken into account at best; and should be dismissed, at worst. This choice of a frame of 'illegality of minorities' presence' has further been used as the tool for justifying the punitive political measures targeting the minority groups. The link established between the 'illegal occupation' and 'legal exclusion of minorities from nation-state-building' has often been criticised by minority representatives, the scholarship and by the European Union as an unsustainable way of ensuring stability of the cultural and linguistic

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environment for the majority (Jubulis, 2001; Lauristin and Heidmets, 2002; Popovski, 2000). To this effect, the ‘policies of titularisation’ implemented in all three Baltic states have ensured ethnic dominance during the period of transition. Because these policies of nation-state builders were innocuous for the majorities, titular publics came to accept these as efforts to ensure the functionality and viability of the post-communist Baltic states’ political institutions in the face of existing domestic and international challenges.

Yet, unlike the uncritical rendering of Brubaker’s core argument (1996), building nation-states did not automatically mean the creation of nationalising states across Central Eastern Europe. The Baltic states expressed their wish to join international security organisations from the very start of their regained *de facto* independence from the Soviet Union in 1991; they did so to ensure external guarantees for their preference of nation-state building. Throughout the 1990s, all three states made significant efforts to conform to the standards required for joining the Council of Europe, and later the EU and NATO (Kramer, 2002). It is mainly the sense of geopolitical insecurity versus their assertive Eastern neighbour (Clemens, 2001), the questionable loyalty of their large Soviet migrant communities (Herd, 2001), and the perception of economic vulnerability (Dellebrant and Norgaard, 1994) that have left Baltic political elites to engage multiple tools in order to push for greater ethno-national cohesion of their resident populations. The explicit desire of the Baltic titular majorities for Westward geopolitical orientation has determined the nationalising policies of three states to consolidate the polities as national homelands for Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians since early 1990s. The dominance of ethno-political majorities ensured their tutelage over their ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse populations until this day.

Clearly one could question whether the goals of ‘developing tolerance and political culture’ stand in conflict with the otherwise declared aims of preserving non-titulars’ ethnic identity and integration into Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian society, as stated in the respective societal integration policies. The clear deficit in the development of relations between the titular majorities and the non-titular, mainly Russian-speaking and Polish minorities has been represented in principle as underlying National Integration Programmes: These reproduce the bias in favour of the state-bearing nations, their cultures, values, and ultimately, their languages as a golden standard which minorities ought to accept in order to become part of Baltic (ethno-) nationally defined societies. Controversies surrounding the programmes aside, the fact that in their large numbers minorities in the Baltics see these as political steps to assimilate non-core nationalities into the titular society (Cianetti, 2015; Nakai, 2014) indicate that the process of nation-state-building was far from complete at the point when Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined the EU in 2004.

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## *2. The Shadow of the EU's Nation-state-building Model*

The context of the EU accession offered an opportunity for the Baltic nation-states to tap the particularly sensitive aspect of policy-making that would offer ethno-national majorities a head start for participation in political, economic and social processes. On the one hand, these policy decisions addressed increasing fears of titular majorities about the survival of their languages and cultures; at the same time, these decisions ensured that local non-titulars were aware that their input into state-building would not count for much. While seeking to strike a balance between the two options, the steps in regulating language use sought to co-opt the greatest possible number of members from the non-core groups in order to achieve socio-economic and cultural-linguistic stability in the region. Not only was this perceived by the national majorities as essential for political security, it also ensured the domination of majority cultures and the growing prestige of majority languages, seen as central for social advancement in the context of nation-states of the Baltic peoples.

Overall, nation-state-building in the Baltic states took place under the guidance of European actors prescribing the establishment of institutions that could serve the nationals of these countries effectively. This mandate has left the definition of 'the citizenry' open, as much as it left the definition of how 'national' citizenship was to be defined up to the nation-states themselves. For the Baltic states, this provided an opportunity to return to the nation-building projects which were left incomplete as a result of incorporation into the Soviet Union. This involved a return to the pre-Soviet ethno-linguistic status quo and has determined policy steps which, although not explicitly aiming to disadvantage non-titular residents, declared the vision of the state as belonging to the majority – a vision which minorities were expected to accept, if not endorse.

The debates on the transformative effect that EU membership has had (or not) on the Baltic states have been taking place since the beginning of the EU accession process. In hindsight, the assessments of EU impact on minority issues in the region went through a period of contented optimism during the accession negotiations in the second half of the 1990s, moving onto that of realism after each of the Baltic states was slotted to join the EU in 2004, and – following EU accession – the period of frustration about the impact of the EU on minority issues in the region.

The reasons for optimism and pessimism have varied with regard to each state and for both minority and majority groups, respectively. The period prior to accession saw both majorities and minorities anticipating the EU taking their 'side' on domestic issues such as minority participation in public life, with minorities themselves, their kin-states and representatives of NGOs lobbying for minority rights. They hoped that the EU track record in safeguarding and protecting human rights would translate into a minority protection agenda. At the same time, majority communities as well as their political representatives in the Baltic states were hopeful that the EU track record in state-building and the EU's interest in security would focus on the positive achievements these states had in harmonising their legislation with that of the EU's *acquis*. Moreover, majorities were hopeful that the EU would support state-building processes and tacitly accept the nation-state-building ideology instead.

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Indeed, the sequencing of invitations to join the EU (first Estonia, later Latvia and Lithuania) has caused a sombre reassessment of the EU's interest in minority issues: Despite being invited to join the EU first, Estonia boasted a large number of non-citizens among its residents, had considerable difficulty in formulating its approach to ethnic diversity at home, and was still developing the society integration programme. Lithuania, with virtually no human or minority rights issues to worry about, was put into the second-tier accession group due to its failure to reform the economy, together with Latvia, which did not have a society integration programme, nor had it developed a sustainable approach to the reduction of non-citizen numbers, nor was it introducing school reforms (e.g. to improve minority education). Both sides of the ideological spectrum – those in favour of greater state concessions regarding policies of minority inclusion, and those maintaining that minority inclusion would/should be resolved by means of generational replacement – could now see that the EU was unlikely to intervene in domestic decision-making where it was not of vital interest for the Union. This included concerns about the design and effectiveness of state institutions, which the EU was to monitor.

With the EU disinterested in confronting the states' watered down approach to minority issues (where these were not explicitly infringing upon human rights concerns), minority issues were pushed back to where they have historically belonged in the Union: into the remit of responsibility by the nation-state. The EU's failure to engage greater leverage against the nation-state approach to resident minorities has significantly decreased the span of its reach into the domestic affairs of the Baltic states, and invited other European security organisations to oversee democratic consolidation in the region (Kelley, 2004). Thus, other international organisations were mandated to engage with and vocalise the concerns of minority groups: the OSCE and specifically the offices of HCNM and ODIHR have become the frontline monitors of political decision-making in the region (Galbreath and McEvoy, 2013). Scholars to date, however positive about how vocal these two institutions have been in identifying the shortcomings of minority protection, have been unable to identify instances where one or another form of nationalism across the region was 'tamed' as a result (Budryte and Pilinkaite-Sotirovic, 2009; Pettai and Kallas, 2009; Kochenov, Poleshchuk, and Dimitrovs, 2013).

During the negotiation of EU membership, Estonian and Latvian elites have – despite their regular accommodation of European suggestions on the issues of citizenship and language legislation – demonstrated little preparedness to compromise their states' favoured trajectory of nation-state-building. Although this led to particularly close international monitoring of Estonia and Latvia on the issue of statelessness, as well as on the state language and education of minorities in Lithuania, European organisations had no instruments left to steer institutional change after the Baltic states' accession.

In this context, Lithuania's social integration was the focus of a more limited interest and enjoyed far less criticism, as it was said to have embarked on a more 'liberal version' of a nation-building project, whatever that might mean (Barrington, 1995; and more critically, Budryte and Pilinkaite-Sotirovic, 2009). Compared to its Northern neighbours, Lithuania enjoyed far less attention, despite persisting issues with the visibility of minorities in public, and the lack of opportunities available for

Russian and Polish speakers to be accepted as representatives of the state if elected. Very few analyses have evaluated the political processes in Lithuania as an ethnicised social integration process serving the political goal of curtailing options for minorities, in order to protect the majority's decisions, similar to the situation in Latvia and Estonia (Kasatkina and Leončikas, 2003). This ambiguous result of Lithuania's original decision to offer a 'zero-option citizenship' was only one step on the path of nation-building and, as my own fieldwork suggests, has not prevented the kind of ethnically-based exclusion which is more clearly visible in the cases of Estonia and Latvia.

The positive value allotted to the national culture and language has been continuous and central for post-communist Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The exaltation of the (ethno-) national culture by the state, its (ethnic) majority nation and international observers. Muižnieks, Rozenvalds, and Birka conclude that the 'emphasis on the majority language and culture as a prerequisite to citizenship and formal membership has enhanced the threat-perceptions of minorities and led to their alienation or identification with the external homeland of Russia' (Muižnieks, Rozenvalds, and Birka, 2013: 288). This tacit acknowledgement of the central role one ethno-cultural community should have when designing political institutions of the state, however, has been instrumental for members of the majorities to gain greater say in domestic decision-making as well as for estranging the multiple speakers of other languages among the citizenry and body of residents. Stringent language regulations, too, have estranged speakers of non-titular languages from participation in public life, and excluded them from social and political engagement.

This is important in the light of the discussion about the EU's influence on, and the resulting recognition of minority languages and cultures: The EU's recognition of the form of Baltic states as 'nation-states' *of*, if not explicitly *for* majorities, has been the cause of both additional guarantees and legal protection for minority languages and cultures, and the fact that nation-states do not belong to minority groups. Therefore, minorities should not expect much state support for culture and language promotion from states where they are residents. Regardless of opportunities in the context of the EU, i.e. outside the Baltic states, and unconstrained in effect by the language regulation, social and cultural challenges faced by the members of minority communities, the currency of state languages has increased. This has created a considerable pressure on groups of minority residents to acquire language proficiency at the appropriate level in order to ensure *individual* rather than *group*-centred participation in public life.

In Lithuania, the visibility of the Polish speaking community has been a thorny issue for over two decades. Polish-speakers reside mainly in and around Vilnius; the Polish Electoral Action party has a strong voter base in the region and its candidates have been successfully contesting municipal, national as well as European elections. Polish-speakers sit in the national and municipal legislatures and the party's leader, Valdemar Tomaševski, was running for the country's presidency in 2014. Despite formal representation, Polish-speakers point out that the state does not commit to the principle of non-discrimination in geographic areas where Poles are in the majority or plurality: bilingual street signs are being removed repeatedly; there is no progress on adjudicating regulations on the proper spelling of Polish names in official documents;

and access to official information in Polish (and other minority languages) is sparse. On the other hand, the Russian-speakers are widely perceived to have successfully integrated into Lithuanian society; though stereotypically represented as advocates of closer links with the Russian Federation, Russian-speakers' political representatives show strong ties with the Lithuanian state, are widely represented in administrations of towns (the overwhelming majority of Russian-speakers reside in cities) and occupy favourable positions on party lists in elections.

In Estonia and Latvia, besides the issue of statelessness, the status and visibility of 'foreign languages' - *de facto* all except the Estonian and Latvian languages, respectively - has caused outrage among Russian-speakers and is central to contemporary ethnopolitical tensions. Governments of both states initiated state language teaching programmes for Russian-speakers as a gateway to citizenship in late the 1990s, largely in response to pressures from the HCNM prior to the states' NATO and EU accession in 2004. Yet, insufficient funding and the lack of qualified personnel, as well as the institutionalised dominance of the state languages and the requirement of language proficiency for naturalization, have combined to leave many Russian-speakers in a socially marginal position even after EU accession. In addition, many international initiatives were naturalised by tightened legislation concerning state language use ahead of Latvia's and Estonia's accession to the EU in May 2004. In Latvia, tensions around the use of the Russian language culminated in a referendum to grant Russian the status of second state language in 2012. While Latvian-speakers have interpreted the referendum as a challenge to their country's sovereignty, Russian-speakers rallied around greater political representation of Russian-speakers and inclusion into dialogue about political and social issues at the national level. Overall, the lack of political representation of Russian-speakers continues to undermine their capacity to communicate specific expectations in political forums and be considered viable contributors to developing social institutions of the state.

Overall, we ought to see the regulation of language use in the Baltic states for what it is: merely a tool of the majority to build a nation-state which serves primarily the needs of, and is accountable mainly to the members of the majority (Agarin, 2010). It is therefore unrealistic to expect that the trajectory for political change, social and economic priorities, and not least cultural and language issues would deviate from the overall nation-state-building paradigm.

Had the representatives of the minority communities interpreted policy-steps not as half-hearted concessions of the local politicians to international pressure but as domestic decisions, one could legitimately speak of the resident non-titular communities being viewed as 'national minorities' who are part of the Baltic nation-states. However, the top-down and prescriptive approach to society integration, and foremost the requirement to identify with the nation-state - owned by another ethnic group - has failed to convey the impression that the state of residence treats (ethno-) national minority groups as a legitimate part of their societies. In the first instance, however, Baltic policy-makers demonstrated repeatedly that they do not see themselves responsible to a segment of society with its cultural and linguistic needs distinct from those of the (ethnic) majority population. More often than not, this exclusion of minority interests has been used as a political tool to ensure majorities' upper hand in political economic competition. If both the titular and non-titular

communities had seen integration into the dominant society as a complementary – albeit personal – decision to retain their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness, one could conclude that concerns about the survival and security of the national majority might have been assuaged. Yet state-sponsored integration as linguistic assimilation into the majority-centred political community has been the focal point of public policy even after the EU accession of the Baltic states.

### *3. Nationalising States and their Minorities*

A range of comparative studies on minority inclusion and minority participation in the decade since EU enlargement began, have underlined that opportunities for input from members of minorities to address the challenge of accommodation in the framework of nation-states are limited (see: e.g. Csörgő and Deegan-Krause, 2011). Research on other EU member states equally corroborates that local minorities faced the choice of either adapting to the new situation of bilingualism transitional into assimilation, or social marginalisation if they chose to preserve their culture and language without acquiring skills in the state language (Shafir, 1995).

Some argue that minority groups in the Baltic states have pursued an assimilation strategy as a rational response to a set of pressures exercised particularly during the period of state-building *on the road to* EU membership from the late 1990s to early 2004 (Laitin, 1998). During this time, nation-state-building was already acknowledged as being a successful tool to prepare states for membership in international organisations. It was acknowledged as such by external observers (the CoE and the EU) (Galbreath, 2005), as a step on the trajectory toward consolidating nation-state institutions and defining the politics in ethno-linguistic terms (Druviete, 2000). This sent a clear signal to minorities that the terms of state-building must be acknowledged, and not reckoned with (Poleshchuk, 2010).

The comparative advantage of Baltic majorities in the early 1990s made it clear that for members of non-titular communities to participate in public life and political processes, they had to adapt not only to a new political, but also to a new social, cultural and linguistic situation on the ground. The issues of political membership have drawn the attention of research on the region, together with some criticism of political marginalisation – and also, at times, political disenfranchisement – of the non-core ethnic groups. I believe, however, that a more fundamental mismatch existed between the building of nation-states and the ever-present mosaic of sociocultural allegiances that did not map neatly upon the idealised language politics view of an ideal matchup between the (ethno-)national and linguistic communities in the region. If any criticism of nation-state-building – if not outright nationalising – public policies could be made in relation to the Baltic states' assessment of their 'nationalities question' during the post-communist and EU accession phases, there is only one aspect of these policies that appears to be genuinely driven by a concern for ethno-national identity: It is that of state titularisation at the expense of, and disregard for the internal diversity of local populations in linguistic, cultural, and ethno-national terms. This, again, has been driven by a radical reframing of societal relationships as having to serve exclusively the titular groups.

The fact that the political elite became dominated by representatives of the core ethnic group signalled to members of non-titular ethnic communities that their choices were indeed limited to either assimilation or marginalisation. The binary choice makes it clear that the nation-state-centred view of statehood has been and remains the norm of the day across 'Europe' which the Baltic states sought to join. This view has been increasingly normalised in the process of EU accession also in relation to other candidate states, such as Romania and Slovakia, which have significant and organised minority communities (Csergő, 2007). Yet, it was also increasingly obvious that the commitment to nation-state-building in the post-communist era was a red herring during the accession phase: it covered up the insufficiently democratic nature of integration processes targeting the minority groups. Minorities were to become citizens in nation-states that were designed as ethno-national homelands for majorities, whereas the populations of these states were always multi-ethnic and multilingual.

Additionally, the process of EU involvement has signalled to members of minorities that it is the state which is the homeland of the minority language that could, and perhaps should assume a more active role in maintaining the language and culture of minority groups - even from the territory of another state (Skulte, 2005; Van Elsuwege, 2015). Herein lies the peculiar contradiction of the EU's impact on the Baltic states' tackling of minority issues as such: if the state of residence is reluctant to support its ethnic minorities, these minorities as well as their resident state come to expect that it is the external kin-state that should be involved in supporting the minority culture and language. However, geopolitical tensions - particularly the fact that the largest kin-state of Baltic minorities has not sought to join the EU and is routinely presented as a threat to domestic security and social peace - suggest that no opportunity has become available for lobbying for minority protection from outside the national arenas in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. This lack of opportunity for kin-states to support their own kin abroad, whether we are talking about a non-EU country such as the Russian Federation vis-à-vis Russians in Estonia and Latvia, or a country within the EU, such as Poland vis-à-vis Poles in Lithuania, has shown the EU's commitment to delegate minority protection to states who are effectively their hosts, regardless of these states' nationalising aspirations.

While implicit in state policies, the nationalising logic of the state also penetrates the choices of non-titular groups, who increasingly start to look like traditional minorities in other EU states (Duina and Miani, 2015; Adrey, 2005). In this process, members of the non-titular communities have adopted pragmatic forms of response to the policies initiated by the titular community in order to preserve their ethno-cultural identity. This was particularly easily done in cases where states pursued nationalising policies which made it clear to minority communities that they were to develop or relinquish markers of ethno-national identity of their own. In so doing, however, members of non-titular communities have put themselves into the position of double dependency from members of the majority in countries where they have lived: First, by reaffirming the guiding role of the titular, state-baring ethnic groups in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to envisage political processes in the region, minorities either accepted or declined these as reference framework for their own ethno-national identity projects. Second - and this is indicative in the increasing prestige of the titular language among the minorities - residence in, acceptance of, and in part also

citizenship of the Baltic states have become central assets for (upward) social mobility and competition in the labour market (Kiilo and Kutsar, 2012; Kruk, 2011).

The ethno-cultural bias of new polities affected the status of minority communities in a range of aspects: from political representation and participation, to complications for upward social mobility and labour market competition, to privatisation and economic security. It has also been argued that the regulation of language use in the public sphere has divided the Baltic societies not into titular/non-titular members, but rather it has created an ethnically specific social structure, the so-called 'ethnoclass' (Agarin, 2013). Some researchers indicated that the risk of social exclusion was endemic for all non-titular residents; those who were non-conversant in the state language were excluded outright from access, not to mention participation in public life (Aasland and Fløtten, 2001). Others suggest that legislation on language use passed in early 1990s has effectively formed a group of people who were pushed away from 'political society' and have since not recovered their affinity for political institutions, political elites and state ideology that treated their residence as expedient (Golubeva, 2010). The change in attitudes of minorities toward the state, titular ethnic group, state language and a view of (multicultural) society have all been in the focus of scholarly investigation (Agarin and Regelmann, 2011). Most suggest that non-titulars have adapted different strategies to deal with the fact of their exclusion, while members of titular ethnic groups have gained not inconsiderable advantages from the shrinking pool of competitors for the same set of scarce resources. All in all, during the EU accession phase it was members of ethnic minority groups who found themselves in need of catching up linguistically with majorities in order to be on par with them in social, economic, and political spheres.

Most obviously, some members of non-titular linguistic communities were better equipped for competition for the same set of scarce state resources than members of majority groups. Others have chosen to adapt to the linguistic regulations of the independent Baltic states, as the scholarship over the past two decades has demonstrated. Unsurprisingly, the social integration programmes in all three states envisage the knowledge of the state language as the *sine qua non* for successful political, social, geographical and cultural mobility. None of these issues are explicitly political, yet their effect has been rather divisive in the context of increasingly important linguistic proficiency. An entire range of secondary factors such as educational attainment, employment structure, socio-economic status, and mobility were made dependent on the adaptation strategies of non-titular groups to the linguistic realities of the post-Soviet Baltic states. In this context, the state-sponsored titular-centred position on the link between the language, state-bearing nation and (ethno-)national sovereignty is explicit in its ultimatum to minority members to either accept and comply with titular dominance, or perish. Thus, Baltic minorities have risked socioeconomic and political marginalisation, if they were unable to cope with requirements imposed by language laws. Those who have avoided marginalisation have done so by adjusting themselves within the political and other processes envisaged and dominated by titulars. In the course of adaptation, improvement in language proficiency played a central role for non-core groups. This fact has been acknowledged by analyses of regional, sectoral and generational differences in adaptation throughout the Baltic states.

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#### 4. *Conditions for Minority Participation in Public Life*

To identify the factors which determine minority members' opportunities to participate, one ought to define the limits for their input into democratic dialogue in their state of residence. The scholarship to date has often placed the responsibility for insufficient engagement in political processes on minorities themselves, as agents who have decided not to engage with and within the political institutions in the Baltic states (Schulze, 2014). However, established by the titular group in order to advantage their own in-group, politics themselves have determined the institutionalised disadvantages for ethnic minorities in the Baltic context (Cf. Csörgő and Regelmann, 2017). Tove Malloy (2005) suggested that European states whose constituent nation finds itself in a precarious position of majority often opt for nationalising policies vis-à-vis their resident minorities and in doing so invite minority resistance, the involvement of external kin states, and frequently also international organisations' keen interest in preventing ethnically based conflicts.

As can be observed over the past two and a half decades in the Baltic states, indeed, the minorities bring forward their own concerns to challenge the state-driven decision-making because representation in ethnically divided societies has been successful for titular nationals as members of majority groups, and has translated into decisive advantages for political participation. This type of mobilisation was widely replicated by members of minorities, *de jure* (as in Estonia and Latvia), and *de facto* (as in Lithuania) excluded from equal participation in state and institution building during EU accession. It also makes clear that they mobilise *as groups* along the ethnic lines in the first instance to achieve representation of their interest in the public domain *as groups* different from the majority and their vision of the state, but merely to have an access to and be able to participate in state-wide political process as individuals on their own agendas (Agarin, 2013).

This, however, is particularly challenging to the dominant mode of decision-making in contemporary European, and specifically post-communist liberal democracies which not only question the minority benevolence in challenging policies and institutions of the state as such, but furthermore invite minority representatives into the ranks of the majority-dominated political elites. These succinct and subtle process of minority co-optation (Agarin, 2009), assimilation presented as functional integration (Malloy, 2009) and asserting equality in the public domain as citizens rather than (the excluded) minority ethnics (Purs, 2012). And it is precisely because the minority representatives find no space for their ethnic identities in the context of political institutions of Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian statehood, they seek participation in politics in areas that have been previously parcelled out for the majority and are not yet reclaimed.

The lack of progress on accommodation of the cultural, social, economic and political rights of minority, non-titular communities in Estonia and Latvia should be alarming to NATO and EU member-states. Arrangements to recognise the connection of minority groups to post-Soviet states should move onto political agendas, particularly following the recent developments in Ukraine and Crimea. However, when discussing the central role played by state institutions in negotiating conflicts between groups over access to scarce resources of the state, it is central to see

minorities as being in both the inferior numerical position as well as in a symbolically more disadvantageous place. If we see democratic politics for what they are as majoritarian politics, and if we see these as taking place in the context of state institutions that are designed to uphold the ethnic majority's dominance, while implicitly marginalising minority communities in their participation and representations, then any kind of democratic politics would need to be referred to as an ethno-nationalist project.

Clearly, all states are driven to establish linguistic and cultural criteria to be able to serve their citizens effectively. The shift of the optics from 'serving the residents' to 'serving the citizens' did, in fact, take place across the post-communist area when state-building began in earnest and found support from European organisations in the 1990s. However, in the Baltic context an additional marker of difference played a pivotal role when reshaping states into nation-states and marginalising (ethnic) minority alternative visions of statehood by establishing the language of the majority as the sole 'pivot' language of the state. The interests of the ethno-national majority have been put into the centre during the process of preparing states for EU membership. The approach of granting state languages centrality in nation-state-building has played an instrumental role during the accession and has not been revised since. Similar processes have also been witnessed across all countries in the region with any significant ethnic minority populations. Thus, one needs to determine, first, whether minority groups participate in public affairs; and if they do - what issues they raise in public, and whether (and how) their voice(s) have been heard.

The marginalisation of Russian-speaking and Polish minorities from political processes in their states of residence has persisted well into the phase of the EU membership (Agarin, 2013). Until this day, ethnic minority populations have rather limited opportunities for participation in political processes domestically or at the European level. Thus, as has been previously observed in a range of studies of minority participation in Latvia and Estonia, but also in Lithuania, the original exclusion of ethnic minority challengers from input into the design of political institutions has boosted the perception of state legitimacy with members of the majority, but has had an inverse effect in minority communities. By solving the legitimacy problem of state ownership in majority communities, therefore, Baltic states have solidified the view of their states' illegitimacy in the eyes of domestic minority groups (Cianetti and Nakai, 2016; Rūse, 2016; Ijabs, 2016). This supports the argument of the article that majority-minority relations - or at the very least, perceptions of these relations - were originally viewed as dichotomous, mutually exclusive, zero-sum game claims or political rights during the initial nation-state-building, and have remained as such until this day.

This has had a double impact on strategies of minority engagement with the Baltic states. On the one hand, domestic political contexts have created opportunities for Russian-speakers and Polish minorities to use the already-established political tools - largely developed as ethno-political tools of the majority - to critically engage with the policy agendas of majorities. On the other hand, members of minority communities in the region have reached out to and developed links with those who could lobby for their interest representation outside the domestic political context. Also in this regard, ethnic minority representatives - from among the political elites,

members of civil society and sociocultural activists – have tapped resources allied to their ethnic resource networks and mobilized identity-building strategies, copying (what were perceived as) successful past endeavours of majority ethnic groups (Agarin, 2011).

Both of these minority mobilisation strategies have been directly affected by the temporal context of EU accession and later, EU membership of the Baltic states. While on the one hand, appeals for the involvement of minorities' kin-states (the Russian Federation and Poland, respectively) have been essential for keeping the issue of minority rights and minority protection on the table during the accession phase, Baltic states' membership in the EU offered arenas to extend claims and raise awareness of the ethnic bias of domestic political institutions, policies and politics at the international level. Crucially, the final say of domestic political institutions designed to – and acknowledged by the EU at the point of accession – serve the members of majority over all other groups, have been explicitly acknowledged. As Waterbury has shown, minority activism across the new members states has gone hand-in-hand with disappointment about the effectiveness of the EU's own engagement with minority issues (Waterbury, 2006).

In contrast to leveraging European support, however, the reluctance of Baltic nation-builders to recognise language and cultural rights and support minority communities' segmental autonomy in education, employment and not least political representation even after EU accession, has facilitated kin-state engagements directly with the populace thus alienated from public life in their states of residence (Waterbury, 2010; Palermo and Sabanadze, 2011). Unsurprisingly, therefore, the lack of progress made by (particularly) Estonia and Latvia regarding the granting of automatic citizenship to Soviet-era migrants has fostered ethnic identity-building on the part of minority communities, who have come to see their kin-states rather than their resident states as supporters and promoters of their particularistic, ethnically-defined interests (Birka, 2016). The reference to the kin-state of Russian-speaking minorities has been particularly divisive: Primarily, it has called into question the success of securing majority-led projects of nation-state-building in the face of assertive domestic minorities; as a result of possible assertiveness of the resident and marginalised minority groups, it had not dealt away with the spectre of geopolitical uncertainty coming from Russia for the Baltic states.

The titular groups in the Baltic states were able to build, consolidate and ensure the legitimacy of nation-state-building projects in the eyes of their own target audiences (i.e. national majorities and the EU) (Duina and Miani, 2015). At the same time, they have been successful, to a degree, in co-opting parts of domestic minority groups into accepting these projects, forcing them to either withdraw from participation or play by the rules of the game dictated by the majority (Kulu and Tammaru, 2004). However, nation-state-building for the majority has had a divisive effect on minority communities and has gradually led to the emergence of fractions who have accepted not only the notion at the heart of Baltic nation-state-building (i.e. that states ought to 'belong' to majorities), but also the agendas of the EU which has supported this vision, namely that it is the nation-states of minorities who ought to engage with and protect the interests of their non-resident kin abroad.

The above discussion shows that different perspectives of state-building in the Eastern Baltic region have focused on the effects of designing state institutions able to maintain state sovereignty in the face of external and internal challengers of *national* statehood. Over the past two and a half decades, the process has gone through three phases: state-building, consolidation of state institutions, and fine-tuning these institutions' performance to European normative standards in order to guarantee sovereignty of the state-nation in political processes, outcomes of political decisions, and design of political institutions. At the same time, however, minority communities – originally viewed as a challenge to national statehood and a liability for states' international image – have been co-opted into this vision, and have come to accept the view of the state as 'belonging' to the Baltic majorities.

From this vantage point, we are now able to see that nation-state-building is done *by and for* the majority; the result is a normalisation of the view that all ethnic groups ought to act and make choices in a nation-state-bound manner (Karolewski, 2009). Thus, while the minorities have been restricted, limited, controlled, etc. in their opportunities for participation in nation-state-building politics in the Baltic states, they have sought politics where their 'voice' could be heard. Whether and to what extent this mode of political, social, economic and cultural interaction should be referred to as 'nationalism' would require a separate engagement. What is clear from the discussion of the Baltic experience is that building a homeland for majorities in the region has allowed minorities to tap into the rationale of 'state ownership' by and for ethnic groups to channel their actions and appease an external lobby, whether it is a kin-state or the European Union, in a way that taps into exactly the same rationale of state-ownership and state-sponsored protection (Arias and Gurses, 2012; Atıkan, 2010). The view that nation-states should include in the citizenry those residents who agree on the principle of state-majorities' privileged role in political decision-making, and accept titular groups' dominance in the public sphere have been normalised over the past decade.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that a decade after the accession, vast segments of minority communities in the region have come to accept little from the EU as regards the protection of their rights. In cases where individual rights were not forthcoming and the EU was meagrely interested in the exercise of pressure on states over issues such as mass statelessness, access to education in the native language, and rampant socioeconomic inequality between ethnic groups, minority members sought to frame their kin-state as the last defender of their ethnic, cultural and language interests. Ultimately, this is what Baltic majorities have been claiming for themselves, and they have been supported in this endeavour by their EU partners since the Soviet Union's demise.

Remarkably, gauging external support for one's own domestic and narrowly-defined nation-state-building project has only rudimentarily addressed the security concerns underpinning majorities' desire to join the CoE, EU, and NATO: whereas the Russian-speakers and Polish minorities were both framed as second-order partners in state-building with rather few opportunities to contribute to the direction and dynamics of political change, these groups have in their majority come to see themselves as genuine minority populations in nation-states of other ethnic groups. On the positive side, this facilitated pragmatic accommodation within the majority-

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dominated society and a degree of societal integration by means of language acquisition to facilitate their social and political integration. However, as these policy steps rarely reflected the requirements of the minority communities and encouraged minorities to assume the burden of accommodation on a relatively short term, minorities in the region came to see their interests as being un-representable by their states of residence. They turned to external actors instead, the EU as well as their kin-states. Inevitably, after the accession the EU lost much of its disciplinary power over nation-states, inviting them to determine for themselves how deeply nationalising they were to be as well as which policies were to be put forward to rule over these states' minority groups.

### *5. Conclusion*

The Baltic states do not present an anomaly either in the context of the EU as such, nor specifically among the post-communist member-states. Though much of the focus in the past has been on the early policy decisions which sought to strengthen the status of the state-bearing nation, most of these policy steps were determined by the drive of the Baltic nation-states to join the EU and other European security organisations. Originally, this geopolitical focus was to ensure the Baltic nations' own unfettered control over the institutions of their nation-states in a regional environment which the titular majorities perceived as hostile. Majorities' limited interest in co-opting resident minority groups as active contributors to the nation-state-building project, therefore, was quickly reframed as the perceived adversarial position of resident minorities and their failure to support the objective of nation-state-building, inviting titular groups to favour nationalising state policies as a remedy. Strengthening the state language and the status of the state-bearing nation had the effect of weakening Baltic minority populations in the region – not only in their social and economic capacity, but also in respect to their own cultural and linguistic self-perception as active political agents.

One could see that the Baltic states have but tacitly accepted their responsibility for their resident non-titular populations. The provisions made for minorities to compete in the labour market, some (and however belated) concern for interethnic society integration in the situation of constant bidding for ethnic majority votes, and the focus on language (as in the cases of Latvia and Estonia) or on ethnic traditions (as in the case of Lithuania) seem to support this point of view. However, seen by the titular nation as a *sine qua non* of future dialogue across ethnic lines, the opportunities offered to minority groups have had little appeal to them. In all three states, the linguistic integration of non-titular communities into the titular society finds considerable support with members of minorities, even despite the opposition to consolidating the role of the state language in public life. This view finds support in Baltic minorities' grudging acceptance of their status as minority in the nation-state of another group. Regulating language use as part of the nation-building process can be justified for different reasons. Yet in the Baltic context, these are hard to separate from the resulting restriction for minority groups' participation in public life and political process.

Some observers suggest that in the Baltic states, the strategies of strengthening the status of the titular language and building nation-states as homelands for the majority were undertaken to secure the sovereignty of the core nation. Yet, it appears that soft security issues, such as social and political stability, and the uni-directional and irreversible transition from a minority status in the Soviet Union to majority in one's own 'homeland' after 1991, were central in this respect. Whether one explains regional dynamics in terms of ethnopolitics, or as an expression of post-communist nationalism, as ethnic democracy or as tutelary transition – all of these explanations underline the rational-choice model of political development in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Applied to Baltic democratic institutional settings, one should analyse the behaviour of political elites in the region as responding to the claims of their increasingly nation-centred electorate to limit access to political decision-making for all those who are not seen as a part of the core (ethno-) nation. These responses involved the public policy framing of minorities as unreliable residents, barely fit to be citizens of the state, and they have imposed linguistic constraints on participation in order to guarantee minorities' participation in public life only alongside the ideological lines favoured by the majority.

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Minority Response to Ethnic Democracy: Poles in  
Lithuania after EU Accession

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### Abstract

This article focuses on the evolution of Polish minority responses to Lithuanian minority policies in the post-EU-accession period. State-minority conflicts in Lithuania have not generated violence or minority radicalization, despite continuing discontent among members of the state's Polish minority (which constitutes Lithuania's largest ethnic minority population) and the failure of the Lithuanian state to resolve the causes of discontent. Employing Smooha's concept of ethnic democracy, the article addresses this puzzle through an ethnographic exploration of the views held by members of the Polish minority about the Lithuanian state's policies of nation-building. The findings reveal a diverse set of critical perceptions among Poles in Lithuania, which emphasize the ineffectiveness of state policies in addressing minority needs. However, a shared perception of threat from Russia, generated after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, helps to sustain the regime's stability and its strategy of stalling the resolution of minority concerns.

*Keywords:* Europeanization, Ethnic democracy, Minority rights.

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## 1. Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, former communist states, pressured as they were by the international community and in particular the EU, embraced multiculturalism as a precept for minority governance. However, principles such as ‘the respect for and protection of national minorities,’<sup>1</sup> enshrined in the so-called Copenhagen criteria – a set of conditions for Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries to join the EU – have not been implemented in full (Kymlicka, 2007). Successful though they were for designing minority-rights-related legislation before accession, these criteria had little observable impact on greater minority accommodation in CEE countries (Sasse, 2005).

This is because, beside the path of democratization, the newly established CEE polities also engaged in the process of nation-building, aimed at creating a state of and for the nation (Brubaker, 1996; 2011). Nation-building processes varied across the post-communist CEE. Contemporary encyclopedias of ethnicity and nationalism distinguish ‘Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania’ (Agarin, 2015) – a group of states with national minority problems of a similar kind. Despite overthrowing the communist regime without sinking into bloody ethnic conflicts, these states have not fully managed to solve problems of their national minorities.

Democratization in the Baltic states has been called ‘a cat’s lick’ because the state in these countries has been ‘privatized’ by the titular nation, thereby marginalizing national minorities and excluding them from accessing public goods (Agarin, 2010). The idea of a nation-state has been enshrined in each country’s constitution and the language of the titular nation has been established as the state language. Estonia and Latvia have deprived a substantial part of their Russian-speaking population of citizenship, thereby turning them into *de facto* stateless persons (Agarin, 2015). However, each country failed to implement and protect minority rights in its own way.

In contrast to Estonia and Latvia, Lithuania from the beginning granted citizenship to all its minorities in the re-constituted state (Budrytė, 2005). This may explain why implementation of EU minority right principles in Lithuania has been more successful than in the neighboring Latvia (Duina and Miani, 2015: 535–552). However, while Estonia and Latvia struggled to accommodate their national minorities’ citizenship claims, Lithuania had problems with the implementation of minority rights. After Lithuania’s EU accession in 2004, minority policy became characterized by a strategy of stalling, which found its expression in a number of unsolved Polish minority-related problems.<sup>2</sup> It may be said that while the existing legal system in Lithuania guarantees the state’s minorities all the rights known to international law, some of these rights that are articulated in Lithuanian laws, (mostly related to linguistic issues), are not implemented fully.

Therefore, one could agree that ‘[t]he three Baltic states are democracies, but also incomplete or flawed nation-states with a poorly developed sense of political community. After more than two decades of independence, being Estonian, Latvian,

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop_en.pdf) Accessed: 26.05.2017.

<sup>2</sup> The argument is developed in more detail in another paper, the writing of which is currently in progress.

and even Lithuanian remains a question of ethnic belonging – of *ethnos* rather than *demos* (Duvold and Berglund, 2013: 362). The three Baltic states, simultaneously pursuing divergent policies of democratization and nationalization, albeit each in its own way, could be called ‘ethnic democracies’ – a term coined by Sammy Smooha to describe political regimes where structured ethnic dominance is matched with democratic rights for all (Smooha and Jarve, 2005: 7). However, if all the three states conform to the major characteristics of an ethnic democracy, then the concept does not help us understand how one ethnic democracy differs from another, or how unique each ethnic democracy is.

Ethnic democracy faces conceptual problems similar to those described by the other famous concept: the ‘nationalizing state’. According to Brubaker, as a concept the nationalizing state ‘does not enable one to predict *how nationalizing* states will be or – more interestingly – *how* they will be *nationalizing*’ (Brubaker, 2011: 1807). Perhaps noticing a similar conceptual dead end, Smooha suggested that ethnic democracy not only helps in the normative analysis of political regimes in ethnically divided societies, but also ‘proves to be a sensitizing tool, at the hands of the investigator, for unravelling the desires, ideas, measures, constraints and institutional arrangements that install ethnic dominance and privilege into a democracy or into a democratizing regime’ (Smooha and Jarve, 2005: 22). In other words, this is a good tool for asking why and how certain democracies become ethnic.

The above use of the concept implies a certain methodological perspective. Critical use of the model could be facilitated by the anthropological perspective and ethnographic research methods. As argued by Charles Tilly, ‘if you believe [...] that how things happen is why they happen, then ethnography has great advantages over most other conventional social scientific methods as a way of getting at cause-effect relations’. It ‘engages the analyst in looking at social processes as they unfold rather than reasoning chiefly from either the conditions under which they occur or the outcomes that correlate with them’ (Tilly, 2007: 428).

Therefore, this study takes an ethnographic approach to analyzing Lithuanian ethnic democracy. The aim of this article is not to offer a typology of the Lithuanian political regime, but rather to study it critically. This is done by examining how ‘ordinary Poles’ accommodate (or not) to Lithuanian ethnic democracy. Studying ethnic democracy through its national minorities could help explain how this type of political regime functions and persists. The article addresses this issue by first establishing the theoretical and methodological setting of the inquiry. It then turns to explaining the current situation regarding state-minority relations in Lithuania. The second half of the article discusses the findings of the study and outlines how they imagine, explain, and negotiate the minority policies pursued by the state in the post-EU accession period.

## *2. Ethnic Democracy in Lithuania: A Bottom-up Approach*

Building on the Israeli example, Smooha developed a model of ethnic democracy as an analytical tool for researching political systems in ethnically divided societies (Smooha, 2002). Later, the model was adjusted for use in the analysis of ethnically divided post-communist societies (Smooha and Jarve, 2005), including Estonia and Latvia (Pettai, 1998; Jarve, 2000; Diatchova, 2005). However, it has not been applied to Lithuania, although the latter has many features of an ethnic democracy.

Ethnic democracy is a type of a political regime marked by an 'inherent contradiction between two principles - civil and political rights for all and structural subordination of the minority to the majority' (Smooha and Jarve, 2005: 21-22). It is also characterized by two main features: ethnic ascendancy and a perceived threat. Ethnic ascendancy is the idea that an ethnic nation precedes the ethnic state, the state therefore serves the needs of a nation, and that nationality, not citizenship, is a necessary condition for membership in the nation (Smooha and Jarve, 2005: 32). In Lithuania, this is exemplified by the fact that the state's independence was not simply declared, but 'restored', suggesting the country was re-established as an inter-war nation-state. Another feature - the perceived threat - means that minorities are considered less desirable and/or a threat to the ethnic nation, and that this threat needs to be controlled by imposing various restrictive measures against the minority (Smooha and Jarve, 2005: 32). Lithuanian Poles make an interesting case here. The minority is seen as the main internal threat, while Russia continues to be seen as the main external threat to Lithuania. Such a paradox may be explained by the pro-Russian<sup>3</sup> leadership of the Polish minority party - the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania - Christian Families' Alliance (EAPL-CFA). Nevertheless, despite various restrictions imposed on minorities, Lithuania is a democracy because of the ethnic majority's ideological or practical commitment to it (Smooha and Jarve, 2005: 33). In Lithuania's case, this commitment stems from the state's desire to belong to major Western political and economic institutions (the EU and NATO).

A few more factors that sustain ethno-democratic regimes are the following: 'a clear and continued numerical and political majority of the ethnic nation', 'continued threat perceived by the majority', 'non-interference of the "external homeland"', as well as 'non-intervention or even extension of legitimacy and support by the international community (foreign states and NGOs engaged in the protection of human and minority rights)' (Smooha and Jarve, 2005: 33). In Lithuania's case, ethnic Lithuanians constitute a clear majority in the country (by comparison, Poles and Russians comprise 6.6 and 5.8 per cent of the state's total population, respectively),<sup>4</sup> Russia is further perceived as the main threat to the state's security, while the external homeland(s) - Poland and Russia - as well as international organizations such as EU and NATO do not interfere regarding the protection of minority rights.

Yet, as admitted by Smooha, '[t]he organization of the state on the basis of this

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21645522-leader-ethnic-polish-party-tries-broaden-his-appeal-reaching-out-ethnic> Accessed: 26.05.2017.

<sup>4</sup> Source: [http://osp.stat.gov.lt/documents/10180/217110/Lietuvos\\_gyventojai\\_2011.pdf/8321a3c1-c8b9-4468-825c-52a7b753f281](http://osp.stat.gov.lt/documents/10180/217110/Lietuvos_gyventojai_2011.pdf/8321a3c1-c8b9-4468-825c-52a7b753f281) . Accessed: 26.05.2017.

structural incompatibility constantly generates ambiguities, contradictions, tensions and conflicts, but not necessarily ethnic and political instability' (Smooha and Jarve, 2005: 22). Minorities do not receive equal treatment, are suspected of disloyalty, and may therefore face the imposition of various control measures. However, the state always leaves room for improving the minorities' position. Therefore, the question is how the aforementioned 'ambiguities, contradictions, tensions and conflicts' do not result in 'ethnic and political instability.'

The objective factors behind instability can vary in different countries, yet the phenomenon may also be caused by people's subjective perceptions. Scholars of the social psychology of minorities have emphasized the need to examine the effect of objective factors such as economic, social, and cultural conditions on members of minority groups (Tajfel, 1981). Similarly, anthropologists try to understand how people perceive themselves and how they behave in everyday life. Anthropologists of the state – a body of anthropological work in itself – have a particular interest in 'the cultural constitution of the state – that is, how people perceive the state, how their understanding is shaped by their particular location and intimate and embodied encounters with state processes and officials, and how the state manifests itself in their lives' (Sharma and Gupta, 2009: 11).

Anthropology and its research methods have contributed significantly to the study of nationalism (Eriksen, 1993; Brubaker, 2006). Relevant to this study is Gregory Feldman's study of the way the post-Soviet Estonia forged a new national imaginary that helped to legitimize the denial of citizenship to its Russian speakers (Feldman, 2010). However, the object of such anthropological inquiries is mostly state-led minority policy, not minorities' perceptions of these policies. But there are some exceptions. Concerning the Baltic states, Ammon Cheskin has shown how Latvian Russian speakers pursue strategies of integration through building a distinct identity of Latvian-Russians (Cheskin, 2012). Monika Frėjutė-Rakauskienė demonstrated the importance of Lithuanian Polish civic and political organizations in terms of minority mobilization and identity building through referencing and recalling the minority's collective memory (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, 2015). This study tries to fill this gap. Following the anthropologists of the state, it asks how Poles perceive the state and how these perceptions shape their response to the state's minority policies.

Consequently, if the state is to be understood as a phenomenon emanating from people's everyday perceptions and imagination, then the state should be looked for among its subjects. In other words, the state understood as a category of cognition should be grasped as an effect produced on people and experienced by them. The anthropologist Timothy Mitchell proposed that the key clue to the state's nature is its elusiveness, and suggested that the state should be studied as a structural effect (Mitchell, 1991: 77). The effect would mean that the state is perceived as an autonomous reality, existing beside society and governing it. If this distinction is accepted as self-evident, the state functions smoothly. Yet, the state can also become visible through its negative effects; i.e., when it is not able or not willing to govern its subjects (e.g. through the non-decisions the Lithuanian state makes about minority governance).

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### *3. Analyzing Minority Governance from Below*

The present study was facilitated by several methods: historical context analysis – to reconstruct the history of Polish-Lithuanian relations and the Polish minority's governance in an independent Lithuanian state –; and semi-structured and unstructured interview guides and participant observation methods for analyzing the nation state from the minority's point of view. Fieldwork took place on six occasions at four different sites: Eišiškės and Šalčininkai (two predominantly Polish speaking towns in the southeast of the country), Vilnius, and Rukla (a military town in central Lithuania). The first occasion was 6 January, 2016 in Eišiškės, when five interviews were undertaken: four semi-structured interviews with local public officers, pedagogues, and one with randomly met youngsters. The rest of the fieldwork lasted from 31 March, 2016 until 5 May, 2016. During this period five participant observations were carried out: four at events organized by the Polish Discussion Club (PDC) – a non-political alternative to the Polish minority party presenting itself as a platform for the exchange of ideas and discussions for a Polish and a Lithuanian audience,<sup>5</sup> and one at the public celebration of the Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad Day (30 March) in Vilnius.

In addition, 24 semi-structured and two unstructured interviews were made in total: 15 interviews with Polish conscripts serving in Rukla; two interviews/conversations with three 'ordinary' Poles in Šalčininkai and Vilnius, nine interviews with minority politicians, experts, a journalist, businessmen, and members of cultural and paramilitary organizations. Participants were mostly recruited using a snowball sampling strategy. The sites were chosen for several reasons. Lithuanian Poles live in both the center and the periphery of the country, yet the cultural, political and economic life of the minority members differs in these locations. Major minority-related institutions, organizations, events, and celebrations take place in Vilnius, the capital city. However, in the periphery one can get a better understanding of the community's more down-to-earth life.

Different categories of people were chosen for this study, primarily for the purpose of addressing a diverse sample. Despite their different social backgrounds, most of the interviewees (except for the conscripts) are active members of the Polish community. However, some people, mostly associated with a more conservative part of the Polish community, were reluctant to participate in the study. I encountered some of them indirectly, during several discussions of the PDC, but despite this, this segment of the Polish minority remains under-represented in this research.

The interview guides were organized around three main thematic blocks: 1) questions related to personal and symbolic issues (i.e., the Lithuanianization of personal names and possible negative experiences due to discrimination on ethnic grounds); 2) institutional issues (i.e., those relating to Polish schools and conscription); and 3) changes in state-minority relations through different periods (i.e., the minority situation during the Soviet regime and afterwards during independence). However, only the responses of interviewees were expressed an interest in matters relating to the

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/pages/Polski-Klub-Dyskusyjny-Lenk%C5%B3-Diskusij%C5%B3Klubas/359810477515105?sk=info&tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Polski-Klub-Dyskusyjny-Lenk%C5%B3-Diskusij%C5%B3Klubas/359810477515105?sk=info&tab=page_info) Accessed: 26.05.2017.

Polish community were analyzed. Some interviewees called themselves Poles but later said they were not very interested in Polish matters. This was the case with the majority of the Polish soldiers interviewed for this study.

Data were analyzed along the three broad categories identified after the first review of materials: the minority's perception of the state's policies; individual and group self-perceptions in terms of strategies for improvement of the community's position *vis-à-vis* the state; and perceived threats to the community. I analyzed these categories in several ways. First, I looked 'inside' each category and tried to define it through the commonalities in the category-related answers of my interviewees. Then I conducted a meta-analysis, treating these three perceptions as interrelated: the way the minority members see the state's actions allows one to analyze how these members see themselves, their peers, and their collective future *vis-à-vis* the state; this, as well as the perceived threats to the community, informs the strategies for improving the minority's position.

#### *4. The Governorless Minority*

The Lithuanian Polish political scientist Marijusz Antonowicz distinguished three stages of Lithuanian politicians' attitudes towards the state's national minorities after independence (Antonowicz, 2015). During the first stage (from 1988 to 1996), which M. Antonowicz has called 'pacification', the state's elite tried to pacify minorities so as to win their support for state independence. During the second stage (from 1998 to 2004) called 'co-optation' minority rights were addressed with careful attention, because as a candidate state Lithuania wanted to conform to the norms and standards of the EU and NATO. When membership had been acquired, minority matters started receiving less attention or were ignored. Therefore, the third stage is characterized by disregard. However, the Lithuanian political elite rediscovered minorities after 2014 when Russia seized Crimea, allegedly to protect its kinsmen from what the Russian political elite often calls.

After Lithuania joined the EU, the state's elite started disregarding one set of minority-related problems repeatedly raised by Poles. These problems include the shutdown of Polish schools; the unification of the Lithuanian language matura exam for all students irrespective of what school – Lithuanian or minority – they attend; the increase in the number of subjects taught in Lithuanian at minority schools; and the possibility to write anthroponyms in Lithuanian passports in their original (Polish) form.

The first two problems illustrate the elite's unilateral decision-making style regarding minority problems. State authorities explained that minority schools were shut down because of the shrinking number of students. These reforms were presented as general in character, and therefore as having nothing to do with national minorities. It was said that these reforms were intended to help foster national minorities' integration into Lithuanian society. However, both decisions were passed

without discussion with members of the Polish minority, and disregarding the arguments they presented at numerous protests against the reform.<sup>6</sup>

The third cluster of problems relates to the problematic enactment of minority rights and exemplifies the state elite's strategy of stalling with respect to ensuring minority rights in Lithuania. The right to write one's name in Polish in the Lithuanian passport has been debated for years among Lithuanian politicians. However, opponents of the idea say that such a law would contradict the Law on the State (Lithuanian) Language. Linguistic problems could have been solved by passing the Law on Ethnic minorities which existed in Lithuania until 2010, but which has been defunct since. No new law has yet been adopted due to endless discussions in parliament. Thus, decisions that are important for Poles are being stalled, and the legal vacuum in Lithuania's ethnic minority rights protection continues (Vasilevich, 2013).

However, Russia's annexation of Crimea changed the security environment in the Baltic region. It was feared that Russia could attempt to destabilize the situation in Lithuania by acting 'on behalf' of the former state's minorities: Russians, and also Russified Poles. Doubts about minorities' loyalty arose and strengthened when leaders of the Polish minority party expressed criticism about the Maidan revolution<sup>7</sup> and indicated their sympathies towards Russia (see: Picture 1), as well as when it became known that Lithuanian minorities, including Poles, receive information mostly from Russian TV channels<sup>8</sup> and thus can be vulnerable to Russian propaganda. However, this had no effect on the practice of stalling the resolution of minority problems, and the fact that the major minority-related problems listed above remain unresolved only supports this premise.



*Picture 1.* EAPL-CFA's chairman Waldemar Tomaszewski at the Victory Day parade (9 May) in Vilnius, 2014 (© Delfi/Tomas Vinickas).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <http://en.efhr.eu/2011/11/10/appeal-of-the-forum-of-parents-from-the-polish-schools-in-lithuania>

Accessed: 26.05.2017.

Accessed: 26.05.2017.

<sup>7</sup> <http://kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/lietuva/politika/v-tomasevskis-kritikuoja-vakaru-remiama-ukrainos-vyriausybe-618568>

Accessed: 26.05.2017.

<sup>8</sup> <http://pl.delfi.lt/aktualia/litwa/wiekszosc-osob-mniejszosci-narodowych-o-ukrainie-dowiaduje-sie-z-rosyjskiej-telewizji.d?id=66838524> . Accessed: 26.05.2017.

<sup>9</sup> Source: <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/v-tomasevskis-buvo-sukritikuotas-lenkijoje.d?id=65197831>

Accessed: 26.05.2017. EAPL-CFA's leader W. Tomaszewski is seen wearing

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## *5. The State Effect in Minority Education and the Enactment of Minority Rights*

One of the most frequently recurring topics during the interviews was education. The topic is highly politicized in Lithuania, and it is therefore no surprise that some of the Polish pedagogues declined to be interviewed. Among those who agreed was the principal of a Polish gymnasium in Vilnius. Asked to describe the state's education policy in general, and minority education policy in particular, he first remarked that 'there is no [education] policy in Lithuania'. Yet he quickly specified that the state's education policy has been undergoing reform for several years already, and that this reform is inconsistent. From the topic of the state's education policy in general we slowly moved on to the topic of minority education. According to the interviewee, the education of minorities requires specific attention and additional resources due to its nature. Therefore, this segment of education in Lithuania is perceived as an undesirable burden: 'On the one hand, attention is paid when we say that national minorities are something we value; however, the real policy throughout the period of different governments since the state's independence has been that it would be better if there were no minorities in the country. [...] This makes us sad as Poles and as pedagogues'. The principal provided several examples of how the state attempts to shake off this burden:

'For example, if we look at the preparation of textbooks... the government washes its hands of it. It gives some money through the school voucher, 20 per cent approximately, yet a textbook sometimes costs three to five times more than this. [...] In the case of primary and lower secondary schools, these textbooks are still provided. In the secondary school - not anymore, which means that the state has disregarded this duty and the last textbook was prepared, perhaps... in nineteen-ninety-something.'

Minority education, indeed, was seen not only as a burden, but also as something not worth paying proper attention to. The principal regretted that although the state guarantees and finances education in the minority's mother tongue, it later pays no attention to the results of this: 'For twelve years it [the state] finances the teaching of this thing, yet afterwards it shows no interest in the results of this education'. He gave another example of the state's disregard for minority issues. According to the new version of the Law on Education, changed in 2011, exams in the mother tongue became optional. However, after Poles organized protests against these amendments, changes were made, establishing these exams as compulsory if the minority's school council so decided.

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the Ribbon of Saint George (black-orange-black) - a military and patriotic symbol associated with Russian nationalism and pro-Russia separatists in Ukraine - during the Victory Day (9 May) parade in Vilnius to mark the capitulation of Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union at the end of the Second World War. The second white-red ribbon represents the Polish flag.

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To clarify, the core idea behind the changes in the Law on Education was to standardize teaching and examination practices in the Lithuanian language for students of both minorities and the majority. In practice, these changes meant that minority students would need to take more subjects taught in Lithuanian. The principal was not against teaching more things in Lithuanian. Yet, as a pedagogue and as a Pole, he was concerned that the state's initiative was incoherent, because responsible institutions could not prepare the methodology for teaching Poles more things in Lithuanian without thereby worsening the conditions of their education in the mother tongue.

‘In many cases, a child from a Polish or Russian family does not have a basic knowledge of Lithuanian [...] no one talks about the methodology for teaching this minority child Lithuanian. [...] Yet, in order for this program to be realized, you need to take these hours from someone. [...] So at whose expense shall it be? The Polish language again? Well, that would not be good.’

The reckless nature of the decision-making process in Lithuania was emphasized by another expert interviewee – a Lithuanian Polish blogger who writes about various issues related to the lives of minorities who is also a lawyer and one of the founders of the PDC. He claimed that the way this decision was implemented shows the state's lack of legal culture. The respondent did not exclude the possibility of a nationalistic ‘allergy’ to the Polish language as the real reason behind the reform. However, he, as well as the principal, said that the majority of Poles would not have minded these reforms if a proper transition period (e.g. 8 years) had been defined. In fact, even the two-year period which the government finally provided was unlawful. A two-year transition period was established by an arbitrary decision by the Minister of Education after realizing that one year was not enough for minority students to prepare for the changes. The blogger explained such arbitrary and thus unlawful decisions by noting the politicians' wish to demonstrate quick results and perhaps by the operating methods of the state's previous government. My interviewee recalled that, although discussions about educational reform had been going on for quite a long time, the reforms were made all of a sudden, ignoring suggestions from the opposition, which included EAPL-CFA. ‘First do and then look at what comes after’ – that was the guiding principle behind the reform-oriented decisions, according to the blogger. Thus, my two interviewees' comments on the hasty changes in minority education show an attempt to rationalize the state's actions by interpreting them in the context of the state's larger problems; i.e., the lack of legal culture and of the ability to plan strategically.

My other interviewees had less empathetic views about the state's educational policies. In principle, none of them minded the idea of exam standardization but all agreed it was done recklessly. One Lithuanian Polish politician described the condition of minority education as ‘good’, yet she said she would have become furious if someone had told her to take the standardized Lithuanian language exam during her last years at school. However, some pondered that perhaps such decisions spring from Lithuanian politicians' antipathy to Poles. During our conversation, a Šalčininkai-based businessman recalled the Soviet times at school, and said that he

and his classmates had encountered no obstacles to studying in Polish. He added that the situation in schools had deteriorated during the last 25 years. 'If they wanted to do it [standardization], why didn't they do it earlier, at the beginning of our independence?', he questioned. To sum up, none of my interviewees were against reforms in minority education. They were concerned instead about the way the state implemented them.

Other respondents perceived other state minority policies similarly. During my field trip to Vilnius, I undertook an interview with a third expert, a politician from EAPL-CFA and vice-president of the biggest Polish NGO, the Association of Poles in Lithuania. During the period when EAPL-CFA was active in government, this interviewee held a high position in the state's Ministry of Culture. At that time, the Ministry was the main institution implementing the state's national minority policy.<sup>10</sup> My interviewee took a lead role in preparing the Law on Ethnic Minorities. However, when the project was finished, it got stuck within the government. As he explained, the bill was not passed due to a lack of political will and disagreements about what linguistic rights the law should provide for Poles. His example shows that there may be attempts to integrate Poles politically, yet such attempts have limits when it comes to structural changes (i.e. ensuring the minority some linguistic rights) in the Lithuanian polity.

To sum up, the state's minority policies are seen among the Poles interviewed in this study as lacking coherence, strategic planning, and genuine interest; moreover, as often based on *ad hoc* decisions and sometimes as hypocritical, ill-disposed, and nationalist. Respondents interpreted the state's actions as members of a specific minority group. However, they also explained it from their professional perspectives (as pedagogues, lawyers and politicians). Nonetheless, and speaking in terms of a Mitchellian state-effect, the enactment of minority rights in Lithuania among my interviewees was seen as ineffective, meaning that the state neither solves problems nor creates new ones. A further example illustrates this limbo. During the interview with the Polish blogger we touched upon another long-unresolved problem of Lithuanian Poles; namely, restrictions on bilingual street signs in the Polish-speaking regions. He gave an example of how the state's non-decisions with respect to minority problem resolution freezes these problems, as well as state-minority relations:

'There was the Law on Ethnic Minorities that kind of allowed [bilingual street names] and kind of didn't, there was room for interpretation, but in 2010 the Law ceased functioning. The new law has not been passed since all the problems have started... because since then it became clear that they [Polish street names] had become illegal, right? Because till then [...] the state institutions looked at these issues indulgently. When these problems appeared, the confrontation increased...because I wouldn't say that till then there had been any serious confrontation between Poles and Lithuanians due to unsolved problems, but, on the other hand, there had been no interference in [the minority's] internal affairs.... the regions were left to be ruled by Tomaszewski

<sup>10</sup> In 2010, the state's Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad was reorganized. Some of its responsibilities concerning national minorities were transferred to the Ministry of Culture. The Department was reopened in 2016.

[...] the education reform was constantly postponed... the plates were left hanging... legal or not – there had been some sluggish discussion about that; however, no one was doing anything, until this wave of activities started – reforms in education started, the minority law expired, and so forth – and thus suddenly all the problems accumulated.’

Yet it should also be noted that the perceived ineffectiveness of the state does not equate to its rejection. On the contrary, all the interviewees were concerned about the state’s minority policies in particular, but also about the way decisions are passed in the country in general. At the same time, interviewees wished the state would do more to ensure minority rights. Such expectations can thus be interpreted as a kind of affirmation of the state. Nor is this ineffectiveness only perceived among Lithuanian Poles. Politicians and NGOs representing the interests of the Lithuanian-Russian minority expressed similar concerns about plans to restructure the network of Russian-language schools. These plans were criticized for being under-prepared and under-discussed with members of the minority.<sup>11</sup> However, compared to Lithuanian Russians, the Lithuanian-Polish minority is more numerous, more consolidated and better politically organized. Thus, ethnic conflict with Lithuanian Poles is more probable than conflict with Lithuanian Russians. Therefore, the next question is: how do Poles react to the state’s ineffectiveness at managing their problems?

## 6. *Negotiating Ethnic Democracy*

My fieldwork started with an assumption that ethnic conflict in Lithuania is prevented and ethnic democracy sustained by the fragmentation of the Polish minority in terms of strategies for negotiating their position within the state. Study results show that these expectations are valid to a certain point. Not only did my interviewees have different explanations for the state’s ambiguous governance, but they also used different strategies to negotiate this governance and their minority position. However, not all the strategies are (in)effective in the same way.

The first observable strategy was a strategy of assimilation. During a field-trip to Rukla, one Polish volunteer soldier and long-term rifleman complained about ‘Polish movements’, probably referring to EAPL-CFA. According to this volunteer, ‘due to their standing out, the nationality of the “Pole” becomes like a swearword. They put themselves on the front lines and then complain. One should first think about what one is doing’. One explanation for this hostility towards Poles is that people simply do not want to be associated with groups of a lower status. A few more examples of such (in)voluntary assimilation support this premise. Another soldier who was interviewed wanted to join the military police, but, as he told me, for this he would need to Lithuanianize his name. During my fieldwork in Eišiškės, a few Polish youngsters told me that Poles tend to Lithuanianize their names and surnames ‘just to avoid problems’ or in order to get desired jobs. However, not everyone opts out this way.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.diena.lt/naujienos/vilnius/miesto-pulsas/lietuvos-rusai-sunerimo-del-planu-reorganizuoti-rusiskas-svietimo-istaigas-739155>. Accessed: 19.10.2017.

Many Poles are proud of their origin; they cherish and celebrate it. The dozens of participants marching proudly in the streets of Vilnius during the parade for the Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad Day which I observed in May during my fieldwork suggest that Poles constitute a viable and visible community. The celebration was organized by the state's biggest Polish NGO – the Association of Poles in Lithuania – and marked 'the 225th anniversary of the 3 May Constitutional<sup>12</sup> declaration, and the 1050<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baptism of Poland.'<sup>13</sup>

Among those who choose the second strategy – active engagement in their community matters – are Poles of two kinds: those who support, and those who oppose the Polish minority party. Supporters understand participation in politics in a narrow sense and are mostly interested in their minority matters (Janušauskienė, 2015). The opposition, in contrast, sees the enactment of the minority as a problem of national significance.

However, before starting to analyze minority accommodation strategies, it needs to be said that the two groups are not necessarily homogeneous. Recently, EAPL-CFA policies were denounced from within the part of the Polish community typically associated with the party, namely Polish pedagogues. In an open letter to the Polish president, the board of one Polish school in Vilnius declared that '[i]t would be unreasonable to require that the Lithuanian side take care of the interests of the Polish community if Poles and their representatives from EAPL-CFA do not do it themselves and sometimes even cause damage to the Polish minority.'<sup>14</sup> Similarly, there are different opinions among those Poles who oppose EAPL-CFA. One of my interviewees – a member of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, a state-supported non-profit paramilitary organization – told me he votes for EAPL-CFA despite knowing that the party is pro-Russian. Supporting the Polish party is like supporting a local football club. 'You know it will never play in the top league, but you support it anyway. What is important is to have your team playing.' However, as I mentioned in the methodological part of this study, the Poles who advocate the protection of their rights within the framework of the Polish minority party remain underrepresented in this inquiry. Therefore, I here focus on those interviewees who stand in opposition to EAPL-CFA.

This 'opposition' is mostly affiliated with the liberal-minded Poles organized around the PDC – a non-political initiative, which, as the Polish blogger told me, was born out of dissatisfaction with EAPL-CFA and its leadership:

'The main idea was to show that there are differently thinking people among Lithuanian Poles, to start dialogue first among the Poles themselves, so that they would start to communicate and to look for possibilities to achieve their aims, [...] and first and foremost to nurture new leaders... that is to say, opinion leaders... because, well.. the situation in the whole community is being associated with a single man, with Tomaszewski [EAPL-CFA'S chairman] which

<sup>12</sup>The Constitution of 3 May was adopted by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Parliament in 1791.

<sup>13</sup><http://media.elfr.eu/2016/05/02/grand-celebration-polish-diaspora-poles-abroad-day-vilnius/>. Accessed: 26.05.2017.

<sup>14</sup>Source: <http://zw.lt/wilno-wilenszczyzna/rada-szkoly-im-lelewela-obroncy-funduja-kolejna-porcje-klamstwa/>. Accessed: 15.10.2017.

is... incorrect and bad in the sense that... of course he has support, huge support, but it is far from one hundred per cent... well, in fact... maybe his support reaches fifty to sixty per cent...'

Creating a non-political alternative to the policies of the conflict-oriented EAPL-CFA was not the only reason for establishing the club. It was also meant to provide a venue for a dialogue between Poles and Lithuanians (see: Picture 2). Lithuanian politicians, intellectuals, and political analysts participated in all PDC's events that I had a chance to attend during my fieldwork. Based on participant observations and interviews conducted for this inquiry, it can be said that from the Lithuanian Poles' perspective, the argument for closer cooperation between Poles and Lithuanians is based on shared history and threats.



Picture 2. Members of the Polish Discussion Club at the 11 March parade that celebrates the Day of the Restoration of the Independence of Lithuania, Vilnius, 2015 (© A. Radčenko).<sup>15</sup>

Several events I attended during my fieldwork support this argument. One of PDC's events I attended was a presentation of a newly translated book (into Lithuanian) written by Józef Mackiewicz – a famous Vilnius-born Polish writer, whose figure provides a model for the Polish-Lithuanian identity. Mackiewicz identified with *krajowcy* – a group of twentieth century pre-war Polish speaking intelligentsia, following the political tradition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. As a fierce anti-communist, he advocated stronger cooperation between Poles and Lithuanians to resist the Soviets.

<sup>15</sup> Source: <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/nepriklausomybes-dienos-eitynese-ir-patriotiskainusiteike-lietuvos-lenkai-56-490300>. Accessed: 19.10.2017 Members of the Polish Discussion Club are seen participating at a parade commemorating the restoration of Lithuania's independence from the Soviet Union on 11 March, 1990. 'Wolnosc = Laisvė' means 'Freedom' in Polish and Lithuanian, respectively. Participants are seen holding Ukrainian, Polish and Lithuanian flags.

Another event was called 'From the Constitution of May 3 to NATO's Warsaw summit'.<sup>16</sup> Here, members of the PDC together with Lithuanian security experts from Lithuania and Poland discussed common security concerns as well as the bilateral relations of Lithuania and Poland. During the discussion, the political scientist M. Antonowicz reminded listeners that more than 200 years ago, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth adopted the first modern constitution in Europe. However, Russia and the state's other neighbors met these constitutional reforms with hostility. The state was partitioned and the reforms were lost. The speaker said that the two nations face challenges similar to those posed by Tsarist Russia several hundred years ago, and back then, like today, these challenges could be met only if the two states stand together. These events demonstrate how the emphasis on common history serves as an argument for engaging the Lithuanian majority in a common dialogue and breaking away from the minority's marginal position, and thus improving the minority's situation in the country.

Some of the interviewees had similar arguments. During our conversation, the aforementioned Polish rifleman explained that his reason for joining the Rifleman's Union was Russia's attack on Ukraine. He, too, sympathized with *krajowcy* and said that the Russian threat could be contained only if both nations start to cooperate the way they used to when both formed a single state. Interviewees who advocated the protection of minority rights within other Lithuanian parties held somewhat similar positions, but in their case the rationale for tighter cooperation was discontent with the activities pursued by Lithuanian politicians. During my visit to Vilnius, I interviewed two Polish politicians from a Lithuanian liberal party. Asked what brought them into politics, the first politician said it was EAPL-CFA's detrimental dominance in terms of the political representation of Lithuanian Poles. As explained by the interviewee, this became possible due to Lithuanian politicians' disregard for minority matters. The second politician expressed a somewhat similar position, saying that she missed the progress that the country's other political parties, including EAPL-CFA, were not able to deliver. With respect to both respondents, the strategy of advocating for minority rights within the framework of a Lithuanian party can be seen as rooted in the expression of Lithuanian-Polish identity. This identity could explain the warm feelings towards Lithuanians and dissatisfaction with the EAPL-CFA's pro-Russian stance. During our conversation, the first politician told me that she comes from a centuries-old Polish-Lithuanian noble family, while the second politician, at the end of our interview, said 'What kind of Pole am I? I don't even speak proper Polish.'

The quote highlights another problem as well as a strategy for improving the minority's position in the country: strengthening the minority culture among the Poles. This was the main mission of the director of a Polish theater in Vilnius. As he put it during our conversation, he was trying to 'bring culture to the masses.' Similarly, the principal of a Polish school said that the state should provide a means of positive discrimination to strengthen the education of Poles in their mother tongue. He said that the fears about minority schools nurturing disloyal citizens are nonsense and assured me that his school educates Polish-speaking Lithuanian patriots. A recent large-scale study of Lithuanian Polish identity supports such a conclusion: Lithuanian

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2016-05-05-nuo-geguzes-3-d-konstitucijos-iki-nato-virusiniu-susitikimo-varsuvoje/143979> . Accessed: 15.10.2017.

Poles have a strong feeling of regional (Vilnius-based) and national belonging (to Lithuania) (Matulionis et al., 2011).

Nevertheless, strengthening the minority's cultural position is not presented as a goal in and of itself. As mentioned earlier, during our discussion on minority education the principal said that teaching more subjects in Lithuanian should not mean hampering Poles' education in their mother tongue. This was important because, as he explained, 'we have a Russification problem, because Russian culture had a strong influence over Poles as there was no Polish intelligentsia [after WWII]. Moreover, the two languages are very similar. On the other hand, we do nothing to reduce the amount of Russian propaganda...' He argued that Lithuanians should help Poles, who were highly Russified during the Soviet period (Stravinskienė, 2010), to strengthen their own culture. This would make them more resilient to Russian propaganda, which, in turn, would contribute to the greater security of the state.

Thus, the strategy of advocating for an improvement in the cultural position of Poles is linked to a strategy of presenting Polish problems as shared problems, and thereby encouraging the Lithuanian majority to take an active stance in the protection of minority rights. Emphasizing common threats serves to strengthen the minority's culture, and *vice versa*: strengthening Polish culture is understood to strengthen Lithuania's national security. Moreover, it seems that this twofold strategy works. After years of active lobbying, members of the PDC have finally convinced Lithuanian politicians to guarantee the retransmission of Polish TV channels in the southeastern part of the country. This, as claimed by the club members, will give Poles an opportunity to receive undistorted information from a friendly, pro-European country, which, in turn, will help to counter Russian propaganda among Lithuanian Poles and prevent their Russification.

Considering what has been said up to this point, the study's starting assumption about the existence of a variety of strategies for improving the minority situation and about the role this variety of strategies plays in sustaining the Lithuanian ethno-democratic regime seems to be valid. However, the perception of common threats seem to be another factor that is sustaining peaceful state-minority relations in Lithuania. By nature, this factor distinguishes Lithuania from the other two Baltic states, where national threats are not perceived as common.<sup>17</sup> The Lithuanian Poles described in this study are comparable to those Russian-speakers in Latvia and Estonia who have developed a distinct local Russian identity and identify themselves with a pro-European Latvian and Estonian demos (Cheskin, 2012; Nielsen and Paabo, 2015).

The use of this strategy supports Smooha's argument that perceived threats may sustain ethnic democracy, but the mechanism is different from that described by Smooha. According to the former author, an ethnic democracy emerges when minorities are perceived as a threat to the (nation) state. Such a definition fits the situation in Lithuania, where Lithuanians sees Poles as pro-Russian and potentially disloyal. Recently, Lithuanian intelligence services have warned that '[g]ranting of exclusive rights [linguistic rights] to the Polish community would pave way for Russia

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/24/ethnic-russians-in-some-former-soviet-republics-feel-a-close-connection-to-russia/>. Accessed: 16.10.2017.

and its groups of influence to demand analogous rights and, ultimately, an exclusive status for Russian communities in all Baltic states.’<sup>18</sup> However, some Poles agree that the threat of Russia’s meddling in Lithuania is real and suggest that the two nations cooperate against it. Similarly, the perceived threat then becomes an argument for different things. For Lithuanians, EAPL-CFA’s pro-Russian outlook is a reason to suspect and/or disregard Poles, while for Lithuanian Poles it is an argument for a more effective state: one that protects the rights of national minorities. Thus, such a situation could be called a conflict without response. Moreover, it seems that this strategy of emphasizing common threats works: Poles have managed to attract the attention of the Lithuanian majority to Polish problems and engage them in dialogue, and, as a result, Poles will be able to watch several Polish TV channels in Lithuania.<sup>19</sup> However, these are small victories that have not brought structural changes in state-minority relations, as none of the aforementioned Polish problems have been solved so far.

Yet how are we to explain such a convergence of different perceptions of threat? Henri Tajfel argued that minorities accept the existing *status quo* in national minority-majority relations if the system that defines these relations among minority members is perceived as legitimate, stable, and permeable (Tajfel, 1981). In their study of the ethnolinguistic vitality of ethnic groups in the Baltic countries, Zabrodskaja and Ehala found that the perceived legitimacy of power relations among national minorities in Baltic states is lowest among Latvian Russians, Estonian Russians, and Lithuanian Russians and Poles in descending order (Zabrodskaja and Ehala, 2013). However, Lithuanians’ distrust of Lithuanian Poles is greater than Lithuanian Poles’ distrust of Lithuanians. According to Zabrodskaja and Ehala, the most significant intergroup discordance may be observed between the Russian speakers in Latvia towards Latvians, and Lithuanians towards Lithuanian Poles. ‘Given the small size of the Polish community and its negative discordance in relation to the Lithuanians, this [...] is somewhat unexpected and probably reflects the sensitivity of Lithuanians to the problems of Lithuanian territorial integrity (in relation to Poland)’ (Zabrodskaja and Ehala, 2013: 72). These results are surprising because Lithuanian Poles ‘considered themselves very close to Lithuanians in culture, closer than to Russians’. Concerned about Russification and dissatisfied with EAPL-CFA’s pro-Russian leadership, Lithuanian Poles perceive the Russian threat as common and therefore as legitimate. On the other hand, the situation that the Lithuanian state does not help the Poles might be perceived as a situation in which the state does not actively try to impair their position either.

Thus, it can be said that various (mis)perceptions of interests create room for negotiation and give Poles hope that their position can be reformed. This room is expanded by self-perceptions: Lithuanians want to see their country as progressive and democratic, and therefore refrain from impairing minority rights in the country. Lithuanian Poles, in contrast to most Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia and Estonia, are autochthons who are aware of their ethnic origins and cherish them.

<sup>18</sup> <http://bnn-news.com/lithuanian-intelligence-singles-out-six-major-threats-to-national-security-163571> . Accessed: 19.10.2017.

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.baltictimes.com/polish\\_tv\\_channels\\_to\\_be\\_broadcast\\_in\\_southeastern\\_lithuania\\_to\\_off\\_set\\_russian\\_propaganda](https://www.baltictimes.com/polish_tv_channels_to_be_broadcast_in_southeastern_lithuania_to_off_set_russian_propaganda) . Accessed: 15.10.2017.

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Moreover, Poles see the two nations as having much in common: the same religion, history, and historical threats. However, the same cannot be said about Lithuanians, whose distrust of Poles is deeply rooted in a shared history (the interwar Polish occupation of Vilnius) and is reproduced by the state's education system (Vyšniauskas and Baltrušaitytė, 2015). Nevertheless, the different perceptions of 'the other' do not prevent both sides from interpreting threats similarly.

## ***7. Conclusion***

This ethnographic study has explored why and how major tensions in majority-minority relations have been avoided in post-EU-accession Lithuanian ethnic democracy by looking at how Lithuanian Poles accommodate to their governance. Overall findings support a twofold answer: majority-minority tensions were prevented because, after 2004, Lithuanian governments deployed a strategy of stalling the protection of Polish minority rights. The strategy allowed further discussion, with no clear resolution. The study showed that Lithuanian Poles are aware of such a strategy, and, speaking in terms of a Mitchellian state-effect, see the Lithuanian state as ineffective at protecting their rights. However, the state's ineffectiveness is interpreted and negotiated in different ways (a path of assimilation, organizing politically around the minority party, or seeking dialogue with the Lithuanian majority). Together with Lithuanian state's stalling strategy, this variety of imaginings and strategies for negotiating the minority's position in the country create another explanation for the stability of ethnic democracy in Lithuania. Although divided and invested with little power, Lithuanian Poles accommodate to the existing *status quo* of power relations by drawing the majority's attention to a common historical Lithuanian-Polish identity, a shared Russian threat, and by aiming to engage the Lithuanian majority in dialogue about improving their rights. In terms of factors that help to sustain ethnic democracy, the perceived common threat distinguishes Lithuania from its two Baltic neighbors. The study also demonstrates that, from a micro perspective, ethnic democracy can be a useful tool in the critical analysis of ethnically divided regimes in post-communist Europe.

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# TAMÁS KISS, ISTVÁN GERGŐ SZÉKELY, GERGŐ BARNA \*

## Factors Affecting Turnout among Ethnic Minority Voters: The Case of Hungarians in Transylvania

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### Abstract

Our article investigates minority voting behaviour through an in-depth analysis of the case of Transylvanian Hungarians, one of the politically mobilised ethnic groups of post-communist Eastern Europe. Members of this minority community have overwhelmingly supported RMDSZ, a robust ethnic party, in each of the parliamentary (and other types of) elections following the regime change. We argue that both macro-political processes and the micro-foundations of voting behaviour should be analysed to properly understand the factors conducive to ethnic block voting. Our main focus is on micro-determinants; however, we also discuss some elements of the macro-political context. Without considering these factors we cannot account for the sustained ethnic mobilisation of the minority group in question. However, the main goal of this article is to provide a micro-level analysis of voting behaviour. We focus primarily on turnout, which is the most important determinant of electoral outcomes in the case under analysis. Our main empirical question is whether the impact of the main factors discussed in the theories of electoral turnout is similar in the case of minority (Transylvanian Hungarian) and national (Romanian) electorates. We conclude that social embeddedness has different effects on the two populations: namely, embeddedness measured through network density supports political mobilisation only in the case of the minority group.

*Keywords:* Electoral Turnout, Social Embeddedness, Ethnic Voting, Ethnic Parties, Hungarians in Romania.

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Numerous scholars have argued that Transylvanian Hungarians have been the most successful of the large, territorially concentrated ethno-national groups of post-communist Eastern Europe in sustaining peaceful ethnic mobilisation and political agency.<sup>1</sup> The Transylvanian Hungarian case is also a typical example of ethnic block voting, as until now the overwhelming majority of the Hungarians who cast a ballot have supported RMDSZ,<sup>2</sup> an ethnic party established right after the fall of the Ceaușescu regime. In this respect, the Transylvanian Hungarian case contrasts sharply with that of some of the other ethno-national minorities of Eastern Europe. For instance, the Russian speakers of Estonia and Latvia have supported mostly non-ethnic (or mainstream) parties during the last two and a half decades.<sup>3</sup> In the case of the Hungarians in Slovakia, there was a split in the Party of the Hungarian Coalition in 2009, and, following this event, Hungarians have voted in an almost equal proportions for either an ethnic party (Party of the Hungarian Community) or a multi-ethnic one (Most-Híd).<sup>4</sup> This variety in minority voting behaviour emphasises that neither the persistence of the political salience of group boundaries nor the gradual loss of their political significance can be taken for granted. The problem of minority voting behaviour should be addressed through empirical research, and the factors beyond different types of voting patterns should be identified.<sup>5</sup> Our article is an in-depth case study with a focus on the Transylvanian Hungarian case in this respect.

The focus of our paper is on the micro-determinants of the ‘ethnic vote’. We concentrate primarily on factors that affect turnout; more precisely, intentions to participate. In another paper we have discussed the instrumental and expressive factors behind the support for RMDSZ.<sup>6</sup> Expressive forms of motivation, such as manifesting group identity, and instrumental forms of motivation, such as the desire for favourable public policies or for resources to be allocated to the Hungarian community, play a crucial role in sustaining the dominance of this robust ethnic party in the long run. Nevertheless, voting for RMDSZ is mostly habitualised. Consequently, the major decision each individual Transylvanian Hungarian has to make before elections is whether to turn out or abstain from voting. Further, the electoral campaigns of RMDSZ are more about mobilisation and less about persuasion, thereby confirming the hypothesis of Horowitz (1985) concerning electoral politics in an ethnic context.

Under these circumstances, the article focuses on the factors affecting the intention to participate in parliamentary elections as they appear in opinion surveys representative for Transylvanian Hungarians. We rely on a secondary analysis of

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<sup>1</sup> See Csörgő and Regelmann (2017). See also Csörgő (2007); Stroschein (2012); Kiss and Székely (2016); Kiss (2017).

<sup>2</sup> In Hungarian: Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség, in English: Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, in Romanian: Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România (UDMR). We use the Hungarian acronym.

<sup>3</sup> See Csörgő and Regelmann (2017: 6–10).

<sup>4</sup> See Bochsler and Szöcsik (2013).

<sup>5</sup> Recently, this was suggested by several scholars. Chandra (2012: 12) has argued that in several cases formerly (politically) activated categories can lose their (political) significance, while in other cases the ethnically divided character of the electorate is persistent. Importantly, both cases need explanation. Wimmer (2013) outlined a similar program concerning the general characteristics of group boundaries.

<sup>6</sup> See Kiss (2017).

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opinion polls conducted between 1999 and 2017. A survey conducted in July 2012 plays a special role in our analysis. This survey was designed for scientific purposes and consisted of two samples: one representative of the Hungarian minority electorate, and another representative nationally (in Romania), with some of the relevant items being asked of both groups of respondents. This allows us to compare the impact of some explanatory variables among Hungarians and Romanians. We included into the questionnaires several items inspired by three distinctive general explanatory models of turnout: (a) rational choice theory, (b) resource-based theories, and (c) theories regarding social embeddedness. Starting from the third theoretical orientation we also introduce measures for the concept of *ethnic embeddedness*, by which we mean the extent to which the personal network of an individual remains limited to the in-group (his/her own ethnic community) or reaches beyond it to contacts that do not belong to the respective ethnic group. Through this variable we try to establish a link between the political salience of ethnicity and another major characteristic of group boundaries, namely the degree of social closure.<sup>7</sup>

In our main argument two conceptual elements are crucial. First, in our understanding of the rationality of voting behaviour, the *strategic politicians* or *mobilisation hypothesis* (Aldrich, 1993) is pivotal. This hypothesis posits that an electoral calculus is made by political actors who invest more or less energy in mobilising voters based on this calculus. Second, the mainstream hypothesis is that socially embedded voters can be more easily mobilised (Franklin, 2004). However, some analysts who focus on Eastern Europe have found exactly the inverse relationship. According to Howard (2003: 121-146), the resilience of personal and family networks can be perceived as a factor in political passivity. To put forward one of our results, denser networks contribute to higher turnout among Hungarians, but do not have the same effect among Romanians. Even if this is in line with the mainstream hypothesis concerning embeddedness, in an Eastern European context the positive relation between network density and participation among Hungarians (not the lack of such relations among Romanians) requires explanation. The concept of ethnic embeddedness is of central importance in this respect.

The article is structured in five parts. First, we present our conceptual premises, discussing the interplay between macro- and micro-level factors and then presenting the different approaches to the factors that influence electoral participation. Second, we describe briefly the electoral trends among Transylvanian Hungarians and the data we used in the analysis. Third, we present the variables used in the analysis. Fourth, we discuss factors affecting the voting turnout among minority voters and compare the impact of these to that on the majority (Romanian) electorate. The last section contains our concluding remarks.

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<sup>7</sup> On the dimensions through which ethnic boundaries can be characterised, see Wimmer (2013).

## *1. Conceptual Background: Macro- and Micro Level, Approaches to Turnout*

### *1.1. Macro- and Micro-determinants of Ethnic Vote*

The factors that lie behind the political salience of ethnic boundaries and the persistence of ethnic block voting can be investigated at different levels. The institutional and political context that favours ethnic parties and helps ethnic elites to mobilise their constituency can be labelled macro-determinants of the ethnic vote. The Romanian electoral system, as well as the broader Romanian regime of minority policies, is of primary importance here. Several authors have emphasised the importance of EU integration in creating a favourable context for claim making through ethnic parties (Horváth, 2002; Csergő and Regelmann, 2017).

The role of ‘electoral engineering’ in strengthening certain kinds of party systems throughout post-communist Eastern Europe is widely acknowledged (Shvetsova, 2003; Bochsler, 2006). From the perspective of RMDSZ, the most important features of Romania’s electoral system are its relatively proportional nature and the existence of a second, compensatory tier for seat allocation at the national level (the first tier being at the level of the counties). This prevents the wasting of votes cast for RMDSZ, even if they come from regions where the share of Hungarians is too low to allow the election of MPs in the first tier; thus RMDSZ is able to secure representation proportional to the share of votes obtained nationally. The new law also contains an alternative threshold, which is beneficial mostly to RMDSZ (a relatively small party with a territorially concentrated electorate): parties that do not obtain five per cent nationwide can still enter parliament by obtaining at least 20 per cent of the vote in four counties.

This electoral legislation also helps RMDSZ to avoid intra-ethnic competition and to maintain its dominant position inside the Hungarian community. The electoral system contains a five per cent threshold, applied at the national level.<sup>8</sup> For electoral alliances a progressively increasing threshold is applied (eight per cent for two parties, nine per cent for three and ten per cent for four or more). Given that the proportion of Hungarians in Romania is approximately 6.5 per cent, these provisions have rendered nearly impossible the success of an alternative Hungarian party.

With regard to the broadly defined regime of minority policies,<sup>9</sup> although Romania is a nation-state, it would be misleading to consider its ethno-political establishment purely integrationist.<sup>10</sup> A sort of duality would be a more appropriate

<sup>8</sup> At the 1992 and 1996 elections the threshold was only three per cent, being raised to five per cent before the 2000 elections.

<sup>9</sup> By ‘minority policy regime’ we refer to the totality of legal and institutional norms and political practices designed to manage ethno-cultural diversity. See Bernd (2009).

<sup>10</sup> McGarry, O’Leary, and Simeon (2008) distinguish between integrationist and accommodationist approaches to managing ethno-cultural differences. These are obviously ideal types in a Weberian sense. Integrationists support institutions that help consolidate so-called ‘common’ or ‘shared’ political identities (e.g. ‘moving beyond’ or ‘transcending’ ethnicity, conceptions of civic citizenship or patriotism, etc.) and inhibit or discourage the political activation of ethnic identities. Accommodationists promote institutional-political arrangements that provide opportunities for the various groups to publicly express their identity,

description: while maintaining the hierarchical relations between the various ethnic groups and defining the state as the state of the Romanian people (in ethnic terms) in the constitution, Romania also accepts and supports the political activation of ethnicity (e.g. the participation of minorities in politics through their own ethnic parties) (see Székely and Horváth, 2014). This kind of arrangement could be labelled asymmetrical accommodation. RMDSZ has been part of various government coalitions or managed to establish ‘special’ relations with governing parties (parliamentary support) since 1996.

An important implication of this ethno-political model is the fact that mainstream parties practically do not appeal at all to Hungarian voters, but behave as *titular ethnic parties*<sup>11</sup> in regions where Hungarians constitute the local majority or are present in substantial proportions (see Kiss and Székely, 2016). On the other hand, through the opportunity of being part of government coalitions, RMDSZ has practically gained a monopoly over public resources allocated to regions where Hungarians form a majority. With voter’s choices embedded in this context we can better understand the relative stability of the ethnically informed voting behaviour of Hungarians.<sup>12</sup>

The transnational institutional and political context of Europeanisation has also favoured asymmetric accommodation and thus indirectly the ethnic vote and the dominance of RMDSZ among the Hungarian minority community. Asymmetric accommodation as a minority policy regime can be located somewhere between ethnic democracies<sup>13</sup> and formally institutionalised ethnic power-sharing.<sup>14</sup> This model of managing cultural differences, although severely undertheorised,<sup>15</sup> is quite prevalent throughout Eastern Europe and, arguably, was facilitated by transnational actors during the pre-accession period. The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life explicitly calls for the inclusion of minority representatives in the executive power (but without urging institutionalised power-sharing). Horváth (2002) argued that transnational actors played a crucial role

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to protect it from the majority, and to be in charge as much as possible in terms of the management of community issues.

<sup>11</sup> The term was coined by Stroschein (2001).

<sup>12</sup> It is important to stress that the argument above only holds for the parliamentary elections. Local elections and elections for the European Parliament posed a more serious challenge for RMDSZ’s dominance within the Hungarian community. In the first election for the European Parliament (2007), an independent candidate (László Tőkés) obtained approximately 38 per cent of the votes cast for Hungarian candidates, and was elected to the EP. Subsequently, both intra- and inter-ethnic competition intensified in the local elections. On the one hand, MPP has put RMDSZ to a rather serious test in Székely Land. On the other hand, in settlements where Hungarian candidates for mayor do not stand a chance of getting elected, Hungarian voters often vote strategically (i.e. they vote for their most preferred Romanian candidate in order to prevent the election of others perceived as less attractive), and this tactic may also spill over to the choice for local or county councils. On the effect of ethnic demography on party fragmentation at a local level, see Stroschein (2011).

<sup>13</sup> In ethnic democracies one group dominates exclusively one ethnic group (Smooha, 2001). The Eastern European examples close to this ideal type are Estonia and Latvia (Järve, 2000; Melvin, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Consociational arrangements (different forms of territorial and non-territorial autonomies) are located in this category.

<sup>15</sup> Several comparative investigations have focused on non-territorial (Maloy et al., 2015; Smith, 2013) and other forms of autonomy (Constantin et al., 2015). Arrangements based on informal rules of bargaining are more difficult to investigate comparatively.

in initiating a process of bargaining between RMDSZ and Romanian political actors in the early 1990s;<sup>16</sup> additionally, in keeping RMDSZ within the governmental coalition between 1996 and 2000.<sup>17</sup> One should also mention that the pressure of transnational actors on national governments to bargain with minority organisations or to include them in the executive power decreased during the 2000s. This was connected to a general shift towards an integrationist approach and discourses stressing the norms of non-discrimination and individual rights and emphasising the dangers of empowering minority groups such that empowerment strengthens ethnic boundaries and leads to permanent institutional segregation.<sup>18</sup>

Csergő and Regelmann (2017: 292–294) establish a linkage between the macro-level factors supporting political participation through ethnic parties and motivational drivers of voting for ethnic parties by employing the notion of collective rationality. Through collective rationality they mean the outcome that minority voters support parties that are in the best position to bargain for the interests of the minority group. One should emphasise that this outcome does not necessarily mean ethnic block voting. According to their typology, individual voting (the case that ethnicity and party option are not correlated) and diversified ethnic voting (the case when members of a group support several parties associated with the group in question) are also possible outcomes. Actually, the authors focus on macro-political factors which are conducive to certain structures of opportunities, and hypothesise that voters behave in an instrumentally rational way and are able to recognise the most promising political alternatives for minority claim-making. However, the reference to collective rationality does not involve a micro-level analysis. Thus, collective rationality remains a ‘black box’ in the sense that the authors do not specify the concrete mechanisms through which elites are able to mobilise voters or the motivational drivers behind certain types of voting behaviour.

The literature concerning the micro-determinants of ethnic block voting is quite extensive. Many scholars have been engaged in identifying different expressive<sup>19</sup> and instrumental<sup>20</sup> factors towards this end. As for the Transylvanian Hungarian case, analysts have emphasised primarily the role of (expressive) identity voting and the capacity (or the lack of capacities) of elites to mobilise along policy issues concerning national identity (Biró, 1998; Brubaker et al., 2006; Csergő, 2007; Stroschein, 2012). In this article we treat the problem from another angle. The desire to manifest a Hungarian identity and the conviction that without the parliamentary presence of RMDSZ Hungarian institutions and Hungarian-inhabited regions would receive far

<sup>16</sup> The *Project on Ethnic Relations* (sponsored by the US government) had a key role in this respect (Horváth, 2002: 33–36).

<sup>17</sup> Horváth (2002: 47) emphasised the role played by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep.

<sup>18</sup> See in this respect, the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies (OSCE 2012) and also Csergő and Regelmann (2017: 4) for a similar argument.

<sup>19</sup> The model of expressive voting emphasises that the reward for participation is the act of voting itself, through which one can publicly manifest group identity. See in this respect, Horowitz (2000 [1985]).

<sup>20</sup> Instrumental models of voting concentrate on the consequences of options, namely policies perceived by the voters as beneficial and direct resource allocation (clientelism, patronage). Authors connected to the theory of rational choice emphasise mostly this perspective. See for instance, Chandra (2004); Posner (2005); Ferree (2011).

less funding are important drivers for sustaining the ethnic vote. However, at an individual level the ethnic vote (i.e. voting with RMDSZ at least in parliamentary elections) can be perceived as a habitus-oriented behaviour. In this respect we rely on the concept of agency employed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), which treats habitualised elements (iteration) as an important component of human action. Other elements, such as reflected future-oriented planning (projective aspect), and the deliberative process of establishing new norms (practical-evaluative aspect), come to forefront only in situations of ‘crisis’. In our case of ethnic voting, the changes of the macro-political context might create such a situation of crisis when they question seriously and credibly the ability of RMDSZ to bargain for ‘Hungarian interests’. However, without such a crisis situation ‘iteration’ dominates, meaning that voting for RMDSZ is barely a reflective choice but merely a taken-for-granted option. The table below underscores this perspective. Data were provided by Kvantum Research, which conducted a post-election survey representative for Transylvanian Hungarians in March 2017. Their question referred to the moment when respondents decided which party or candidate to support in the December 2016 parliamentary elections. Answers showed that an overwhelming majority of respondents already knew which party they would support before the campaign started.<sup>21</sup>

Table 1. When did you decide which candidate/party to support?

	Hungarians who casted a ballot	RMDSZ supporters
Before the campaign period	74.2	76.8
In the first part of the campaign period, several weeks before the elections	9.2	8.7
During the last week before the election day	5.9	6.3
During the election day	6.4	5.3
Don't know, no answer	4.3	3.0

*Source: Kvantum Reseach*

From this perspective, it seems obvious that the RMDSZ campaign was more about mobilisation and less about persuasion, at least under ‘normal’ circumstances (e.g. when macro-political factors did not question the utility of voting for RMDSZ). Thus, our case confirms the classic although recently contested<sup>22</sup> argument of Horowitz that in ethnically divided societies, electoral results primarily depend on the turnout of different groups, while parties are interested primarily in increasing the participation of their co-ethnics.

From the perspective of individual voters, ‘normal circumstances’ means that the party option is mostly taken for granted and individual decisions refer to casting a ballot or abstaining from voting. Consequently, the micro-level investigation of ethnic

<sup>21</sup> A total of 91.2 per cent of respondents declared their support for RMDSZ.

<sup>22</sup> Ferree (2011) and Jeremy Horowitz (2015) argue that in the ethnically divided societies of South Africa and Kenya the main concern of parties and candidates is not to mobilise their (ethnically or racially defined) core constituencies but to convince voters who belong to swing groups or live in swing areas. Others, like Chandra (2004) and Posner (2005), agree that ethnic parties seek mostly to mobilise their core constituency; however, they also argue that parties and political entrepreneurs seek to redefine politically salient ethnic boundaries and categories (or in other words, their ‘core constituency’).

voter behaviour should focus on factors affecting turnout. In what follows, we deal with this issue and compare the effects of different variables on the turnout of Transylvanian Hungarians and the Romanian majority.

## 1.2. Factors Influencing Turnout

We draw on three different theoretical orientations which address the factors influencing voter turnout in a general (non-ethnic) context. These are (1) rational choice theory, (2) resource-based theories, and (3) theories of social embeddedness. In the survey we conducted in 2012 we tried to operationalise some variables connected to these approaches. This issue will be discussed later in the empirical part of our paper.

(1) According to the *theory of rational choice*, voting is an instrumentally rational act, meaning that participation and options are the result of the individual cost-benefit calculus of self-interested actors. Downs (1957) and Riker and Ordeshook (1968) describe the well-known free rider dilemma<sup>23</sup> as it applies to electoral participation. The former emphasise that, from an instrumental perspective, abstaining from voting is the only rational option as the chances of one vote being decisive are minimal, and one would benefit from favourable policies even if they abstained from voting.

Nevertheless, the model calls our attention to four basic relations. First, we should expect a lower turnout when the *cost of voting* increases. This means that rules that make participation easier, or on the contrary, more difficult, influence turnout. Such rules include pre-registration, extensions of the duration of voting, and so on (Blais, 2006). Second, the willingness of voters to participate in the electoral process should increase if the *benefits expected from the winning candidate* are more substantial: when there are greater differences between the candidates' programs or when greater power is concentrated in the institutions people vote for (Pacek, Pop-Eleches and Tucker, 2009). Third, participation increases if there is a greater chance that *one's vote could be decisive*. This occurs when, according to voters' perceptions, the race is close, the constituency is small, or participation is very low. Proportional electoral systems, where the chance of wasting one's vote is lower, can also increase turnout. Fourth and last, we must mention the issue of self-efficacy; that is, voters' belief that they *can influence political decisions*. The term *self-efficacy* was coined by social psychologist Albert Bandura to refer to the extent to which an individual trusts their own competences or believes that they are responsible for their own life. In politics, it refers to what the voter thinks about their personal power or capacity to influence political processes.

(2) The second theory we draw on is the *resource model of political participation*. This model also builds on rational choice theory to some extent, but also includes sociological characteristics of voters to explain their participation and electoral behaviour.<sup>24</sup> Authors subscribing to this theory criticise rational choice

<sup>23</sup> See Olson (1965).

<sup>24</sup> The resource model was not primarily or exclusively developed to explain electoral turnout, but also other types of political participation. Research on civic voluntarism and on non-electoral political

approaches primarily because these are unable to properly model the costs in the calculus of voting, although the costs obviously depend on the resources available to voters (Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995). The most important resources regarded as producing higher turnout are material wellbeing, educational level, professional skills, and membership in various organisations (Whiteley, Clarke and Sanders, 2001), or, for other authors, civic skills or competences, money, and spare time (Brady et al., 1995).

(3) The third turnout model we rely on emphasises the role of *social networks and social embeddedness*. This approach holds that socialisation is pivotal to understanding voting behaviour, since it is the time at which patterns of participatory behaviour emerge and crystallise. For example, one can best understand party identification using this model, as attachment to a party can involve a lifetime bond, or at least a very long period of time. On the other hand, in contrast to the atomised individuals theorized in the rational choice model, socially embedded voters consider values, norms, and interests, as well as group sanctions in their own reference group when making a decision (Franklin, 2004).

A first important remark refers to the possible interpretations of rational choice theory. The most widespread interpretation is that voters make an individual cost-benefit calculus and decide whether to turn out or abstain from voting. Nevertheless, the model of socially embeddedness is much more compatible with an alternative reading, namely the *strategic politicians* or *mobilisation hypothesis* (Aldrich, 1993). This approach does not apply the mechanisms of rational choice to individual voters, but to politicians. Generally speaking, individual voters' thinking about political issues is not that sophisticated as to consider turnout in terms of a cost-benefit calculus; however, political elites do the analysis for them. According to Franklin (2004), mobilisation models are more realistic than the rational calculus of individual voters, because in their more complex forms they are able to combine rationality with socialisation mechanisms and social embeddedness. Mobilisation is hardly imaginable without networks; the elites are able to mobilise provided that they invest in the maintenance of networks, and if they fail to do so, their mobilisation capacity decreases.

As a second remark, the relation between social embeddedness and political participation in Eastern Europe should be discussed. Advocates of the mainstream hypothesis, in fact, are adherents of an expressive model of voting. In this model, social norms held in the community matter more than the calculus of the individual voter. However, this interpretation of the social embeddedness approach focuses to a great extent on Western societies (or classic, consolidated democracies) and implicitly presumes that the social norms facilitating turnout are dominant in society. However, according to the literature on Eastern Europe we may suppose that the region is different in this respect. Based on a study by Howard (2003), one may argue that in Eastern Europe the density of personal networks may shape participation in politics or civil organisations in a way that is exactly the opposite of what the literature focusing on Western Europe implies. Howard starts from the idea (also sketched out by many other scholars), that in Eastern Europe masses perceive a very sharp dichotomy

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participation also draws heavily on the resource model. See for example, Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995); Whiteley, Clarke and Sanders (2001).

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between the private and the public spheres, a distinction inherited from the former regime.<sup>25</sup> Without going into detail, one can say that one of the particularities of socialist regimes was precisely the deep penetration of (party) politics into various social domains. This does not mean, however, that the regime destroyed informal personal networks. Quite the contrary: personal networks strengthened because the relations valued by people were removed from the public sphere and found their place in personal, informal networks (Howard, 2003: 28). These networks also played an essential role in the adaptive and survival strategies of the population in the midst of economic hardships, and an economy of penury. Based on these considerations, Howard (2003: 121-146) associates the low intensity of participation in public life (as broadly defined) to three concrete factors. First, post-communist institutional systems have not succeeded in overwriting the distrust and disdain towards public life inherited from the former regime. Secondly, Howard emphasises the disappointment with transition. Thirdly, passivity in public life is related to the resilience of personal and family networks. It is important to note that the structure of personal networks was transformed to a great extent after the change of regime, being influenced by social changes that promoted self-fulfilment and prosperity, or which have contributed to increasing social inequalities. In spite of all this, the role of personal networks remains essential in different areas of life throughout Eastern Europe.<sup>26</sup> This also shows that the relation between social networks and active participation in public life is not necessarily what we would expect, based on Western-focused literature.

As a third remark, we introduce the notion of ethnic embeddedness. This is closely related to social embeddedness; however, it is also a topic found to be highly relevant in the literature on ethnic parties and ethnic politics. Arend Lijphart (1977) uses the notion of *encapsulation* in his theory of consociationalism, arguing that it is a fundamental characteristic of pillar-type social organisation. For Lijphart the phenomenon is related primarily to organisational and institutional systems and networks. Social encapsulation emerges if communities possess an organisational-institutional network that is able to satisfy a variety of needs and claims of pillar members. The ideology of a minority society that is promoted by the Transylvanian Hungarian elites rests on institutional complexity as the primary means of achieving this encapsulation (see Kiss and Székely, 2016). Our notion of ethnic embeddedness is also related to the concept of *social closure*, which in turn exerts great influence on the prospects of ethnic and cultural differences gaining political significance (Wimmer, 2013). We use the ethnic closure or openness of social networks (the proportion of members who belong to the in-group and the majority group, respectively) as an indicator of *ethnic embeddedness*.

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<sup>25</sup> For Romania, the argument appears in the work of Verdery (1996) and Kligman (1998), and in work by Biró (1998).

<sup>26</sup> For example, Sandu (1999) highlights that personal relations play a key role in the strategies of the entrepreneurs in Romania.

## 2. Electoral Trends and Available Data

As mentioned already, Transylvanian Hungarians have overwhelmingly supported one ethnic party, namely RMDSZ, since the beginning of the 1990s. As a consequence, RMDSZ has been the most stable political organisation in the Romanian political field with a continuous presence in the national parliament since 1990. Electoral results for RMDSZ have been quite closely associated with the demographic proportions of Hungarians.

**Table 2. The results of RMDSZ for the Chamber of Deputies, 1990-2016**

Parliamentary election	RMDSZ votes	RMDSZ %
1990	991,583	7.23
1992	811,290	7.46
1996	812,628	6.64
2000	736,863	6.80
2004	628,125	6.17
2008	425,008	6.17
2012	380,656	5.14
2016	435,969	6.19

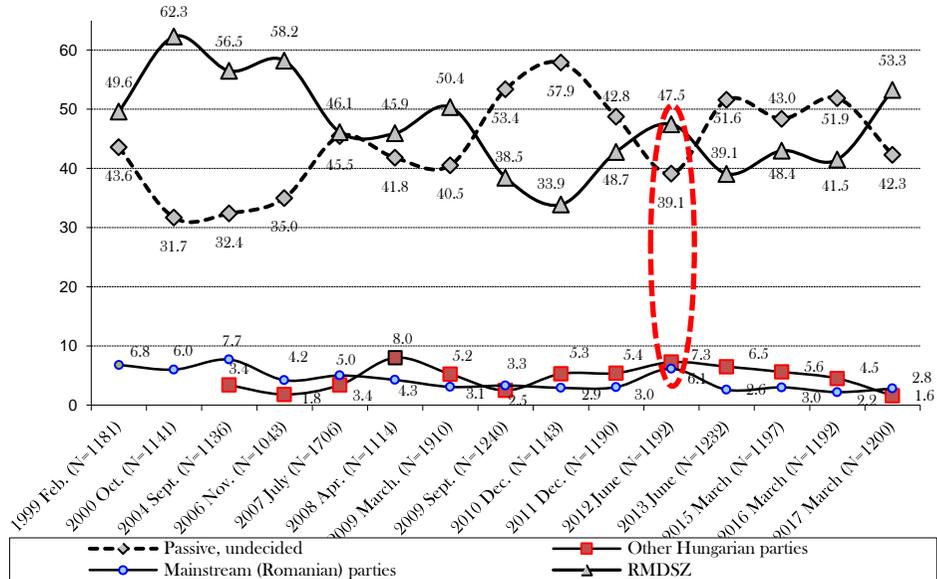
*Source: Central Electoral Bureau*

The sole parliamentary election when a relatively potent Hungarian political formation (EMNP)<sup>27</sup> ran against RMDSZ was held in 2012. Under these circumstances, the main factor affecting the number of votes obtained by RMDSZ was the turnout among Hungarians.

Survey data also show that among decided partisan voters support for RMDSZ has changed very little over the past fifteen years (varying between 78 and 93 per cent). The highest levels of support for Hungarian challenger parties were recorded in 2008 (after MPP<sup>28</sup> was established), and again after 2010 (when EMNP was established). The highest propensity to vote for mainstream parties was measured in 1999, 2004, and 2012. Consequently, RMDSZ managed to preserve its dominant position within the Hungarian community for the entire period under scrutiny. However, the mobilisation capacity of RMDSZ appears less stable when compared to the total Hungarian electorate.

<sup>27</sup> Erdélyi Magyar Néppárt in Hungarian, Partidul Popular Maghiar din Transilvania (PPMT) in Romanian, Hungarian People's Party in Transylvania in English.

<sup>28</sup> Magyar Polgári Párt in Hungarian, Partidul Civic Maghiar in Romanian, Hungarian Civic Party in English.



**Figure 1. Party options of Transylvanian Hungarians, 1999-2012, all respondents\***

\* The logistic regressions reported in the second part of this article are based on the survey marked with a circle

As already mentioned, our analysis relies on survey data. Survey data containing individual records have a series of advantages compared to electoral results which are available in aggregated form (usually at the municipality level). Fortunately, in the case of Transylvania's Hungarians such surveys exist, and our ability to draw on such data represents the greatest added value of this article. Nevertheless, some methodological issues still have to be addressed with regard to the data we use.

First, in spite of the large number of existing surveys, the possibilities for theoretically informed analysis are rather limited. The majority of opinion polls representative for Transylvanian Hungarians carried out between 1999 and 2017<sup>29</sup> investigated the turnout intentions and electoral options of voters in a pre-electoral context. The majority of these surveys were commissioned by RMDSZ itself, serving the purpose of informing party leaders about the estimated support the party enjoyed at different moments. The surveys provide only a reduced and incidental set of relevant explanatory variables. In this respect, one survey should be highlighted. This survey was carried out by the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities in 2012 and was designed for scholarly purposes. On this occasion we had the opportunity to include in the questionnaire theoretically relevant items concerning

<sup>29</sup> The surveys of February 1999, February 2000, October 2004, September and November 2006 were carried out by CCRIT (Research Center on Inter-Ethnic Relations); TransObjective Consulting coordinated the surveys of July 2007, April 2008 and April 2014; Kvantum Research carried out the surveys of March and September 2009, December 2010 and December 2013 March 2015, March 2016 and March 2017; the surveys of December 2011, July 2012 and June 2013 were conducted by the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities. All surveys were based on similar sampling methods (multi-stage, stratified, random samples). We weighted the databases according to sex, age and region using the same method. Sample size is reported in the tables and figures.

participation in elections. The survey is all the more relevant since it targeted not only Hungarians in Romania, but also included a sample representative of the entire population of Romania, enabling us to compare the impact of some relevant variables for the two populations.<sup>30</sup> The regression models as well as the descriptive statistics presented in the fourth section of this paper are based on this survey.

Second, surveying minority electorates poses further challenges. One of the most important problems is to delimit the minority population. The surveys we rely on were conducted in Hungarian, meaning that respondents were selected following screening based on language proficiency. This method may exclude people who identify themselves as Hungarian but do not have the proficiency in the minority language that would permit them to respond to the questionnaire (Kiss and Kapitány, 2009). A related problem is a special manifestation of the more general issue of social desirability: when respondents face an interviewer who addresses them in the minority language, they tend to provide answers that conform more to the discourses perceived as dominant or legitimate within the minority community than their actual opinions or behaviour.<sup>31</sup>

Third, a more general problem is that in a pre-electoral context interviewees only report intentions and not about action they have already performed. That is, respondents tend to exaggerate their intention to participate, leading to an overestimation of turnout. The most important cause of overestimation is the so-called social desirability effect, meaning that respondents adjust their answers regarding turnout intention to meet perceived or presumed social expectations.

### *3. Factors Influencing Turnout and RMDSZ's Mobilisation Capacity*

As we perceived, electoral campaigns among Transylvanian Hungarians are more about mobilisation than persuasion. From a micro-perspective, habitual elements govern electoral behaviour. Many Transylvanian Hungarians take it for granted that they support RMDSZ and they rarely reflect on the possibility to vote for another party. In this section we focus on the factors that influence the turnout of Transylvanian Hungarians and the mobilisation capacity of RMDSZ.

#### *3.1. Operationalisation and Univariate Analysis of the Factors Influencing Turnout*

In our survey from June 2012 we tried to operationalise the factors presented above to explain individual turnout intentions. In this section we discuss the operationalisation of the variables and present some univariate analyses, while in the next section we turn to multivariate regressions.

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<sup>30</sup> The sample representative of the Hungarian electorate consisted of 1192 respondents; the national representative sample of 1691 individuals.

<sup>31</sup> Of course, a different and arguably more serious problem (in the opposite direction) arises when minority members respond to questions addressed to them in the majority language instead of their mother tongue. Accordingly, we would like to stress that we are not arguing against conducting interviews in the respondent's mother tongue.

### 3.1.1. Rational choice

Drawing on the rational choice model of turnout, we created five explanatory variables based on attitude scales.<sup>32</sup> (1) We grasped *internal self-efficacy* with the following question: *'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I and individuals like me can influence politics and public affairs.'* (2) Regarding *external self-efficacy* we asked the following: *'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Politicians, leaders are concerned with what I and individuals like me think.'* (3) Our third rational choice-inspired variable operationalised the *benefits perceived by the voters in the case that certain candidates win* the elections. It was created from two survey items: *'There are parties that represent my interest'* and *'There are politicians I trust.'* (4) A fourth variable was designed to measure *commitment to democracy and its operation* and was created from the following items: *'Democracy works only if the majority of people vote'* and *'Every citizen should vote.'* (5) The fifth variable was meant to capture the perceived *stake of elections*, and was computed from two survey items: *'It does not matter which party wins, because parties are all the same'* and *'Each election has its stakes, since it decides the leaders for the years to come.'*

Table 3 shows the mean values by ethnicity for the five attitudinal items linked to the rational choice model of turnout. The results indicate that internal self-efficacy and expected benefits from the winning candidate are significantly lower in the case of Hungarians than in the case of Romanians. There are no significant differences with regard to the other three variables.

**Table 3. Mean values of attitude scales linked to the rational choice model of turnout, by ethnicity\***

	Romanians (N=1533)	Hungarians (N=1192)	Romania (N=1691)
Internal self-efficacy	4.3	<b>-18.2</b>	2.9
External self-efficacy	-18.1	-25.2	-18.5
Benefits from winning candidate	-6.4	<b>-17.4</b>	-7.2
Commitment to democracy	60.5	62.8	60.7
Stakes of elections	31.0	27.0	30.8

\* All variables transformed to scales ranging from -100 to 100. Values in bold represent significant differences between the groups according to ANOVA tests. Values for Romania are computed from the merged (and reweighted) samples, while values for ethnic Romanians are calculated from the sub-group of Romanians in the merged sample. Values for Hungarians are computed from the sample representative of Hungarians in Transylvania.

### 3.1.2. Resource model

Next, we turn to the resource model. For measuring the level of citizen competences, our questionnaire included two sets of questions for grasping *interest in politics* and *forms of political participation other than voting*. We measured interest in

<sup>32</sup> All survey items referenced in this section were measured on four-point Likert scales, with response options ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement.

politics by creating two cumulative scores: one from four items about the frequency of political news consumption (in newspapers, on the internet, radio and TV, each measured on six-point scales), and another from four items grasping the frequency of discussion of politics (with family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues, each measured on four-point scales). Concerning non-electoral political activities, we counted the number of different activities each respondent engaged in (out of ten listed types).<sup>33</sup>

**Table 4. Interest in politics and non-electoral forms of participation, by ethnicity**

	<i>Romanians (N=1533)</i>	<i>Hungarians (N=1192)</i>	<i>Romania (N=1691)</i>
Frequency of following politics in the media *	49.9	<b>45.2</b>	49.6
Frequency of talking about politics *	54.6	51.4	54.4
Number of non-electoral political activity forms engaged in **	0.85	0.83	0.85

\*Mean value, transformed to 0-100 scale

\*\*Mean value of the number of various forms of political participation the respondents engaged in

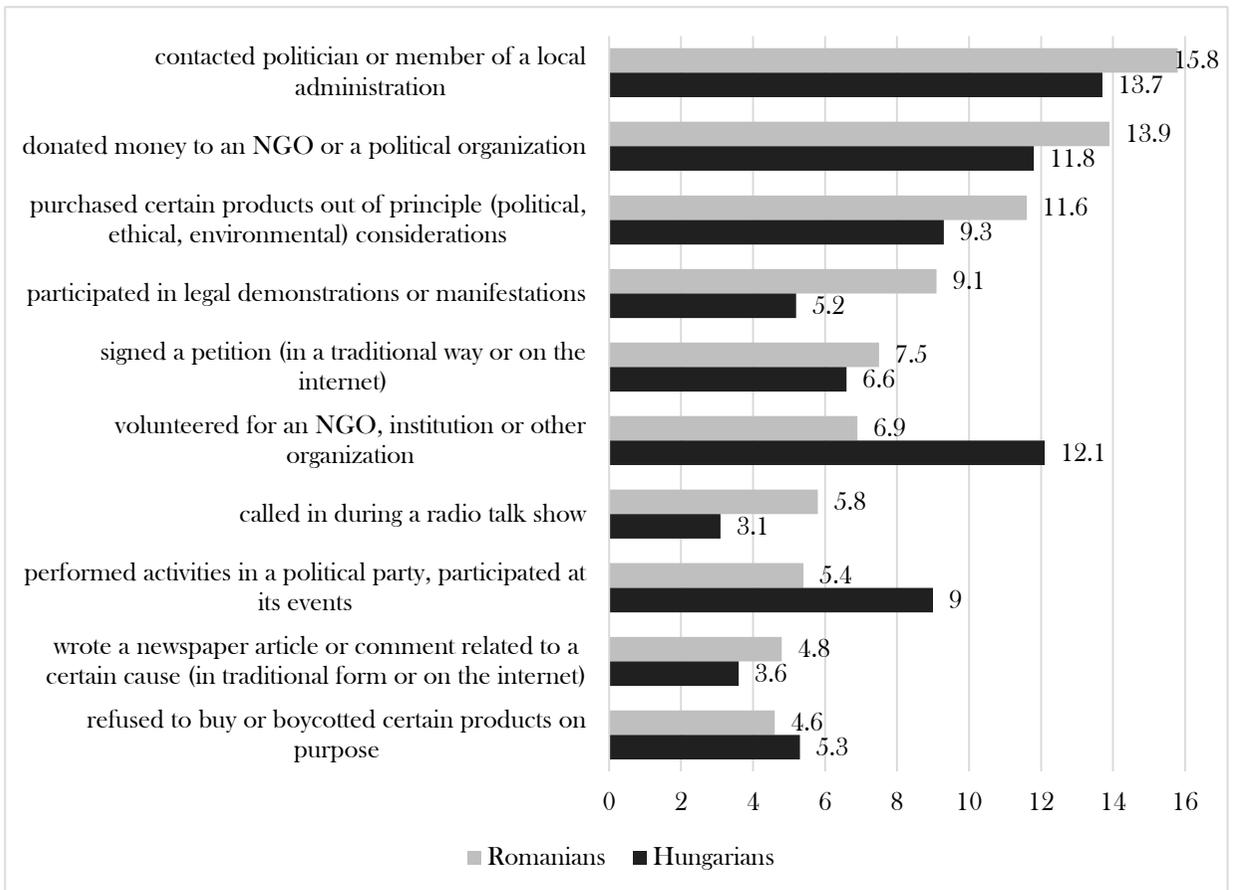
Values in bold represent significant differences according to the ANOVA tests. Values for Romania are computed from the merged (and reweighted) samples, while values for ethnic Romanians are calculated from the sub-group of Romanians in the merged sample. Values for Hungarians are computed from the sample representative of Hungarians in Transylvania.

Table 4 shows the means of the variables inspired by the resource model according to ethnicity. On average, there is a significant difference between Hungarians' and Romanians' consumption of political media-content: overall, Romanians consume more. Breaking down the results further, according to the different types of media (data not shown), we can observe that the difference comes mainly from the more intense consumption of political content in electronic media (mainly TV).

Concerning non-electoral political activities, there is no significant difference between Hungarians and Romanians in overall levels of engagement.<sup>34</sup> However, there are certain forms of political participation that Hungarians prefer in higher proportions, most importantly engaging in voluntary work and participating at events organised by a political party; therefore, we have good reason to consider these activities ethnically specific forms of participation. It should be noted that these are forms of participation that presuppose longer-term involvement and commitment to organisations as compared to most other types of participation that require only one-time involvement. We believe that this particular trait is related to the Hungarian elites' project of building ethnic institutions, which is aimed at forging long-lasting institutional structures (see Kiss and Székely, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> The ten types of non-electoral activities are listed in Figure 2.

<sup>34</sup> For an earlier analysis of non-electoral participation in Romania, to which our data are to a certain extent comparable, see Sum (2005).



**Figure 2. Types of non-electoral participation, by ethnicity**

### 3.1.3. Social and ethnic embeddedness

We approached the operationalisation of social networks and social embeddedness in two ways. First, we constructed a composite scale which we named *community embeddedness*. The survey items we used for this purpose referred to how often voters attended church and various community events.

**Table 5. Community embeddedness, by ethnicity**

	Attends church		Participates in local festivities, events	
	Romanians (N=1533)	Hungarians in Transylvania (N=1192)	Romanians (N=1533)	Hungarians in Transylvania (N=1192)
Several times a week	3.6	3.6	3.7	1.1
Once a week	18.2	22.9	4.6	3.4
A few times a month	24.8	26.0	17.5	19.9
A few times a year	30.8	26.6	42.8	40.2
Less frequently	22.5	20.7	31.3	35.2
<b>Mean (on 0-100 transformed scale)</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>40.5</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>23.4</b>

As Table 5 shows, there is no significant difference between Romanian and Hungarian respondents regarding community embeddedness. Hungarian respondents attend church somewhat more often, while Romanians attend local festivities or events more often, but neither of the differences is significant.

Second, the questionnaire included several questions about personal networks. We asked respondents to name up to three persons who would best match the following five situations: (1) *'Have you been someone's guest, or has someone been your guest in the last three months?'* (2) *'Are there persons with whom you go out for entertainment (to pubs, the theatre, sport events, hiking, etc.)?'* (3) *'Apart from family members living in the same household with you, are there persons with whom you regularly talk about confidential issues and problems?'* (4) *'Let us suppose you needed money immediately. Are there any people you could borrow from?'* (5) *'People often need legal counselling or advice, and help in official matters. Is there anyone you can rely on in case you need to?'*

Each person could name a maximum of three persons for each situation described above, resulting in a total of maximum 15 persons. Based on these items we created two indicators. On the one hand, we measured *the density of the personal network* by the number of persons the respondents mentioned. Romanians mentioned 2.3 persons on average, while Hungarians 2.9 persons (the average for the sample representative for Romania was 2.4). The difference between these values is statistically significant. This higher value for Hungarians is rather surprising,<sup>35</sup> especially knowing that compared to the national average Hungarians occupy more unfavourable positions according to several indicators of social stratification (Kiss, 2014).

On the other hand, we mapped *the ethnic structure of personal networks*. Table 6 shows the values of two indicators, cross-tabulated with various sociodemographic variables. The first is the proportion of Romanians in the personal networks of ethnic Hungarian respondents. The second shows whether there are persons of Romanian ethnicity in the family, meaning close relatives (father, mother,

<sup>35</sup> Density of personal networks and social position in a stratified system are usually positively correlated. Our survey confirmed this relation.

or spouse). The table also displays the results of ANOVA tests, indicating statistically significant differences between the groups for most of the listed explanatory variables.

**Table 6. Ethnic Romanians in the personal networks and families of Hungarians**

		Proportion of Romanians in the personal network		Sig.	Proportion of Hungarians with Romanian family members	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Region	Dispersed communities (N=202)	25.2	8.6	0.000	22.6	62.1	0.000
	Central Transylvania (N=218)	16.8			17.6		
	Partium (N=295)	7.9			11.1		
	Székely Land (N=478)	3.8			2.7		
Proportion of Hungarians	Below 20% (N=244)	27.9	6.7	0.000	23.7	71.5	0.00
	20-40% (N=206)	12.5			15.2		
	40-60% (N=109)	7.3			6.3		
	60%+ (N=634)	5.1			5.1		
Size of municipality	Below 2000 (N=342)	6.6	0.3	0.000	6.0	12.8	0.005
	2-10 thousand (N=309)	11.2			9.8		
	10-100 thousand (N=280)	12.2			13.6		
	100 thousand + (N=261)	15.2			15.0		
Type of municipality	Urban settlement (N=612)	14.1	9.1	0.000	13.7	9.1	0.03
	Rural settlement (N=580)	8.0			7.8		
Age	18-34 (N=367)	11.9	0.6	0.075	13.8	4.4	0.109
	35-54 (N=375)	12.5			12.3		
	55+ (N=451)	8.9			8.5		
Education	Elementary (N=365)	6.1	.3	0.001	6.9	5.5	0.066
	Secondary (N=658)	12.4			12.7		
	Higher (N=169)	12.9			12.0		
Religion	Protestant (N=601)	10.7	0.0	0.001	10.6	18.3	0.000
	Catholic (N=524)	10.0			11.0		
	Other (N=66)	22.7			20.0		
Church attendance	Weekly (N=300)	7.7	0.2	0.024	9.7	0.947	0.814
	Several times a month (N=305)	11.0			11.4		
	Several times a year (N=306)	13.2			11.8		
	Less often (N=245)	12.6			11.0		
	<b>Total (N=1192)</b>	<b>11.0</b>			<b>11.4</b>		

For the total population of Hungarians in Romania, on average 11 per cent of the contacts in personal networks are ethnic Romanians. While almost all sociodemographic variables produce significant differences, the greatest ones emerge with regard to region and the ethnic structure of the settlement.

While the personal networks of Hungarians comprise on average 25 per cent Romanians in the ‘dispersed Hungarian communities’ where the proportion of Hungarians is very low, in the compact Hungarian-inhabited area of Székely Land this proportion is as low as 3.8 per cent. The table also shows that the proportion of Romanians in the personal networks of Hungarians in Central Transylvania (where Hungarians are a significant minority) is well above the proportion measured in the Partium region (where ethnic demography is more balanced).

The revealed impact of region is to a great extent an indirect consequence of ethnic geography. This is confirmed by the impact of the ethnic composition of the settlement on the composition of personal networks. The type of settlement also has an impact: the personal networks of Hungarians show more ethnic homogeneity in smaller settlements. The influence of educational level on network structure is also significant, individuals with at most eight finished classes having the most homogenous personal networks. Conversely, the influence of age is not significant (or only marginally so). Religion also matters: the proportion of Romanians is higher in the personal networks of individuals belonging to other churches than the Hungarian historical ones (Catholic, Protestant). It is also important to note that with the exception of church attendance, the same variables have a significant effect on both the presence of Romanians in the family and their proportion in personal networks.

Furthermore, there are also great differences in the ethnic structure of personal networks of families according to party choice, as shown in Table 7. One third of the supporters of Romanian parties have Romanian family members, and the proportion of Romanians in their personal networks also approaches one third. Conversely, among voters of RMDSZ or the other Hungarian parties these proportions remain below ten per cent.

**Table 7. Ethnic Romanians in personal networks and families, by party option**

	Ratio of Romanians in the network (average, %)	Ratio of Hungarians having Romanian family members (%)
RMDSZ voters (N=565)	7.9	7.7
Other Hungarian parties (N=82)	6.9	5.7
Romanian parties (N=74)	30.6	33.0
Passive, undecided (N=424)	12.7	12.3

### *3.2. Factors Influencing the Mobilisation Capacity of RMDSZ*

In the last part of our analysis, we present multivariate regression models for the electoral mobilisation of Transylvanian Hungarians. First, we report a multinomial logistic regression which models the odds that respondents will not vote for RMDSZ but (1) remain passive /undecided, or (2) vote for one of the Romanian (mainstream) parties, or (3) for an alternative Hungarian party (MPP, EMNP), respectively. We should note that support for RMDSZ reached a nadir in 2012 and both the support for mainstream parties and Hungarian competitor parties was at its highest. Our category of reference is *RMDSZ voters*. The table shows odds ratios (Exp B), flagged for the conventionally used significance levels. An odds ratio of less than one indicates how much a one unit change in the explanatory variable reduces the odds of belonging to the respective group (compared to the vote for RMDSZ). An odds ratio greater than one indicates how much a one-unit change in the explanatory variable increases the same odds. The table also shows the reference values for categorical explanatory variables.

The model presented in Table 8 includes the explanatory variables we have derived from the theories of turnout, as well as control variables. The latter include the usual socio-demographics, a variable grasping general levels of satisfaction (with the direction the country is going; namely with actual and expected living conditions), as well as a variable about Hungarian citizenship. The explanatory power of the model is relatively good (Nagelkerke  $R^2=0.402$ ).

Table 8. Turnout and political options of Hungarians in Transylvania: July 2012 (multinomial logistic regression)

Variable	Category	Basic distribution (%)				Multinomial logistic regression		
		Passive	Other Hungarian party	Romanian party	RMDSZ	Passive vs. RMDSZ	Other Hungarian party vs. RMDSZ	Romanian party vs. RMDSZ
						Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
Region	Dispersed communities (N=202)	45.6	5.3	15.6	33.5	1.01	1.39	<b>6.82**</b>
	Central Transylvania (N=218)	35.5	6.1	11.7	46.7	<b>0.47*</b>	0.85	<b>6.05**</b>
	Partium (N=295)	30.7	4.8	4.8	59.7	<b>0.33***</b>	0.66	1.58
	Székely land (N=478)	37.7	12.8	1.2	48.2	.	.	.
Proportion of Hungarians	Below 20% (N=244)	43.7	3.1	16.1	37.0	0.79	<b>0.29*</b>	<b>3.54**</b>
	20-40% (N=206)	33.5	4.5	9.5	52.5	1.48	0.42	1.69
	40-60% (N=109)	41.1	7.1	5.4	46.4	1.00	0.95	1.41
	60%+ (N=634)	35.3	11.4	2.6	50.7	.	.	.
Settlement size	Below 2000 (N=342)	34.1	6.9	4.5	54.4	<b>2.33**</b>	0.47	1.38
	2-10 thousand (N=309)	33.6	10.2	8.5	47.7	<b>2.79***</b>	0.94	2.83
	10-100 thousand (N=280)	42.6	10.4	5.9	41.2	1.21	1.71	0.98
	100 thousand + (N=261)	40.1	4.7	8.7	46.6	.	.	.
Type of settlement	Urban (N=612)	43.2	7.1	7.1	42.5	<b>3.18***</b>	0.57	0.74
	Rural (N=580)	31.2	9.1	6.5	53.3	.	.	.
Sex	Woman (N=622)	38.9	6.8	7.4	46.8	1.20	0.79	1.18
	Man (N=570)	35.0	9.6	6.1	49.3	.	.	.
Age	18-34 (N=367)	38.9	8.2	6.1	46.8	1.36	0.88	1.39

Variable	Category	Basic distribution (%)				Multinomial logistic regression		
		Passive	Other Hungarian party	Romanian party	RMDSZ	Passive vs. RMDSZ	Other Hungarian party vs. RMDSZ	Romanian party vs. RMDSZ
						Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
	35-54 (N=375)	34.0	8.9	6.3	50.8	0.97	0.84	0.87
	55+ (N=451)	38.2	7.5	7.7	46.6	.	.	.
Educational level	Elementary (N=365)	40.4	5.2	7.7	46.7	0.86	0.70	<b>2.56**</b>
	Secondary (N=658)	36.5	8.6	6.4	48.4	0.75	0.84	1.29
	Higher (N=169)	34.1	11.1	6.5	48.4	.	.	.
Hungarian citizenship	Applied for (N=229)	27.9	16.4	2.3	53.4	<b>0.50***</b>	<b>2.71***</b>	<b>0.23**</b>
	Would like to apply for (N=433)	29.0	8.6	7.2	55.2	<b>0.54***</b>	1.79	1.02
	Do not want to apply for (N=509)	43.8	4.1	8.4	43.8	.	.	.
Religion	Protestant (N=601)	37.5	7.2	6.7	48.6	0.98	0.66	0.50
	Catholic (N=524)	36.8	9.3	5.6	48.2	0.77	0.51	0.52
	Other (N=66)	36.6	7.0	16.9	39.4	.	.	.
General satisfaction						<b>1.15**</b>	0.91	0.90
Internal self-efficacy						1.00	1.00	1.00
External self-efficacy						1.00	1.00	1.00
Perceived benefits from winner						<b>0.97***</b>	1.00	1.00
Commitment to democracy						<b>0.98***</b>	1.00	1.01
Stakes of elections						<b>0.98*</b>	1.00	<b>0.99**</b>
Community embeddedness						<b>0.97***</b>	0.001	0.99
Network density						<b>0.73***</b>	0.94	0.95

Variable	Category	Basic distribution (%)				Multinomial logistic regression		
		Passive	Other Hungarian party	Romanian party	RMDSZ	Passive vs. RMDSZ	Other Hungarian party vs. RMDSZ	Romanian party vs. RMDSZ
						Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
Proportion of Romanians in personal network						1.09	<b>0.33**</b>	<b>1.47**</b>
Romanian person in family	No (N=1067)	6.6	8.6	5.1	49.7	0.67	1.18	<b>0.36**</b>
	Yes (N=125)	1.5	4.2	20.4	33.8	.	.	.
Frequency of political conversations						0.99	1.00	1.00
Other forms of political activity						0.95	<b>3.17**</b>	1.00
Consumption of political media-content						<b>0.99***</b>	1.01	1.00

\* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

Of the rational choice-inspired attitudinal scales, commitment to democracy, the perceived stakes of elections and the perceived benefit associated with the election of particular candidates had a significant negative effect on remaining passive, as opposed to voting for RMDSZ. However, only the stakes of elections had a significant impact with regard to voting for other parties than RMDSZ: those who perceived higher stakes were less likely to support Romanian parties instead of RMDSZ.

With regard to the resources model, we find that the consumption of more political content in the media reduces the likelihood of being passive. A much more interesting finding is that more intense non-electoral political activities increase the support of RMDSZ's Hungarian challengers: engaging in one additional form of non-electoral activity more than triples the odds of voting for a Hungarian challenger instead of RMDSZ. The most plausible reason for this is that the competition between RMDSZ and its opposition is more intensive among the politically active strata of the community (among a sub-elite level of community activists) and less intensive among the masses.

The level of social and ethnic embeddedness also has a significant impact. The weight of Romanians in personal networks is not related significantly to the probability of remaining passive, but it increases the likelihood of votes given to Romanian parties and decreases the probability of voting for other Hungarian parties. The presence of Romanians as close family members also matters; those without Romanian family members are almost three times less likely to vote for Romanian parties, although there is no significant effect with regard to supporting Hungarian challenger parties.

Turning now to the control variables, the region where the respondents live significantly differentiates both the undecided and the supporters of Romanian parties from RMDSZ voters. On the one hand, voters from Central Transylvania and the Partium region are significantly less likely to be passive than those who live in Székely Land. This conclusion is in line with the findings of Stroshein (2011) and Tătar (2011) that ethnic mobilisation is more successful and the dominance of RMDSZ is more accentuated in regions where ethnic demography is more balanced. On the other hand, the odds of voting for Romanian parties are seven times greater in the dispersed Hungarian communities, and six times greater in Central Transylvania than in the Székely Land.<sup>36</sup> The ethnic structure of the settlement influences the support of both Romanian parties and the Hungarian challengers. Supporting Romanian parties is 3.5 times more likely in localities with less than 20 per cent Hungarians than in settlements with more than 60 per cent, while voting for challenger Hungarian parties is about three times less likely. Thus, the findings corroborate the electoral results which show that the main challenge for RMDSZ comes from two different sources depending on the ethnic composition of the region: Romanian parties are the primary competitors in the regions where Hungarians are dispersed - where the ethnic embeddedness of the Hungarians is considerably lower - while in the ethnically more homogeneous Hungarian region of Székely Land, the main challenge is mounted by the smaller Hungarian parties who promote more radical programs.

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<sup>36</sup> The finding that the Central Transylvanian region seems to resemble the diaspora in this respect was a novelty in the 2012 survey: previous polls did not indicate higher support for Romanian parties in this region.

The mobilisation capacity of RMDSZ is stronger in rural areas and smaller settlements than in larger cities.<sup>37</sup> However, settlement type and size exert a significant impact only with regard to passive voters, but not to supporters of Romanian parties or RMDSZ's Hungarian challengers.<sup>38</sup>

Apart from these sociodemographic variables,<sup>39</sup> only education displays a relevant effect, and only with regard to the likelihood of supporting Romanian parties. The data show that persons with the lowest educational level were more than 2.5 times more likely to vote for Romanian parties than respondents with a higher education. Although the effect is not significant, we still find it useful to dwell on the impact of education on passivity because education is not a mere control variable but can also be understood as being related to the resource model. Thus, it is against our expectations that with regard to the RMDSZ-undecided comparison it is the most educated who display the highest likelihood of remaining passive.<sup>40</sup>

Hungarian citizenship has an interesting effect.<sup>41</sup> Hungarians who already applied or were planning to apply for citizenship were less likely to remain passive in elections, were more likely to vote for smaller Hungarian parties compared to RMDSZ, and less likely to vote for Romanian parties. In other words, this category was easier mobilised than the average and, based on their party preferences, tended to adhere to more radical positions regarding ethnic issues.

Finally, a higher level of general satisfaction produces passivity instead of support for RMDSZ. This rather unexpected finding is probably related to the fact that RMDSZ was in opposition by the time of data collection.

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<sup>37</sup> This tendency is revealed by all opinion polls that have been carried out from 1999 to 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the impact of type and size are contradictory, which may be some sort of a methodological artefact (one of the variables captures a residual effect).

<sup>39</sup> The lack of impact of age is somewhat surprising because surveys carried out from 1999 to 2009 showed that older generations used to support RMDSZ in greater proportions. However, relations changed in 2010 (probably related to the fact the RMDSZ supported the austerity measures introduced by Emil Boc's government in response to the economic crisis, which also included cutting back pensions). See Kiss and Barna (2011).

<sup>40</sup> Here too a brief contextualisation could be useful: RMDSZ used to enjoy more substantial support among higher educated segments until the emergence of the Hungarian opposition. However, after the successful campaign of László Tőkés for the European Parliament as an independent, and the registration of the first Hungarian challenger party (MPP), the proportion of passive voters as well as supporters of alternative Hungarian parties increased among the most educated group of voters. After RMDSZ reached an agreement with Tőkés before the 2009 EP elections whereby Tőkés got re-elected on RMDSZ's ticket, support for RMDSZ increased to the largest extent among more highly educated voters. However, RMDSZ once again lost the sympathy of the most educated segment, the lowest level of support among university graduates being recorded in December 2010; this also coincides with the lowest level of overall support ever measured in surveys for RMDSZ. The trend could be summarised as follows: while support for RMDSZ among the higher educated strata was above average until 2007, since then the most educated voters seem to have been reacting somewhat more sensitively than the rest of the community to important political events see Kiss and Barna (2011) for details.

<sup>41</sup> According to the survey, 18 per cent of Hungarians were Hungarian citizens. Since then, the proportion has increased significantly to 50 per cent.

### 3.3. Factors Influencing Turnout Among Hungarians and in the National Electorate

Now we compare the effects of the investigated factors on voting intentions of Romanians and Hungarians through two binominal logistic regressions. Table 9 shows odds ratios and significance levels. The explanatory power of both models is weaker compared to the multinomial model presented in the previous section (Nagelkerke  $R^2$  for the national sample is 0.275, and for the Hungarian sample 0.288). The decrease in explanatory power in the case of Hungarians comes from the fact that, for the sake of comparability, we had to exclude a series of relevant variables that were included in the multinomial model. For example, we left out regional distributions in Transylvania, the ethnic structure of settlements and the indicators of ethnic embeddedness.

**Table 9. Factors determining election turnout in Romania and among Transylvanian Hungarians July 2012 (binominal logistic regression)**

Variable	Categories	Romania			Hungarians		
		N	Proportion of certain voters	Exp (B)	N	Proportion of certain voters	Exp(B)
Region	Transylvania	575	60.9		1192	65.0	
	Moldova	491	83.2	<b>1.71***</b>			
	Wallachia	625	72.1	<b>2.13***</b>			
Settlement size	Below 2000	508	73.3		342	68.5	
	2-10 thousand	382	77.6	0.88	309	64.7	0.69
	10-100thousand	331	69.6	0.57	280	61.3	0.78
	100 thousand +	321	66.7	<b>0.38***</b>	261	64.8	<i>0.99*</i>
	Bucharest	149	53.4	<b>0.12***</b>			
Type of settlement	Urban	892	67.2		612	60.8	
	Rural	799	74.1	0.63	580	69.5	<b>2.76***</b>
Sex	Woman	877	70.7		622	62.5	
	Man	814	70.2	<i>0.82*</i>	570	67.8	<b>1.46**</b>
Age	18-34	503	65.0		367	63.5	
	35-54	557	68.9	0.93	375	69.0	1.31
	55+	631	76.0	<b>1.99***</b>	451	63.0	1.16
Educational level	Elementary	492	73.3		365	62.0	
	Secondary	890	70.9	<b>1.42**</b>	658	66.3	0.91
	Higher	309	64.7	1.03	169	66.7	0.74
			<b>Mean</b>	<b>Exp (B)</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Exp (B)</b>
General satisfaction			3.77	1.01		3.59	<b>0.81***</b>
Internal self-efficacy			2.9	<b>1.01***</b>		-18.1	1.00
External self-efficacy			-18.5	<b>1.01***</b>		-25.2	1.00
Perceived benefits from winner			-7.2	<b>1.01***</b>		-17.3	<b>1.01***</b>
Commitment to democracy			60.7	<b>1.01***</b>		62.8	<b>1.01***</b>

Stakes of elections	30.8	<b>1.01***</b>	27.0	0.99
Frequency of political conversations	54.4	<b>1.01***</b>	51.4	1.00
Other forms of political activities	0.85	<b>1.02</b>	0.83	<b>1.08*</b>
Consumption of political media content	49.6	<b>1.00***</b>	45.2	1.00
Network density	2.4	0.95	2.9	<b>1.13**</b>
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.275		0.288	

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

The comparison of the two models reveals important differences. First, the effects of variables connected to the model of rational choice and resource model seem to be more important in the case of the national sample. Here, all the indexes modelling rational cost-benefit calculus are significant. In other words, Romanians were more likely to vote if their internal and external self-efficacy was higher, if they perceived the stake of the elections and the benefits from the winning of one candidate as higher, and if they were committed to democracy. In the case of Hungarians only commitment to democracy and perceived benefits had such effects. In the case of Romanians, resources also matter; consequently, those who are more informed (who talk about politics and consume political media content) were more likely to vote. In the case of Hungarians no such relation existed. However, perhaps the most significant finding is that social embeddedness has different effects on the two samples. The density of personal networks is relevant (with a positive impact) in the case of Hungarians, but it does not have a significant impact in the national sample. Moreover, analysis of only the ethnic Romanian respondents in the national sample shows that the effect of personal network density becomes marginally significant, but in the opposite direction.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> 6.4 per cent of the respondents in the national sample are Hungarians. We do not show the re-computed model here; the effect of other variables has not changed in important ways. We report, however, the mean network densities among voters and non-voters by ethnicity: among Romanians, voters' networks consist on average of 2.2 persons, while non-voters' of 2.4 persons. Among Hungarians these values are 3.1 and 2.7, respectively.

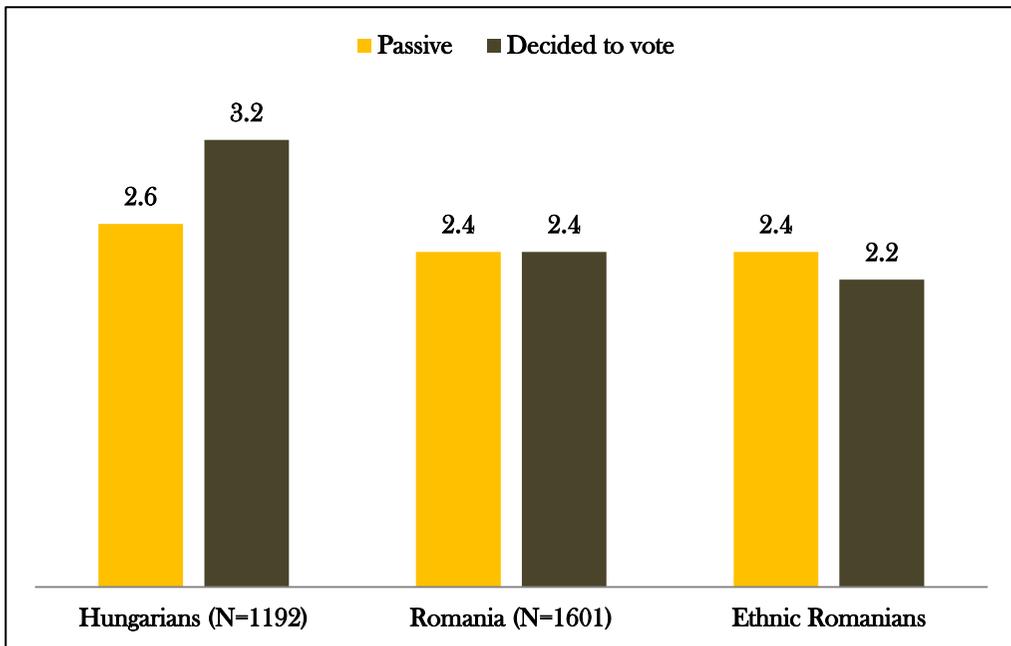


Figure 3. Network density by voting intentions

#### 4. Conclusion

Our paper has examined the factors that lie behind ethnic block voting through an in-depth analysis of the Transylvanian Hungarian case. In this respect, one should distinguish between macro- and micro-level determinants. We have argued that the notion of collective rationality employed by Csergő and Regelmann (2017) is not satisfying. The authors suppose (most probably correctly) that minority voters will support political parties that are best able to bargain for their interests. However, they reveal neither the concrete mechanisms through which parties mobilise their ethnically defined electorate, nor the individual motivations of people who vote for ethnic parties.

In this article we noted that, at least under ‘normal circumstances’ (e.g. when the capacities of RMDSZ to bargain for the ‘Hungarian interest’ are not profoundly and credibly questioned), the voting behaviour of Transylvanian Hungarians is habitually driven, or as Emirbayer and Mishe (1998: 976–983) would say, can be perceived as an ‘iteration’ of a routinised behaviour. In such a context, the option of voting for the dominant ethnic party is taken for granted and the question is rather whether Hungarian voters can be mobilised and whether they cast ballots in sufficient numbers for RMDSZ to pass the electoral threshold.

Consequently, we investigated the micro-foundations of the mobilisation capacity of RMDSZ and the micro-level factors affecting voter turnout. Our first regression model that was run on the Hungarian sample revealed that the capacity of RMDSZ depends strongly on ethnic embeddedness. The factors that increase the likelihood of voting for mainstream (or Romanian) parties was influenced strongly by this factor. In our second regression model, we compared the factors influencing

turnout intentions among Hungarians and among the majority population. This comparison led us to important conclusions. In the case of Hungarians, rational cost-benefit calculus matters less, while social embeddedness matters more. In the Romanian sample the density of one's social network did not have a significant effect on voter behaviour. This latter result is less surprising if one takes into account the literature focusing on Eastern Europe. Howard (2003) highlighted that the resilience of personal networks has exactly the opposite effect to that which one mainstream hypothesis predicts: it actually supports a turn away from the public sphere and political passivity. From this perspective, the opportunity for RMDSZ to build on existing social networks and on the embeddedness of Hungarian voters in terms of mobilisation (rather than the lack of a relationship between embeddedness and participation in Romania) is pronounced.

In sum, the ethnic vote is sustained by the capacity (or by the belief in the capacity) of RMDSZ to bargain for the interests of the Hungarian minority. However, individual voting behaviour is mostly habitualised, while the mobilisation capacity of RMDSZ is mediated by social embeddedness and ethnic encapsulation.

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# HUUB VAN BAAR AND PETER VERMEERSCH\*

## The Limits of Operational Representations: Ways of Seeing Roma beyond the Recognition-redistribution Paradigm

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### Abstract

Since 2011, the EU has called upon its member states to step up their efforts to improve the socioeconomic conditions facing many Roma. It has also sought to secure the ethnic representation of the Roma in these efforts. By doing so, the EU has tried to strike a balance between redistribution and recognition: it has recognized the ethnic specificity of this group, but it has also framed the issue as one that requires a socioeconomic solution. Using insights from frame analysis, visual theory and governmentality studies, we argue that the EU's balancing act between recognition and redistribution has its limits. Current redistribution policies may be open to forms of group representation, but the deeper operational representations which underpin that openness still conceptualize the Roma in restricted ways. These operational representations determine how the Roma become publicly 'visible' and 'governable'. In this article, we speculate about a possible trajectory out of this impasse and argue in favor of a repertoire of representation that allows for more fluid and contestable images of the Roma.

*Keywords:* Europeanization, Operational Representations, Hypervisibility, Visuality, Recognition, Redistribution, Participation, Roma.

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Since the fall of communism, members of Europe's Roma minorities have increasingly participated in political debates about the ways in which their position could and should be improved. By developing their own heterogeneous social movements, Roma activists have entered the post-1989 political scene as active agents of representation, not mere passive 'victims' of representation by others (van Baar, 2011a; Vermeersch, 2006). They have become more than simply the subject of discourses and programs of inclusion, development, and empowerment; they have now also become critical voices in debates about their status as European, national or ethnic minorities. In this capacity, they have tried to influence the policy fabric around their position. The momentum of 1989 and the ensuing dynamic interactions between a range of organizations – formal and informal Roma groups, advocacy networks, non-governmental organizations and international governmental structures – have created a wide and diversified landscape of Roma activism in and beyond Europe (Ram, 2011; van Baar, 2011a; Vermeersch, 2006).<sup>1</sup>

This is in many ways a positive story, but it is hard not to see the more tragic reality that is also still there. Many reports raise concerns about the perilous socioeconomic and political conditions that continue to face the majority of the Roma and warn against the emergence of a reinforced racialized divide between the Roma and others (see also Sobotka and Vermeersch, 2012; van Baar, 2017a). Across Europe Roma citizens often lack access to public services and face severe obstacles when seeking to exercise their rights. Research has pointed to several social and political mechanisms that make the Roma into 'non-regular' societal subjects. This predicament has been approached and studied from a range of conceptual angles, including, for example, stigmatization (Bogdal, 2011; Lucassen et al, 1998), racialization (Agarin, 2014; Stewart, 2012; van Baar, 2017a), orientalizing (Willems, 1997), securitization (van Baar, 2011b; van Baar et al., 2018), and nomadization (Drakakis-Smith, 2007; van Baar, 2011b, 2015). The Roma's declining living conditions have not only been a continuing concern at the center of Roma-related activism; they have in recent years also led the EU to engage in more robust policy-making efforts.

In this article, we assess recent developments related to the EU's policy framework on the Roma, which was launched in 2011.<sup>2</sup> Policy initiatives on the Roma have usually emphasized either their lack of status as a legal or ethno-political group (in other words: their need for recognition) or their need for a more equal share of the available socioeconomic and political resources (the need for redistribution) (Kostadinova, 2011; McGarry, 2012; Szalai, 2003; Tremlett et al., 2014). Recognition and redistribution are also key terms in discussions that focus on participatory minority governance, i.e., those addressing the participation of Roma in decision-making and policy formation (McGarry and Agarin, 2014) and their empowerment through inclusive education and community development (Richardson and Ryder, 2012; Rostas, 2012a; 2012b; Ryder, 2014; Ryder et al., 2014a; 2014b). According to

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<sup>1</sup> We do not represent the post-1989 broadening and diversification of the Roma movement as a progressive and linear development for reasons we clarify later in this article.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2011) *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*. Brussels: European Commission.

many scholars and policymakers, Roma policy programs are problematic when they are one-sided. Policies that focus primarily on minority rights (recognition) tend to neglect the detrimental dynamics of socioeconomic interactions between the Roma and others, while those that focus narrowly on social inclusion (redistribution) ‘forget’ to increase measures against discrimination, human rights abuse and ‘Romaphobia’. Therefore, the remedy often put forward is to find a balance between these recognitive and redistributive dimensions; something that can be done by developing socioeconomic inclusion policies directed specifically at the Roma while increasing the dialogue with the Roma themselves at both ‘elite’ and ‘grassroots’ levels in devising, implementing and evaluating these policies – a methodology that is often dubbed ‘Roma participation’ or ‘Roma representation’. We argue that combining recognitive and redistributive trajectories, and securing the participation and representation of the Roma in the development of such combined strategies, are necessary steps – but they may not be sufficient. In order to be more effective, we need a more critical approach towards ‘Roma participation’ and ‘Roma representation’ – buzzwords that have so far been incorporated in policy discourses in a too perfunctory manner. Using insights from frame analysis, visual theory and governmentality studies, we seek to develop a more elaborated notion of ‘representation’, one which lays bare the problems with current initiatives and may help us to imagine better practices.

We structure our argument as follows. In the first section, we examine recent EU Roma-related policy initiatives in more detail and show why they indeed can be described as a balancing act between recognition and redistribution. In the second section, we argue that, in the context of neoliberal imperatives in countries with large Roma populations, there are several limits to this balancing act. Such combined policies, we posit, might in the end not help that much to improve the position of many Roma, and in some cases, they may even create new obstacles. We explore the empirics of the problem briefly in the third section of the article. In the fourth section, we then argue that to go beyond the restricting categories of recognition and redistribution, we need to envision a better and thicker conception of ‘Roma representation’. Our argument is based on an analysis of current ‘operational representations’ of the Roma, which are thin representations that have been institutionalized in decision- and policy-making bodies. They are thin because they tend to limit the ways in which the Roma are ‘seen’. They categorize Roma as either ‘risky’ or ‘at risk’ and may therefore, in some ways, rather contribute to their marginalization than resolve it. We diagnose this problem, but we also think about a possible trajectory out of the impasse. We conclude our article by exploring briefly what might be helpful: the development of a repertoire of representation that allows for more fluid and contestable images of the Roma.

### ***1. European Policies on the Roma: Balancing Between Recognition and Redistribution***

The emergence of European Roma-related policies has sometimes been described as a momentous, constructive and even progressive shift towards materializing opportunities for the Roma. The roots of that idea go back to the early 1990s. With an undertone that seemed to echo the claim about the ‘end of history’

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(Fukuyama, 1992), many observers hoped at the time that the material suffering and gross human rights violations that plagued many Roma would eventually and inevitably become a thing of the past. Since the authoritarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe had collapsed and Western liberal democracy had triumphed, just accommodations for the region's Roma could finally be implemented and would automatically deliver results. International structures went along with this reasoning. European institutions such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE, alongside a variety of Roma activist networks, non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups, argued it was time to recognize Roma cultures, histories, and experiences (including the experience of their victimization of Nazi and communist regimes). This was not only needed as a matter of principle, it was argued; it was also to be a necessary step towards the improvement of their societal position and would directly foster their inclusion into mainstream European societies. As a result, throughout the 1990s international organizations gradually developed a framework for policies on the Roma that emphasized their special position and also expanded transnational political opportunities for ethnic mobilization and activism in the name of the Roma (Vermeersch, 2005a).

Throughout the years, many scholars have commented on key developments in European Roma-related policy formation. We cannot do justice to the rich analysis that has been made, but we can discern a couple of common denominators in several of these scholarly reflections. For example, many have pointed out that minority rights-based approaches and discourses (McGarry, 2010; Vermeersch, 2006), and the identity paradigm more generally (Tremlett et al., 2014), have tended to diagnose the problems facing Roma as primarily caused by the widespread (and historically rooted) denial of their cultural specificity. And some have been critical precisely of this diagnosis. Martin Kovats, for instance, in his analysis of emerging European Roma policies, has warned against the 'growing tendency to view the Roma issue isolated from the wider political, economic, social and cultural context' leading European institutions to promote the homogenization of policies 'based on the limited ... definition of the problem as fundamentally one of 'culture' (discrimination)' (Kovats, 2001: 110).

In Kovats's critical reading of the post-1989 decade of European Roma-related policies, there was a growing need to counter, even if only partially, a culturalized 'framing' of the Roma (Vermeersch, 2012) by one that would place a stronger emphasis on society-wide structural socioeconomic causes. The EU's policy trajectory towards a combination of, on the one hand, minority rights promotion, anti-discrimination laws, and cultural initiatives in the field of anti-racism and Holocaust remembrance with, on the other, policies that are explicitly dedicated to social inclusion and the application of regional cohesion and development funds to Roma issues can be considered a response to such criticism.<sup>3</sup>

To some extent, the EU's approach, which gradually came into being after the start of the negotiations about the accession of Central and East European countries to the EU in the late 1990s, can be read as an attempt to merge recognition and redistribution (Sobotka and Vermeersch, 2012). The recognitive dimension has

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<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere (van Baar, 2011a; Vermeersch, 2006), we have extensively discussed the variety and heterogeneity of post-1989 Roma-related European policy initiatives.

primarily been articulated by the development of non-specific and generic EU minority policies, the adoption of anti-discrimination laws such as the Race Equality Directive,<sup>4</sup> and the introduction of several European Parliament resolutions (i.e., on the position of the Roma in the EU, the remembrance and recognition of the Roma Holocaust, and combatting racism against Roma). On the other hand, events such as the launch and reinforcement of several EU funds (structural, regional and social funds such as PHARE and its successors), the introduction of an EU strategy toward the social inclusion of impoverished minorities, and the inauguration of a generic method of open coordination of policies and policy initiatives (OMC) in this domain, exemplify the correlated redistributive dimension.

Expectations were high, but the results fell somewhat short of the mark. The merging of recognition and redistribution, although at first sight impressive and promising, did not lead to a structural improvement of the living conditions of Europe's poorest, most marginalized and segregated Roma; nor could we witness the rise of a broad popular acceptance of the Roma as European fellow citizens. After a series of highly mediatized events in the period 2004-2011, in which Roma became the explicit target of civic and institutional violence in several EU member states (Italy, Hungary, the Czech Republic, France, Bulgaria, Germany, the United Kingdom, Romania and Slovakia), the EU's policy machinery went a step further and finally went along with a bolder embrace of the 'ethnic turn' that several advocacy and activist groups and networks had appealed for. Now, for the first time, a clearly ethnically defined European framework for policy-making on Roma emerged. Nevertheless, this was in a way also not that much more than a symbolic turn. In what the EU established as its 'EU Roma Framework'<sup>5</sup> both the recognitive and redistributive dimensions remained confidently embedded. After the establishment of the Integrated Roma Platform (2007) and after the development of the Ten Common Basic Principles of Roma Inclusion (2009) and the Roma Inclusion Road Map (2010), the EU Roma Framework has turned out to be, most of all, an endeavor to bring all the previously introduced measures comprehensively together and solidify the policy conditions under which Roma-related recognition, inclusion, and redistribution could go together. But, what made things different from earlier periods was that now new channels for representation and participation of Roma (for example, the regular meetings of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion) were introduced at various levels of policy formation.

This development, too, has received criticism. Several scholars have responded to the supposed inclusiveness of this new scheme and the ways in which it has been articulated in its multiple policy translations from the European to the national and subnational levels. Aidan McGarry and Timofey Agarin (2014), for instance, have discussed what they consider the underspecified character of what is frequently referred to as 'Roma participation'. They argue that, although policymakers and documents often use this term (alongside with the phrases 'Roma inclusion' and

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2000) *Council Directive 2000/43/EC*. Brussels: European Commission.

<sup>5</sup>

'Roma integration') to qualify 'progressive' political programs, they usually refrain from specifying what exactly it means (or should mean) in practice. Moreover, McGarry and Agarín suggest, the ways in which 'Roma participation' has been articulated in policy and political circles, as well as in recent policy transformations, are 'thin' and tend to be restricted to forms of tokenism or to what Sherry Arnstein (1969), in her famous paper on the 'ladder of participation', would have called 'non-participation'.

In what could be considered an adapted version of Arnstein's ladder, McGarry and Agarín distinguish three increasingly 'thicker' levels of participation, referred to as 'representation', 'voice' and 'influence'. At the lowest level of participation ('representation'), Roma are politically represented in bodies, councils, committees, organizations and boards that, in one way or another, and at various institutional levels, deal with Roma-related policy formation and that, through consultation and advice, allow the Roma 'to have their say' in processes of policy-making. McGarry and Agarín accurately explain that, although this 'representation' may lead to a higher visibility of the Roma, it is 'unlikely to translate visibility into voice, because the institutional constraints they face are, for the most part, beyond their control' (McGarry and Agarín, 2014: 1978). Therefore, at the middle level of participation, that of 'voice', McGarry and Agarín stress the importance of focusing on the 'structural conditions that allow a minority to sustain its difference from the majority and as such be accepted by the majority with its difference at no additional costs for political participation' (2014: 1979). Only if this prerequisite is fulfilled, we will see recognition of minorities as equal participants, i.e., as agents with their own distinct voice. Finally, 'influence', they conclude, is a form of participation that 'allows minorities to enjoy substantive voice as agents of policymaking in their own right' (2014: 1976). Only on this level participation results in the power to enforce change.

We agree with McGarry and Agarín that the EU Roma Framework has led to certain policy interventions and institutional arrangements that could be qualified as merely 'representation' or, at best, 'voice', but remain far from effective 'influence'. Likewise, we endorse their observation that 'if the Roma are unable to exert influence in majority-dominated institutions and discourses then negative perceptions of Roma will remain in the ascendancy' (2014: 1986). Yet, we believe it is possible and necessary to think further. McGarry and Agarín call for a substantially thicker political participation of Roma and, by extension, for a more adequate merging of recognition and redistribution in institutional and societal contexts, but their call seems to bypass the need for a critical interrogation of the sociopolitical and politico-cultural climate in which these initiatives are or should be launched. To use Arnstein's metaphor once again, what exactly is the ground on which the ladder of participation stands? We could call for 'more' and 'thicker' forms of participation of Roma, but what if, with every attempt to climb higher on its rungs, the ladder also sinks deeper in the swampy political landscape in which it is situated? Put differently, it is one thing to describe theoretically, ethnographically or empirically the diverse steps or levels of the ladder, but we also need to think about the *conditions* under which it can be climbed. Although these conditions are mentioned by McGarry and Agarín, or at least implicated in their reflections about voice and influence, we believe they need to be highlighted and made more explicit.

Arnstein's ladder of participation has also popped up in other critical reflections on the EU Roma Framework and, particularly, in scholarly calls for what has been called 'inclusive community development' (Richardson and Ryder, 2012; Rostas, 2012b; Ryder, 2014; Ryder et al., 2014a; 2014b). Andrew Ryder (2014), for instance, has been mindful of the conditions we have alluded to. In his work on the attempts of British Gypsies and Travellers to organize their social movements and communities on their own terms, Ryder discusses, for instance, the delicate role of power relations in participatory governance; the risks of narrowing down minority inclusion and participation to veiled forms of assimilation, and the so-called 'rhetoric-reality gap' of the EU's emphasis on dialogue and partnership with Roma-related civil society.

We sympathize with Ryder's assessment 'that there is scope for community development to be achieved by Gypsy and Traveller communities on their terms fusing the old with the new [groups, ethnicities and identities] and through asset-based development predicating such development on existing cultural traits' (Ryder, 2014: 33). Yet, what remains much less clear is how and to what extent these forms of development, based on 'assets' and 'cultural traits', will manage to challenge the major political and societal barriers that have been put up by 'the majority-dominated institutions and discourses' (McGarry and Agarín, 2014: 1986) and, thus, how they will articulate Roma-related recognition and redistribution beyond the current impasse.

Implicitly, these authors seem to assume that the policy frameworks throughout Europe already fulfill the basic conditions under which Roma-related recognition and redistribution could be articulated. The only thing that is then left to be done is to discuss the next moves to be taken on the (modified) ladder of participation. We doubt, however, whether this is the case. To show why, we have to discuss more in detail the ways in which, at various levels of government, recognitive and redistributive measures have been introduced. We also need to discuss why they so far have mostly 'failed' to address the predicament facing many Roma.

## *2. The Limits of Balancing Recognition and Redistribution*

What are the larger conditions that need to be addressed when we discuss the issue of Roma representation, voice, and influence? And why do these conditions pose important limits to the combined policies of recognition and redistribution? To explain our view, we need to start from the observation that the introduction of Roma-related recognitive measures in Europe in the 1990s happened under profoundly changing political and socioeconomic circumstances. The drafting of the novel European human and minority rights agenda as well as the emergence of Roma-related policies of recognition began at a time when European social democracies and welfare regimes, including the communist varieties of the latter, started to become frayed under the pressure of neoliberalization. Not only did candidate EU member states engage in large-scale privatization, the decentralization of governance, and the

rebuilding of state-civil society relations,<sup>6</sup> they were also faced with the sweeping impact of EU membership conditionality.

The relationship between the dynamics of neoliberalization and the recognitive side of policies on the Roma, however, is far from straightforward. To analyze it thoroughly one should not, as some have done, ignore the context of larger economic developments in Europe and beyond (Ladányi and Szelényi, 2006). Nor should one assume an all-too-easy identification of minority rights discourses with neoliberalist ideology (Sigona and Trehan, 2009). Proponents of the latter idea have an easy answer to the question why Roma-related policies balanced between recognition and redistribution have not resulted in success. They have suggested that such policies have failed because they are simply part and parcel of a ‘neoliberal ideology’ that is aimed at the ‘Americanization of Eastern Europe’ (Sigona and Trehan, 2009: 3). However, as van Baar (2011a; 2013) has argued, a distinction should be made between the advancement of minority rights discourses (and the participatory ideas embedded in them) and the neoliberal project. We should also critically examine the ways in which the ‘perverse confluence’ (Dagnino, 2008) of minority participation and neoliberalization – which consists of a severe tension rather than a perfect convergence – has impacted on the abilities of governments to articulate minority rights publicly. In other words, what we see is not so much an *ideological* confluence of minority rights discourses and neoliberalism, but a hollowing out of minority rights *through* neoliberalization<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, the fact that the Roma-related politics of recognition have frequently departed from promoting equality and, instead, resorted to valorizing or even reifying (ethnic) difference (Vermeersch, 2005b) has not been the *direct* result of the merging of rights discourses and neoliberalism but, rather, of the latter’s ‘sustained assault on the very idea of egalitarian redistribution’ (Fraser, 2005: 298). The result of that assault is that minority policies became largely void of redistributive demands and gave prominence instead to processes of culturalization, ethnicization and territorialization (van Baar, 2011a; 2012). In her reflection on the development of feminism at about the same time, Nancy Fraser draws a conclusion that is relevant also to the case of the Roma:

Under *these conditions* [of the deflation of the idea of egalitarian redistribution], a culture-centered politics of recognition *could not succeed*. To the extent that *it neglected political economy and geopolitical developments*, this approach *could not effectively challenge* either the depredations of free-market policies or the rising tide of rightwing chauvinism that emerged in their wake. (Fraser 2005: 296, emphasis added)

<sup>6</sup> In this context, we consider Nancy Fraser’s (2005) historicization of and reflection on the (rise of a) politics of recognition and redistribution – in her case *vis-à-vis* several phases of the feminist movement – as insightful to rethink the post-1989 development, ambiguities and barriers of the Roma movement. Although we do not share much of her geopolitical framing of this development, we think that her historicization of social movements in the context of co-emerging neoliberalism, culturalism and nationalism has relevance beyond her focus on feminism.

<sup>7</sup> We do not approach neoliberalism as a new ‘grand narrative’ or as a set of policies or an ideology that is omnipresent and omnipotent in the sense that it represents everything that is bad. Rather, we understand neoliberalism in terms of complex, situated processes of neoliberalization in which neoliberal rationalities and technologies significantly intersect and intermingle with other types, ways and styles of governing (see van Baar, 2011a: 28-49, 163-74).

Furthermore, the limits of minority rights discourses should be seen in the context of key developments in the global and European political economy. In the EU, most notably, the neoliberalization of policies intersected with the policies of EU membership conditionality towards the candidate states. This seriously diminished the candidate states' room for maneuvering, particularly when it came to prominent socioeconomic and institutional reform agendas.<sup>8</sup> Fox and Vermeersch (2010) have argued that, under these conditions, a culturalization of East Central European politics took place that led to the renewal and reinforcement of nationalism, including the reemergence of Romaphobia, anti-Semitism and homophobia. In other words, indirectly the EU has to some extent contributed to what Fox and Vermeersch (2010) call 'backdoor nationalism', a counter-politics of identity that, in tandem with the Roma-related politics of recognition, has led to a highly problematic emphasis on now racialized difference.

Crucial to observe is that post-1989 attempts at combining a strong social democracy with neoliberal marketization either shipwrecked only to favor the latter (Eyal et al., 1998) or did not go together well with measures to mitigate the socioeconomic inequalities caused by neoliberal labor market flexibilization. Instead, in the West as well as Central and East European versions of a politics of redistribution, attempts were made at getting over status hierarchies, primarily through multicultural and anti-discrimination programs (Fraser, 2005). However, in a context of resurgent nationalism and increased local competition over resources in the wake of weakened social welfare protection systems, the combined politics of recognition and redistribution quickly turned into a rhetorical battle about who were the 'deserving' welfare beneficiaries, and, by extension, who the 'non-deserving'. It also popularized the idea that a distinction should be made between those 'able and willing' to adapt to the post-socialist conditions and those who are socioeconomically or even racially 'inadaptable'. In other words, a reductive politics of recognition and redistribution facilitated narratives that pit 'normal' citizens against those who are allegedly 'undeserving' and 'inadaptable', and - in the transnational dimension - discourses, promulgated by populist politicians and intensified by media, that make an equivalence between the supposed threat of poor 'welfare migrants' and that posed by the Roma (Stewart, 2012; van Baar, 2011a; 2012).

In her thorough discussions of the struggles for Roma minority recognition in Hungary, Júlia Szalai argues that '[w]elfare redistribution, with its sharp bifurcation into systems for "citizens" and systems for "the poor", alongside the decentralization of the provisioning for the poor, has intensified the competition among the poor for meager local resources' (Szalai 2003: 211). Although Szalai's analysis is focused on the effects of the Hungarian minority self-government system on the position of the Roma - who have been overrepresented among the poor - we consider her analysis also useful to assess the influence of the 'ethnic turn' implicated in the EU's Roma Framework. Nowhere in the process toward the establishment of that framework, nor in the elaboration of the procedures toward its domestic implementation, have we seen room for serious reflections on the potential problems of reinforcing and

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<sup>8</sup> Here we particularly mean the EU's encouraging of processes of privatization and the decentralization of governance, as well as the EU's support for, for instance, active labor market policies. As van Baar (2011a; 2012) has argued, in many of these policy areas the Roma have been negatively affected.

institutionalizing ethnic competition. Yet, such competition has emerged. Measures that have been taken to develop Roma-related policies have in some cases led to a sharp and often ambiguously institutionalized bifurcation: there are systems in place for ‘regularized citizens’ and others for ‘the irregularized poor’ (meaning the Roma). An example is the way in which the EU’s right to free movement has been applied to the Roma (van Baar, 2017b; Vrăbiescu, 2018) or how EU-supported development programs have failed to reach particularly the poorest and most segregated Roma (van Baar, 2017a; van Baar et al., 2018). Observing this is not equal to saying that most or even all Roma-related policies have ‘failed’ or are doomed to ‘fail’, but rather that the current articulation and implementation of these programs, although in theory based on a balance between recognition and redistribution, need further attention.

### ***3. Additional Problems Created by Contemporary Policy Formation and Implementation***

This policy impasse is important to address not only because it leads to a standstill on the ground, but also because it might create additional problems related to popularizing and further embedding stereotypical images of the Roma. Our argument is that inequalities between the Roma and other social groups persist not only *despite* recent efforts at designing modes of participatory governance with minority representatives, but to some degree also *due* to these efforts. While these policy measures may indeed increase the opportunities for Roma participation in policy creation and implementation, they fail to address – and sometimes even reinforce – the underlying view of the Roma as an exceptional category. Measures that are aimed at social inclusion through Roma participation often end up being implemented as part of a wider range of practices that build boundaries between the Roma and other social groups. As a result, such measures fail to counter the essentializing categorization schemes that have produced earlier forms of categorized inequality.

We see examples of this in several areas of policymaking. Sobotka and Vermeersch (2012) have detailed such a process in the field of housing. From their case study, they are able to show that a policy decision to offer Roma ‘adequate social housing’, even if that decision is made on the basis of consultations with Roma, can lead to a practice of eviction. In the case they describe – the Czech town of Roudnice nad Labem – the local government framed the eviction policy as an improvement of the local social housing situation for everyone; in reality, however, it meant a substantial reduction of the Roma’s chances for social inclusion because they were placed in new housing in a separate (and racialized) area outside the center of town. The key observation here is that seemingly well-intended policy measures, even if they are monitored by the EU and have come into being against the backdrop of ongoing policy-related discussions involving Roma representation and participation, do not always break down the boundaries between the Roma and others; sometimes the opposite happens. Even in cases where there is financial support from the EU for non-segregated housing renovations through programs like the European Regional Development Fund, such subsidy is in practice likely to be framed as ‘for the Roma,’ a tendency that reinforces the social distance between the Roma and others. As Sobotka

and Vermeersch write: ‘The spatial segregation that contributes to this detrimental situation is further exacerbated when local policymakers portray Roma citizens as a burden on the local economy, not as a group that deserves economic support as equal citizens or inhabitants who can help to build up the potential economic and social strength of the local community’ (Sobotka and Vermeersch, 2012: 818).

Other examples include targeted and racialized deportation and eviction regimes in France, Germany, Spain and some other countries, which have appeared next to, and even emerged out of, policy constellations that are on paper meant to improve the situation of the Roma (van Baar, 2015, 2017b; Vrăbiescu, 2018). We have seen, for example, that France in its national Roma strategy, which it has drawn up in response to the request of the European Commission, explicitly refrains from targeting ethnic populations in the field of poverty reduction or housing; but the Roma in France *are* targeted by authorities when it comes to ethnic profiling, forced evictions, and other instances of heightened tension around perceived security threats (van Baar, 2011b). This is even more tangible in the case of policies that are aimed at dismantling trafficking networks and stepping up efforts to protect children in marginalized communities, initiatives that ironically enough are often couched in a humanitarian narrative and executed in the name of children’s and women’s rights (Vrăbiescu, 2018).

In Belgium, to give another example, it was not so long ago common police practice to indicate whether someone is ‘zigeuner’ in offender as well as victim profiles in the General National Data Base.<sup>9</sup> This practice happened against the background of policy discussions on how to address the situation of the Roma from EU countries who had migrated to Belgium. The government aimed at fulfilling commitments to the EU’s Roma Framework, but simultaneously that commitment served as a pretext for singling out Roma for policy measures that were meant not to promote their social inclusion but to control and police them, or even to discourage them from entering Belgium. In March 2013, for example, Geert Bourgeois, the Flemish minister of governance and integration, proposed a measure to introduce an obligatory program of ‘civic orientation’ (*inburgering*) especially and only for the Roma from other EU countries; the proposal was to introduce financial fines for those Roma who would refuse to attend such a program. While the measure was legally impossible to implement – in fact, the proposal received strong criticism from many sides: EU institutions, NGOs as well as the Belgian equality body (Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, currently known as Unia) – the accompanying official discourse found affinity with the moral ambiguity that was already palpable in media and political debates about the Roma.

In other words, policy proposals that are specifically aimed at policing and controlling Roma can apparently be rhetorically introduced as part of a concerted EU effort to alleviate the problems facing the Roma; they seem part of one and the same benign strategy of recognizing Roma identity. Simultaneously, these initiatives allow authorities to target Roma for special monitoring activities that resonate well with, and might even sanction and reinforce, the overall public discourse about the presence of

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<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, <http://www.demorgen.be/binnenland/politie-onder-vuur-voor-registratie-zigeuners-a2287416/> Accessed: 13 December, 2017.

the Roma as an external nuisance and even a potential danger for European cultures, states and societies. These and similar examples illustrate how – despite as well as *because of* currently omnipresent narratives of minority rights – specific kinds of Roma representational schemes and narratives have been *operationalized* to govern the Roma in ambiguous ways.

#### ***4. Out of the Impasse: The Importance of Challenging ‘Operational Representations’***

It is one thing to state that narratives about the Roma and their societal status that circulate in political debates tend to depict them as ‘irregular’ citizens or migrants (see, e.g., Sigona and Trehan, 2009; Stewart, 2012; van Baar et al., 2018), but quite another to discern the reasons why this might be happening and what may be a way out of it. Elsewhere, van Baar (2011b; 2015; 2017a) has approached the question from the angle of critical security studies and securitization theories. Van Baar has argued that the Roma have become the subject of *securitizing moves* at the level of political communication and debate. These moves tend to result in *securitizing outcomes*; that is, they ‘successfully’ construct the Roma as a (social, public, human, national, urban, etc.) security problem (see also van Baar et al., 2018). The security studies perspective, however, does not always take into full account how routinized policy practices often continue to be based on the previous circulation of stereotypical perceptions and representations. Seen from the angle of critical race studies, one could approach the issue in terms of the effects of racializing and racial discourses on policy formation. That explanation is certainly relevant here too, but the analysis should go further than simply pointing out that policy discourses are intermingled with racism and racialization (Araújo, 2014; Bhopal and Myers, 2008; Maeso, 2015; Stewart, 2012); we should also check how these policy discourses are articulated and incorporated in policy formation, and how they, over a longer period of time, are reinforced by earlier and more established forms of policy-making (see: Sokolova, 2008; van Baar, 2011a). What is at work here, we believe, are *operational representations*. These are discursive, visual and material frames that contribute to making the Roma ‘visible’, ‘legible’ and ‘governable’ within the context of their general ‘avisuality’.<sup>10</sup>

We borrow the term avisuality from media scholar Akira Lippit (2005: 32), who has used it to describe a situation in which someone is made visible but nevertheless remains in certain ways overlooked and ignored. This person (or group of people) are ‘seen’ only in restricted ways. Lippit illuminates his notion by referring to Ralph Ellison’s 1952 novel *Invisible Man*. The ‘invisible’ black man, who is the novel’s main character, is highly visible in society, but, at the same time, he is and feels reduced to mere matter. ‘I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me, Ellison’s character says. ‘Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass.

<sup>10</sup> Our concept of operational representations has been inspired by the way in which the artist Harun Farocki has discussed ‘operational images’. These are related to a regime of visibility that is produced and demarcated by automated images, such as those taken by drones or satellites (see Paglen, 2014).

When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me’ (Ellison, 1995: 3).

Avisuality is the state in which the Roma find themselves in a lot of authorized bodies and processes of policy-making, including bureaucratic organizations with executive power (social and public services, migration offices, taskforces, police, Europol, Frontex, etc.). This is not simply about a literal system of visual signification (how images of Roma are presented); we are concerned here with a broader and more encompassing phenomenon, with ‘how we see, how we are able, allowed or made to see’ (Foster, 1988: ix). Put differently, the question of avisuality is, following poststructuralist philosophies of perception and aesthetics (Crary, 2001; Foucault, 1994; Rancière, 2004), ‘about the modes of articulation between forms of action, production, perception and thought’ (Andersen et al., 2015: 89). To research the avisuality of the Roma, one should therefore examine processes of policy articulation on the Roma against the background of a dense network of policy instruments, cultural legacies, public debates, inter-subjective relations, and, last but not least, forms of knowledge and expertise. One of the crucial issues to note is that, in policymaking, the Roma almost always and exclusively fall within the categories of either ‘risky people’ or ‘people at risk.’ This happens in discussions about development – in which they are primarily seen as at risk of underdevelopment, precariousness, vulnerability and poverty – and in those about security – in which they are considered threats to the security of others, including other Roma.<sup>11</sup> At a time when Europe’s Roma minorities are problematized at the nexus of development and security and have, as a result, become the target of intersecting processes of developmentalization and securitization (van Baar, 2017a; 2018), operational Roma representations have become intrinsically related to preemptive risk profiling. The modalities of risk profiling primarily concentrate on the biopolitical qualities and qualifications of the targeted Roma. To a considerable extent, current labor market interventions and educational, housing or health care programs focus on the deficiencies of their Roma ‘clients’ (Araújo, 2014; Maeso, 2015; Messing et al., 2013; Piemontese, 2015; Powell, 2010; van Baar, 2012). Even when these deficiencies are formulated in positive terms or situated in their historical contexts, the Roma are nevertheless portrayed as in need of a remedy; they need to improve *their* skills, attitudes and behaviors (*their* ‘social capital’). Generally, the focus of these programs is not on minority-majority relationships but explicitly, even sometimes exclusively, on the involved Roma, and specifically on their (supposed lack of) readiness and capability to change their supposedly ‘cultural’ and ‘behavioristic’ attitudes.

These diverse programs – whether they focus on employment, education, housing, health care, security, empowerment, non-discrimination or culture – tend to render the Roma ‘avisual’. In other words, these policies make them visible, legible and governable only in *very specific* ways; they operate in a regime of avisuality that affects Roma agency negatively. While practices of securitizing and controlling the Roma lead to their criminalization and commodification, approaching them from the

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<sup>11</sup> Van Baar (2014) has criticized the trend in criminology and policymaking to consider the Roma themselves as a threat to their fellow Roma citizens, most notably through a questionable culturalization and racialization of approaches to the combatting of trafficking, banditry and domestic violence in which Roma perpetrators have been involved.

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viewpoint of developmentalism or humanitarianism victimizes them and, thus, reduces their capacity for agency. Within this regime of avisuality, the lenses of the policy cameras are usually and predominantly trained on tracing Roma somewhere on the thin and sterile line between those ‘at risk’ to those who are ‘risky’ and, consequently, these policy formations and interventions leave us with a narrow and reductionist two-dimensional vision of the Roma’s future (see also van Baar et al., 2018).

The problem of the Roma’s avisuality also explains why the current policy roads involving a balance of recognition and redistribution have not resulted in the pathways towards more sustainable success. Operational Roma representations have made the Roma governable in Europe’s current complex policy machinery, but they have done so without conceptualizing them as full fellow citizens and co-partners in processes of decision-making; in several cases they have even irregularized the Roma in ways that have contributed to worsening their societal position. Relatedly, the EU’s qualification that the national Roma integration strategies need to target the Roma ‘explicitly but not exclusively’<sup>12</sup> has become ‘a matter of both positioning in the sights (targeting and identifying) and visualizing through a projected line of sight (pre-empting, making actionable)’ (Amoore, 2009: 24). Some may suggest that the current EU policy framework helps to improve the situation of the Roma because it promotes social inclusion and secures Roma representation, but this view usually ignores the more structural reasons behind the problems of exclusion and non-representation.

What can be done? A way out of the impasse will inevitably have to address the issue of representation. In abstract terms, it means we will have to come up with methods of representing Roma that challenge the usual ways in which the Roma are seen and presented. But what does this mean in practice? Are there any examples to be found that might illustrate such alternative representations?

We think there are indeed some examples to be found, however scant they are. And we also think it is useful to stimulate a scholarly discussion that highlight those places and contexts in Europe where alternative imaginaries of the Roma appear or have a chance of emerging. Some of these places and contexts are to be observed in social movement actions, but they often also occur in the artistic field, and areas where creative production is often narrowly intertwined with social and political engagement. Of course, to engage in a serious attempt to promote such a discussion through the analysis of real-life examples would require another article; here we can only briefly mention two examples that we think would fit and inspire such a further analysis.

Across Europe several instances of ‘youth work’ might provide the type of image contestation we have been discussing. This youth work has happened, for example, through the actions of the deliberately ethnically hybrid networks (the ‘ternYpe: International Roma Youth Network’ is one that springs to mind). While the activities of a network like that may still squarely focus on issues that concern Roma history – indeed, in the case of ternYpe they stay true to the commitment of telling Roma history as part and parcel of the dominant narrative of European history – participation in it may be diverse and not restricted to young Roma. This multiple identity is not only important for those who participate and are of Roma descent –

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<sup>12</sup> European Commission, 2011: 8

they can more easily gain access to a variety of identity groups, which in itself might be a form of social mobilization – but also for the non-Roma participants and the (Roma and non-Roma) audiences involved in the initiatives of such a network. Such a network creates opportunities for members and audiences to become active, and thus visible, in different ways – as ‘Roma’ but also, for example, as ‘youth.’ Initiatives like this cut across different ethnic and socioeconomic identifications and affiliations. Their actions may ultimately lead to the emergence of new collective action frames and protest identities – and new visualities.

Another example that may fit this call is *Metropoliz* in the outskirts of Rome (see also Careri et al., 2013; Maestri 2016). This is an abandoned salami factory that through the initiative of an artist has been turned into an improvised shelter home that is at the same time a community house, a modern art exhibition, a tourist destination and an experiment in radical democracy. The almost 200 people who squat the building – among them many Roma families – may from a certain perspective be framed and interpreted as homeless communities at the edge of society. However, they are also the well-respected hosts of an art collection that is revered by visitors and art critics. In addition, the art serves as a protection for the inhabitants against forced eviction.

## *5. Conclusion*

The purpose of our article has been to draw attention to an important challenge inherent in the current EU framework on the Roma and, more generally, policies that start from the idea that it is sufficient to balance recognition and redistribution in order to improve the situation for the Roma. There is a deeper problem to be addressed, a problem that is related to the current use of operational representations of the Roma in all spheres of policy-making. We want to highlight the importance of challenging these operational Roma representations to discover routes of escape from the current narrow sphere of Roma avisibility. For now, however, we do not want to formulate a final conclusion on this issue but, rather, open doors to encourage new discussions about possible ways forward. For example, we are aware that we should not idealize the examples we mentioned at the end – they may ‘fail’ as political and social projects, and they may suffer from the same ambiguities as some of the other modes of representation that we have discussed. It is important, however, to take heed of the new possibilities that such initiatives might create, even if they are modest. By giving them attention, also in scholarly research, a modified, plural and more fluid imagery of the Roma might grow.

We want to underline the importance of breaking the widely held and often invoked assumption that there is a tight, even inherent, link between the ‘Roma’ and ‘risk’. Such a link is reinforced when the Roma are portrayed only in a context of poverty and danger, and especially when the focus is on the social ills that follow from that context (which often results in politicians, media and the broader public blaming the Roma for their own predicament). Those who do not fit this particular socioeconomic frame are often not even ‘visible’ as Roma. In a context where stigma is both historically and socioeconomically prevalent, it is important to study the situation of the Roma in less biased ways – e.g., creating, in research as well as in other

forms of public representation, a mode of visibility that not only focuses on the dynamics of marginalization and exclusion but also includes a view on social mobility across Roma and non-Roma communities, on useful internal and external reframing processes and changing social interactions.

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## Book Review

### **Jenne, Erin K. (2015) *Nested Security: Lessons in Conflict Management from the League of Nations and the European Union*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.**

The field of mediation and conflict management is no stranger to the complex histories and dynamics of Central and Eastern Europe. The efforts of intervenors and mediators through the post-Cold War period to find a non-violent solution to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia bred a rich research ground for exploring minority-state relations, preventive diplomacy, and conflict management techniques and theory (Kymlicka & Opalski, 2001; Bose, 2002; Touval, 2002). This regionally focused work has contributed to a wider international discussion on the role of regional cooperation in successful mediation and conflict management, including Rajat Ganguly's (1998) comparative analysis of kin-state intervention in South Asia, the European Union's transformative power in conflict resolution (Diez et al, 2008), and the role of regional security regimes (Crocker et al, 2010), to name just a few. This research agenda underscores an understanding that civil disputes do not exist in a vacuum and neither should attempts at their resolution.

In *Nested Security*, Erin K. Jenne contributes to this discussion a valuable framing device for recognising and understanding the interrelatedness of international relations and inter-communal civil disputes. After a brief discussion of the difficulties in explaining success and failure in cooperative conflict management, particularly in low-conflict settings, Jenne presents a coherent and illustrative 'nesting' framework for understanding, at least in part, the regional or international management of domestic ethnic minority mobilisation. This theory is subsequently examined in four chapters of case analysis from Central and Eastern Europe featuring a comparative analysis of cooperative conflict management efforts, specifically preventive diplomacy and induced devolution, in the inter-War and post-Cold War periods. Jenne then follows this case analysis with a medium-N test, extending the theory to wider conflict settings, before concluding with a series of lessons for successful cooperative conflict management. The overall argument of the book is that the stability of the regional environment is a necessary and perhaps even sufficient condition of mediation success.

The theory of nested security is illustrated using a stacked Venn diagram with three levels: domestic, regional, and systemic. A domestic civil dispute set is 'nested', or exists entirely, within a larger set of regional dynamics and rivalries which, in turn, is 'nested' entirely within an overarching systemic set featuring great power rivalries and traditional balance of power dynamics. Therefore, any change to a single level necessarily impacts all those sets nested within said level, but not necessarily vice-versa. A mediator can then interact with any of the actors in each set, or level, of the model. This submits a strong recommendation that aspiring mediators should conduct preventive mediation from the 'outside-in,' focusing on the external

dimensions of domestic conflicts and seeking regional stabilisation first before engaging domestic mediation on the ground.

Jenne tests this theory of nested security with a comparison of multiple cases under two minority rights regimes. The first selection of cases from the inter-War (1918-1939) period in Central Europe feature the Baltics and the Åland Islands, mediated under the auspices of the League of Nations. The second set examines the post-Cold War (1990-) period, exploring the mediation efforts of the European Union and OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) monitoring body in the Baltics and the Balkans. This comparative framework is quite strong, with the historical dynamism of these cases through the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries providing a variety of background conditions in which to test the theory. Yet these periods and circumstances are exceptional in a wider international and historical analysis. Jenne argues that the virtue of this exceptionalism is that her theory holds across a wide variety of conditions but also acknowledges the challenges of extending the theory as presented to other geopolitical circumstances such as certain African or Latin American contexts.

The comparative analysis itself is informative and demonstrative of the rich historical case knowledge necessary for tracing evidence for the theory of nested security. Using the process-tracing method, Jenne is able to walk each case through their transitions towards stabilisation and nested security and subsequently away from stabilisation towards nested *in*security in examples of mediation failure. By careful ordering of key events, Jenne demonstrates that in each case nested security was either preceded by a stabilisation of the regional environment or was a product of induced security through a single or set of international actors. She further demonstrates that where each case begins with *in*security, or where it later shifts back towards *in*security, this is preceded by a destabilisation of regional actors. Nested *in*security takes two forms, the first being in favour of the government or their allies and the second in favour of the minority group in conflict, causing the minority to feel empowered and thus mobilize.

In analysing the successes and failures of the League and EU/OSCE mediations, Jenne further limits her discussion to the study of mediated low-intensity conflict and two forms of mediator strategy: preventive diplomacy and induced devolution. This decision is both strategic in narrowing the possible variables that might impact the cases under examination and purposeful in addressing the larger moral impetus behind the theory, which is to contribute to managing internal disputes before they erupt into violent civil conflict. To this end, she categorizes success into two variants of nested security, exogenous and endogenous. Exogenous nested security is realised by inducements or sanctions to force the domestic parties to settle their disagreement. Unfortunately, this does not necessarily address the power-imbalance mobilising the domestic groups in conflict and is therefore unstable. Alternatively, endogenous nested security, realised through the stabilisation of the regional environment through bi-lateral or multi-lateral agreements, can be perceived to be stable by domestic minorities and majorities, which in turn can disincentivise their mobilisation to conflict. Hence the conclusion that pursuit of regional stabilisation and mediation from the 'outside-in' is required for civil conflict management.

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Jenne's cases illustrate how consolidated nested security can be created through a regional peace pact or normalized bi-lateral relations between external lobby groups including international organisations, diasporas, and above all, kin-states. But this regional peace alone would still be exogenous nested security. The argument for endogeneity requires that the minority and majority parties in conflict 'perceive the regional peace to be self-enforcing' (50). Any bi-lateral regional stabilisation must be believed to be sustainable, otherwise the parties will not be suitably induced to end or forego conflict. However, these perceptions of sustainable stability which underpin the strength of endogenous nested security are not adequately examined in *Nested Security*. The theory does not account for how either majority or minority parties moderate the conflict environment. Nor does it take account of any localised histories that may inform perceptions of sustainable stability. In other words, the conceptualisation of the 'endogenous' dimension would benefit greatly from an exploration of the complexity on the ground in civil disputes. The absence of that complexity makes the 'nested security' model vulnerable to instability from both outside and inside the conflict setting. It also makes the generalisability of the theory weaker in contexts which feature deeper ethnic divisions or histories of violent conflict.

This challenge of complexity on the ground is exemplified in Jenne's effort to explain the failure of induced settlement in Kosovo wherein the domestic Albanian leadership rejected the categorisation of their identity as an ethnic minority within the Serbian state. In return, Serbian officials rejected attempts to recognise the Albanian leadership as this was deemed quasi-recognition of the minority's claim. Jenne concludes that the failure of this mediation was due to insufficient exogenous pressure from the West, but other cases did not require such Western pressure. Macedonia accepted the legitimacy of the international community as intervenors and mediators early on which allowed for mediations in both the 1990s and later after 2001. The difference here is less about regional stabilisation than it is a reflection of circumstances and relationships on the ground. An agreement to terms of reference by both minority and majority parties in Macedonia produced a level of domestic stabilisation which allowed the state government to accept international mediation, whereas the lack of such agreement in Kosovo prevented this mediation. The Kosovo case thus reveals the significance of 'willing' domestic political actors, without whom external pressure cannot succeed.

In addition, even where this domestic dynamic may not be as prevalent, the theory of nested security presents a cyclical argument of stabilisation and destabilisation. For example, the League-era preventive diplomacy regarding Hungarian minorities in Romania, wherein necessary trade alliances between the state governments forced Hungary to withdraw their active support of Hungarian minority mobilisation, thus creating endogenous nested security, destabilised rapidly once thrown in to war as a result of German expansionism. As their erstwhile alliances were a product of extraordinary circumstance, this security regime was inherently unstable. The artificial economic decline in Germany resulting from the western powers decisions after WWI was neither natural nor constant. In accordance with nested security theory, the regional nested security could only occur during the inter-war period because of the international (im)balance that was created by foreign powers. As

such, the potential for regional stabilisation or endogenous nested security to maintain in a non-conducive international environment is considerably reduced.

Erin K. Jenne acknowledges some of these limitations after a wider analysis beyond the Central and Eastern European cases revealed that the theory of regional stabilisation, while still necessary, is not in fact sufficient for successful mediation. Despite these concerns, *Nested Security* provides an excellent foundation for further theorising the interaction of regional and international actors with civil disputes and mediation. The finding that aspiring mediators should ensure the stabilisation of the regional environment in order to increase their success delivers as a 'return to the Macro' in conflict resolution theory, recently called for by Roland Paris (2014) in response to the wider turn to the local and a more domestic focus. Jenne has provided both scholars and practitioners an organising theory to help navigate the complex relationship between international relations and domestic civil disputes. *Nested Security* should be read widely by scholars and practitioners alike as they continue to explore the nuances of mediation and conflict management in a complex world.

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## Book Review

### **H. Zeynep Bulutgil (2016) *Roots of Ethnic Cleansing in Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.**

Despite an abundance of scholarship on extreme interethnic violence, gaps remain in our knowledge of what prevents ethnic cleansing and what explains the transition from peaceful relations to the horrors of ethnic cleansing. And while periods of interethnic peace far outnumber those of interethnic violence, understanding how and why this transition occurs is imperative to preventing future atrocities. In *The Roots of Ethnic Cleansing*, H. Zeynep Bulutgil fills this void with a compelling theory of the conditions that prevent ethnic cleansing and the factors that weaken these conditions to enable its occurrence. This theory rests on two pillars: ethnic cleavages are only one dimension of a multidimensional political space, and ethnicity involves unique social groups due to their non-repetitiveness. She tests these theoretical insights using cases from twentieth-century Europe where ethnic cleansing did and did not occur. After applying her theory to Europe successfully, Bulutgil expands its application to the African context. She concludes with her main contributions to the study of ethnicity and ethnic cleansing and their implications for policy makers.

The first pillar of Bulutgil's theory is that dominant ethnic groups are almost always divided along non-ethnic lines, such as social class and religion. She explains that these cleavages create factions of dominant group members advocating for different goals. The result is that while dominant group members focused on issues of ethnicity may advocate for ethnic cleansing, other dominant group members focused on non-ethnic issues, like class, may advocate for policies, such as the re-distribution of wealth. And while the former group is ethnically homogenous, factions advocating for non-ethnic issues often build coalitions with non-dominant group members who they see as valuable to their cause. These latter, ethnically mixed groups have a strong incentive to oppose ethnic cleansing, and in doing so, they help prevent advocates of ethnic cleansing from garnering enough political support to carry it out.

The shift from peacetimes to ethnic cleansing can only occur if there is a shift in political power and support toward dominant group factions advocating for ethnic cleansing. To understand how this shift occurs, Bulutgil introduces the second pillar of her theory: the non-repetitive nature of ethnic groups across territory. In one of the most novel contributions of her book, Bulutgil points out that while other social groups repeat across territory, ethnic groups tend not to repeat. She illustrates this by explaining that if you were to make your way in a straight line across Europe, the ethnic groups you would encounter would differ, whereas you would repeatedly come across the same categories from other social classes, such as wealthy and poor groups (pp. 30-31). This non-repetition has political implications because of the political nature of ethnicity. Ethnic groups (also referred to as ethno-linguistic groups) became politically relevant during the process of modern state formation in Europe. Seeking support from citizens to pay taxes and serve in the army, state leaders united

populations around a common ethno-linguistic identity. The common identity chosen tended to be that of the majority group and was often located in the geographical center of the state. The creation of a dominant linguistic group meant the creation of non-dominant groups and varying access to state goods, resulting in an ethnic hierarchy within each state (pp. 32-33). And because of the non-repetitive nature of ethnicity, the resulting dominant group and ethnic hierarchy tended to differ between states.

With dominant and non-dominant groups differing from state to state, any change in territory affects the established ethnic hierarchy and can result in ethnic cleansing in several ways. If the annexation of territory is successful, then the dominant group in the annexed territory, which was likely to have led the army fighting against the annexing state, may be targeted for ethnic cleansing in retribution. The non-dominant groups in newly acquired territory may also be targeted by proponents of ethnic cleansing in the annexing state because they do not have any alliances with members of the dominant group focusing on non-ethnic issues. If the annexation is unsuccessful, then non-dominant groups who experienced an increase in their societal position because of enemy state support or collusion with the enemy may be targeted for ethnic cleansing. Bulutgil successfully illustrates the above scenarios through cross-national comparisons across Europe.

While strong in its ability to explain the cases she presents, Bulutgil's theory raises some key questions. For example, in the last scenario described above, non-dominant groups who experience elevation in society due to their collusion with an enemy state are at a greater risk of ethnic cleansing. This may be because the non-dominant group directly participated in violence against their own state's dominant group. But in cases where the non-dominant group did not participate in the violence, why is the fear of a reversed ethnic hierarchy so powerful? Bulutgil cites their loss of power as one reason. Yet, according to Ashutosh Varshney's theory of value-rationality (2003), the turn to ethnic cleansing may be driven by other values. Varshney argues that the position that someone is born into in an ethnic hierarchy affects not only their access to political goods, but also their sense of dignity, an idea borrowed from Charles Taylor's scholarship on the Politics of Recognition (1994). Thus, a dominant group's fear of moving down the ethnic ladder is also linked to their sense of self-respect. As Varshney goes on to explain, the pursuit of dignity can lead individuals to make value-rational cost-benefit analyses that motivate them to participate in extreme acts, including killing others and self-sacrifice.

Varshney's theory of value-rationality also has implications for if and how non-dominant groups actively participate in collaboration with the enemy state. To avoid endogeneity, Bulutgil notes that this collaboration must result from territorial conflict, not from a non-dominant group's fear of ethnic cleansing before the territorial conflict even takes place (pp. 40). This leads her to focus heavily on the role of the annexing state's dominant groups in initiating the collaboration. For example, in Czechoslovakia she argues that it was Germany's intervention, not the actions of Czech Germans, which led to the latter group's targeting for ethnic cleansing (pp. 80). But even when non-dominant groups are not initiating collaboration because of a fear of ethnic cleansing, their desire to rise in the ethnic ranks may make them more open or susceptible to colluding with an enemy state as a means of achieving this elevation.

Furthermore, how open a non-dominant group is to collaboration with the enemy state may shape the nature of the collaboration and affect the degree of the elevation they experience, which in turn may affect the probability of ethnic cleansing.

Bulutgil's theory also raises the question of how elites mobilize ordinary citizens to actually carry out ethnic cleansing – a factor necessary for its occurrence. For the purposes of her study, Bulutgil focuses only on state-sponsored ethnic cleansing. Yet, even in such cases, mass ethnic cleansing requires mass participation. In some cases, the state may directly train militant groups, like Germany's militarization of a large group of young Ukrainian men who later 'cleansed' Volhynia and Eastern Galicia of Poles (pp. 106). But in cases like Bosnia-Herzegovina, civilians played a major role in the ethnic cleansing. Stathis N. Kalyvas (2003) offers a compelling theory on the 'joint production' of action in civil war. He explains that actors within the state have distinct identities and interests, so while citizens may take up the public goals of state elites, such as ethnic cleansing, they may do so for private reasons, such as the desire for vengeance. According to Henry Hale (2008), elites can also use ethnic identity itself to mobilize citizens. Like Bulutgil, he notes the uniqueness of ethnic identity. He explains that it is a powerful tool for helping individuals make sense of the unpredictable actions of others, thereby allowing them to reduce the uncertainty innate in a complex social world. This is due to ethnicity's strong ability to connote common fate, lower barriers to communication (through common language and culture, for example), provide fairly permanent and visible physical indicators, and because of its strong correlations to other traits. By framing uncertain times, like the aftermath of territorial conflict, in ethnic terms (like a security threat), elites can mobilize citizens into participating in violent acts.

Overall, Bulutgil's theory makes important contributions to explaining the conditions that maintain peaceful relations and why ethnic cleansing tends to occur within the context of interstate war. She successfully demonstrates how domestic factors, including factions within the dominant party and ethnic hierarchies, interact with international factors, including shifting territory through war and collusion between enemy states and domestic ethnic groups, to result in ethnic cleansing. In doing so, she makes important steps forward in merging the silos of domestic and international theory. She also challenges pre-conceived notions that ancient ethnic hatreds are at the heart of ethnic cleansing in Eastern and Central Europe. Instead, by illuminating the importance of non-ethnic cleavages amongst dominant groups in preventing ethnic cleansing, she shows why democracies have lower rates of ethnic cleansing than post-communist states that often adopt secularization and re-distribution of land policies. The new insight generated by her theory is essential to producing preventative policies. It lends support to existing calls to promote cross-cutting cleavages amongst dominant ethnic groups, advocated for by scholars like Horowitz (2001), and it raises new questions about what the equalizing nature of the welfare state might mean for interethnic relations in states adopting this model.

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## Book Review

### **Timofey Agarin and Karl Cordell (2016) *Minority Rights and Minority Protection in Europe*. London, UK: Rowman and Littlefield.**

This monograph fits into a body of research on minority rights in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) that seeks to go beyond arguments of external imposition or imitation, highlighting, instead, the domestic nature of policy-change instead. Cordell and Agarin's book is a welcome addition not only because it attests to the importance of internal structures and endogenous processes, but also because it does not shy away from articulating inconvenient truths: for example that the strategy of EU officials for the promotion of minority protection was (at least partly) based on misunderstandings (PP. 1), that the post-communist governments' adoption and implementation of minority rights frameworks has been 'grudging, haphazard and uneven' (PP. 2), and that the much-desired 'return to Europe' did not improve the position of minorities substantially after all.

More specifically, the authors advance the two-fold argument that minority protection in post-communist states has been both limited and domestically driven (PP. 3). To arrive at this conclusion, they examine the evolution of minority protection from a variety of angles as well as through the contrasting assessment of cases across CEE and beyond. Their proposed explanation centers on the continued importance of ethno-nationalism. They claim that nation-states in post-communist Europe have continued to serve the interests of the titular majorities despite the ongoing process of supranational integration, the result being the persistent marginalization of minorities (PP. 181). Moreover, according to the authors, European integration contributed to entrenching these power inequalities, because it locked-in minority rights protection 'into a rhetoric of formal compliance with European norms that are themselves vaguely defined' (PP. 6).

Agarin and Cordell develop this argument in seven thematically linked chapters. The substantive discussion begins with Chapter 1 that outlines the theoretical approach, including the concepts and analytical tools used in the book. The chapter emphasizes the theoretical significance of domestic opportunity structures constituted by the institutional environments in which actors operate (PP. 16). It highlights the role the institutional setting of the nation-state plays in determining whether and which policy changes domestic political elites are likely to advocate (PP. 19), as well as in framing the expectations of the public (PP. 20). Chapter 2 provides a background discussion on post-communist state-building, with the aim of showcasing the persisting political relevance of ethnicity in CEE. This, the authors claim, has led to deliberately giving political institutions an ethno-national form, which has, in turn, had detrimental effects for the rights of non-dominant populations (PP. 38). Moreover, far from mitigating the power imbalance between minorities and majorities, post-communist nation-state building further solidified ethno-national claims to state ownership, including the majorities' privileged access to economic resources available in that state, and thus entrenching ethnically based systems of inequality (PP. 39). The authors argue that national sovereignty across the

post-communist area 'has remained defined via ethno-nationally designed institutions of the state' (PP. 50), which explains the failure to put into place effective and equitable mechanisms of diversity management (PP. 51).

Chapter 3 brings the analysis closer to empirics, by contrasting constitutional design in Lithuania, Macedonia and Slovakia, with the aim of demonstrating how institutionally-constituted opportunity structures have favored majorities, while putting minorities at a disadvantage (PP. 62). Chapter 4 also looks at legal and policy frameworks adopted across the region in order to take this point further. The authors provocatively assert that far from protecting minorities, nation-states set out to devise means to protect majorities from minorities' claims, especially in contexts where minority ethno-political entrepreneurs or kin-states have systematically challenged state-sovereignty (PP. 85). In both chapters, the authors identify as one of the central impediments to the development of extensive minority protection frameworks the emphasis EU officials and bodies put on individual equality and personal flourishing rather than advocating for group rights.

Chapter 5 directs attention to the Roma, Europe's largest and most disadvantaged minority population. It stresses the shortcomings of policy-making and implementation and criticizes poorly designed and poorly implemented policies, which, according to the authors, have left the problem of systemic discrimination untouched and prevailing notions of rightful state-ownership unchallenged (PP. 115). It is indeed ironic that, by implying that the Roma represented a potential impediment for EU accession, the weight put on the integration of this severely marginalized social category may have unintentionally exacerbated already negative majority attitudes towards its members (PP. 110). Chapter 5 discusses in detail the cases of Bulgaria, Slovakia and Poland, attempting also to convey a broader sense of space, by bringing in perspectives beyond Eastern Europe.

Chapter 6 shifts the focus to kin-states, seeking to understand how these influence domestic politics and policy-making and, in turn, the ways domestic dynamics impact interstate relations. In the link between homelands and minorities, the authors identify yet another sign of the significance of ethnicity in CEE, which, in their view, 'constitutes the basis of post-communist states' approaches to extraterritorial citizenship' (PP. 135). The chapter maintains that the EU's emphasis on good neighborly relations enhanced domestic policymakers' capacity to increase the costs for minorities to claim external support, both from the EU and external kin-states (PP. 148). Finally, Chapter 7 looks at the question of minority rights for migrants in the context of intra-EU mobility. Specifically, the authors ask how EU integration alters majority-minority relations by allowing the latter to 'remove themselves out of the vertical relation with their nationalising state of citizenship' (PP. 158). Through the discussion of the cases of Latvia and Estonia the authors conclude that the European project has 'alienated domestic minorities from both the state where they live and the EU as an institution' (PP. 163). Further, by examining the examples of evictions and expulsions of EU citizens in France and Italy, they also establish that 'the principle of nation-state sovereignty over territory remains a fundamental block of EU integration' (PP. 168).

The two authors, Cordell and Agarin, are well-known experts of post-communism. Their book, intended for practitioners and academics alike,

demonstrates not only their evident familiarity with the region but also their genuine concern for the object they study. I am particularly sympathetic to the institutionalist approach and the emphasis on internal processes and domestic structures. Like the authors of this book, I, too, am convinced that treating CEE states as ‘autonomous actors and not as mere recipients of directives and initiatives from “the West”’ (PP. 8) is imperative. Exposing the shortcomings and limitations of externally-driven change in the field of minority protection is an important step toward providing a balanced appraisal of institutional and policy transformation in the post-communist context.

That minority protection frameworks have a lot to do with nationalism is also indisputable. However, criticism can be raised towards the authors’ central argument that it is the in-built ethnocentrism of post-communist states that has shaped the observed patterns. Namely, it is not clear what makes the relationship between ethnicity and the state a distinctively Central and Eastern European (as opposed to a more general) phenomenon. Specifically, the authors assert that in the post-communist context ethnic favoritism is the norm, referring, for example, to the ‘cultural bias in the institutional design of states’ (PP. 42) or to the generalized perception that ‘the states belong to the titular majority group and as such exists primarily to serve the needs of that group’ (PP. 102). This bias, they conclude, produces ‘radically different expectations of whom and how the state should serve first and foremost’ (PP. 182), the implication being the limited minority protection we see across the board. However, the authors do not attempt to reconcile this claim with the empirical observation that ethnic favoritism is ingrained in nation-states also beyond the post-communist context (Wimmer, 2002), and state-baring nations everywhere engage, to some extent, in the promotion of a particular language and the cultivation of a sense of membership in a particular community (Kymlicka, 2000: 185). In fact, most national ideologies prescribe a mode of political organization that is ethnic in character, including a claim to represent the interests of a specific ethnicity defined as a cultural unit, which is where the nation-state draws, in turn, its political legitimacy (Eriksen, 2010: 121). Consequently, while the authors cast ethnocentrism as a distinguishing feature of post-communist states, in my view this seems to be a matter of degree, not of kind. It would have been, therefore, particularly helpful for the authors to offer more clarity regarding the scope of their argument, given also the – fortunately declining – tendency of overemphasizing the ‘ethnic’ character of nationalism in CEE in the academy and beyond.

There are also some further limitations to consider. In their effort to bring out the domestically driven, institutionally mediated nature of stability and change by approaching this theme from a variety of angles, the authors have traded depth for breadth. Part of this problem is that the book lacks a rigorous comparative design. Rather than thinking their cases against each other, the authors pick out illustrative examples that fit their line of argument, which enriches their descriptions but decreases analytical rigor. This strategy, moreover, conveys an exaggerated sense of homogeneity across CEE. While I do think that regionally confined analysis can be particularly useful both methodologically and substantially, this cannot come at the price of broad-brushing variation and overlooking key contextual differences.

Despite these shortcomings, the book also contains a number of thought-provoking ideas that can be further developed. In particular, the claim that CEE

actors, institutions and viewpoints have had a feedback effect on the ‘European minority rights regime’ and that therefore change has not been unidirectional but reciprocal (PP. 6) is an innovative thought that merits further elaboration. Another way to advance the debate would be to take up the topic of minority rights from where the authors left it: Europe’s most recent crisis. In particular, the authors note that as a reaction to the European migrant and refugee emergency ‘the governments of all post-communist EU member-states, regardless of ideological hue, have expressed deep reservations about hosting refugees’ (PP. 177). They take this resistance as evidence that CEE nation-states and domestic political actors talk the talk of minority rights while increasingly walking out on minority protection (PP. 10). It would be interesting to further investigate this phenomenon, by relating it, for example, to the demographic landscapes and the structure of the political competition of CEE states. Finally, by emphasizing endogenous development and especially the role of pre-existing institutional structures, this book also signals how to bring analyses of minority rights closer to the complexity of lived experience. Refocusing attention to social and institutional dynamics as they unfold through time constitutes a particularly effective way to assess the extent and direction of change, not only on paper but also on the ground.

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## Book Review

### **Expansive Nation-Building and Internal Politics: The Case of Hungary**

**Szabolcs Pogonyi (2017) *Extra-Territorial Ethnic Politics, Discourses and Identity in Hungary*. Palgrave Studies in Citizenship Transitions. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.**

The question of when, how, and why states engage with their external populations has been a focal point for social scientists over the past few decades. The explosion of scholarly works addressing this question, particularly in the late 1990s, reflects the significance of the phenomenon of governments ‘reaching out’ to co-ethnics abroad, as well as the need to understand and explain the causes and implications of this phenomenon. The study of transnationalism, kinship, and diaspora relations has arguably become a distinct field in its own right—or at least an interdisciplinary subfield within Sociology, Political Science, and Citizenship Studies. Yet despite all of this growth and attention, there have been few studies that investigate the actual impacts of cross-border engagement on inter-state and inter-ethnic relations. There have also been very few studies that analyze precisely how the institutionalization of cross-border relations is perceived and experienced by external communities themselves. These are just two of the important contributions made by Szabolcs Pogonyi’s ground-breaking and fascinating study of Hungary’s extra-territorial citizenship policies. Ambitious in scope and in the use of multiple methodologies, it is a complex, compelling, and masterful account of perhaps the most activist strategy of expansive nation-building in East-Central Europe.

The book begins with a synopsis of extra-territorial citizenship and nationalism in post-communist Hungary. Hungarians beyond the borders became a concern after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, and successive Hungarian governments since the fall of communism have made kin/diaspora relations a priority (to varying degrees). Since 2010, the Fidesz government has institutionalized extra-territorial citizenship and voting. In the 2014 parliamentary elections, Fidesz received an overwhelming 95.5% of the votes cast by non-resident voters and won a total of 133 seats—exactly the number needed for an absolute majority. As of July 2016, over 780 000 Hungarians living outside of Hungary had acquired Hungarian citizenship (pp. 3), and the government’s declared target is 1 million non-resident Hungarian citizens. In an effort to explain these developments, Pogonyi asks three key questions: What are the causes and consequences of the discursive and legal construction of the Hungarian transborder nation? How does the political engagement of Hungary with non-resident Hungarians impact inter-state, inter-ethnic, and intra-ethnic relations? And how do institutional changes and shifting discursive strategies redefine ethnic belonging, and the self-perception of Hungarians outside the country?

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In Chapter Two, the author presents the main historical events and political conditions that have led kin-states in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to offer non-resident citizenship to co-ethnics abroad. He argues that despite the convergence of transborder engagement policies, kin-state politics serve different context-dependent purposes. In certain cases in CEE, such as Hungary, Romania, and Poland, extra-territorial citizenship was motivated by, and justified with, dissatisfaction with the redrawing of borders and patterns of state succession in 1918, 1945, and 1989. Restitutive citizenship was introduced as part of democratic transition and historical reconciliation in the region (pp. 10-14, 30-33). Pogonyi also highlights the significance of demography, explaining how citizenship policies in CEE after 1990 were used as a tool for ethnic engineering, through the exclusion of non-resident ethnic minorities and the inclusion of non-resident ethnic kin populations (pp. 17-18, 25). The two parallel processes of internal exclusion and external inclusion served exactly the same nationalizing objective: to secure the ethnic domination of the titular nationality. This chapter offers a detailed and helpful survey of the landscape of citizenship and nation-building in post-communist CEE.

Chapter Three examines kin-citizenship in the contemporary European context. Pogonyi provides an overview of existing typologies of citizenship regimes, with an emphasis on the civic-ethnic distinction, and the emerging normative framework of citizenship attribution in Europe. This section addresses the puzzle of how it is that CEE states can implement ethnically selective citizenship policies which are in stark contrast to European principles of non-discrimination. Pogonyi's analysis shows that current European norms and laws designed to promote the de-ethnicization of citizenship, in practice—and paradoxically—open up the possibility of ethnicization of citizenship through over-inclusive and expansionist preferential acquisition laws. The Europeanization of citizenship, intended to facilitate the inclusion of resident aliens (including national minorities and settled migrants), can be easily hijacked by opportunistic nationalist governments seeking to link non-resident kin groups to their putative, imagined 'homelands' (pp. 65). This is another way citizenship policies may be used as a tool for ethnic engineering.

After discussing external citizenship in the context of regional and European dynamics, the book zooms in on the case of Hungary and its transborder nation-building projects. Chapter Four presents an excellent summary of the diaspora engagement scholarship and traces the evolution of diaspora politics in Hungary. It gives an overview of pre-2010 citizenship debates and political discourses, followed by an extensive analysis of the 2010 and 2014 elections and the Orbán government's external citizenship regime. Pogonyi asserts that the government's attention to external Hungarians is driven not by geopolitical or economic interests, but purely by strategic reasons integral to Hungarian party politics. He explains how transborder politics have become one of the main fault lines between Left and Right in Hungary since 1990. Fidesz has used kin-state activism to strengthen its nationalist image, to discredit its Left-wing and Liberal opposition, and to preempt nationalist outbidding by the far-Right Jobbik party. Both Left and Right-wing parties have used transborder politics as a means of entrenching partisan cleavages—and these cleavages have been exported to the transborder communities, with consequences for external kin.

Pogonyi then assesses the impact of the Fidesz government's nation-building on inter-state and inter-ethnic relations. Three significant implications follow. First, while kin-state activism may create diplomatic tensions between the kin-state and resident states<sup>1</sup> of kin-minorities, it does not necessarily lead to inter-state or inter-ethnic conflict. So far, Hungary's external citizenship regime has not been a major challenge for good neighborly relations. Despite the often-harsh rhetoric and claims that helping external kin is a major symbolic and moral objective, the Fidesz government does not go so far in its activism as to harm Hungary's geopolitical relations. As a nationalizing state actor, it will not risk its rational interests for the sake of helping transborder kin.

Second, external citizenship, especially non-resident voting rights, is adversely affecting the political orientation and mobilization potential of external Hungarians. It is weakening the agency of transborder minorities and disincentivizing minority claims-making on their resident state governments (pp. 110-111). As enfranchised members of the political community, kin-minorities may over time become more dependent on the kin-state and more marginalized in their resident states. Thus kin-citizenship projects, rather than encouraging minority mobilization to secure rights and recognition in their countries of residence, actually compromise the claims-making potential and the leverage of transborder political actors.

Third, and relatedly, easier access to Hungarian (and with it EU) citizenship may increase the migration of Hungarians from other states into the Hungarian kin-state. The depopulation of transborder communities further weakens the potential for minority agency in resident states. It also potentially accelerates the 'ethnic unmixing' of multi-ethnic regions (Brubaker, 1988). Although we have no empirical evidence of whether and to what extent non-resident citizenship forces out-migration, Pogonyi says we can reasonably assume that it does not facilitate the survival and development of transborder minorities. This is in stark contrast to Fidesz's claims that offering citizenship to external Hungarians helps to stop assimilation and out-migration by strengthening the Hungarian identity abroad.

After focusing on Hungarian state-led initiatives and their consequences, the book turns to a bottom-up analysis of Hungarian communities abroad and how extra-territorial citizenship is interpreted, practiced, and consumed in these communities. Chapter Five investigates whether and how formal inclusion in the Hungarian 'transnation' affects the identification and everyday nationhood of external

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<sup>1</sup> In much of the extant literature, the terms 'host state' and 'homeland' are used to describe the state in which co-ethnics currently live, outside of the kin-state. This can be misleading and unclear. 'Host state' implies that kin minorities are *guests* on someone else's land—that they have only been there for a short time and will be leaving shortly. In the region of ECE, this simply is not the case. People may have been living on a given territory as a titular majority for generations, but through forced boundary changes and the breakup of empires, this territory became part of another state. Consequently, communities moved from majority to minority status. Such is the pattern of reversals in domination and subordination in the region. To suggest that these communities are 'guests' is both a misnomer and offensive. On the other hand, 'host state' may be an appropriate description, in that it indicates the kin/diaspora community's desire for eventual return to the homeland (i.e. the kin-state). The current state of residence is only a temporary stopover point in the historical journey homeward. Much depends on the case(s) one is studying, and the perspective from which one is writing. However, the term 'homeland' is sometimes used synonymously with kin-state, and other times it is used to refer to the state in which co-ethnics live. Notions of homeland are complex and require analytical clarification. 'Resident state' is a more accurate and neutral term to denote the state in which co-ethnics currently live.

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Hungarians. The first part of this investigation involved a series of interviews conducted with newly naturalized Hungarian citizens in four settings: Romania, Serbia, the United States, and Israel. These four contexts offer a unique comparative perspective on the modalities of self-perception in different Hungarian external communities, and allow for an exploration of variation in transnational histories, personal narratives, and political participation. Moreover, two of these cases comprise transborder kin minorities and the other two comprise members of the Hungarian overseas diaspora, offering a comparison contrasting the different types of external communities. The second part of the investigation involved an online survey, which was used to generalize and test the findings of the interviews.<sup>2</sup>

Pogonyi finds that extra-territorial citizenship is widely considered by recipients to be both an instrumental asset and a marker of identity. Hungarian passports are perceived as a 'ticket' to certain opportunities and as 'badges' of national belonging. They are also perceived as a means of ethnic boundary-making, as a status symbol through which recipients can elevate their social standing, and (for Hungarians in Israel and the USA) official proof of Europeanness and a shortcut to education and economic opportunities in the EU. The survey data confirms the interview data: There is a statistically significant correlation between the pragmatic and emotive valuations of non-resident citizenship for transborder Hungarians. The strategic and identitarian uses of non-resident citizenship are overlapping, non-exclusive, and even strengthen one another. In other words, the higher pragmatic value respondents attribute to citizenship, the more likely they are to attach symbolic value to citizenship as well. Interestingly, external Hungarians who voted in the 2014 elections considered it their moral duty to support Prime Minister Orbán personally and to vote for Fidesz as a gesture to honor the party that made citizenship available. The acquisition of non-resident citizenship compelled recipients to feel loyal to the kin-state government that invited them to become members of the nation, and this loyalty translated into a sense of obligation. This is why, despite the principled criticism of non-resident voting (which arose in the interviews), Fidesz received 95.5% of non-resident votes in 2014. The criticism was outweighed by feelings of gratitude (pp. 166-68). This finding could have implications for research about voter behavior and rationality.

Pogonyi's study makes a number of meaningful and stimulating contributions to existing scholarship. It urges us to think critically about external nation-building and expansive citizenship, and the implications of these phenomena. It encourages us to analyze citizenship not only as an institution, legal status, and/or practice (as the current literature does), but as a tool that can be instrumentally used by nationalizing politicians in the kin-state, on the one hand, and by non-resident citizens, on the other. This dual 'instrumentality' of citizenship and the dynamics involved, might have been further elaborated in the book. Another key innovation is the study's bottom-up

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<sup>2</sup> The geographical distribution of survey respondents was rather uneven: very few respondents from the USA and Israel, with an overwhelming majority of respondents from the neighboring states of Romania, Serbia, and Ukraine (see pp. 169-170). It is also noteworthy that although the survey cannot be considered representative of the Hungarian non-resident constituency, the survey data on electoral participation corresponds with non-resident voter turnout in the April 2014 elections. Approximately 45% of non-resident Hungarians who received fast-track naturalization voted in 2014. In the survey, 46% of eligible respondents claimed to have participated in the parliamentary elections (pp. 177).

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approach, which challenges and provides an important corrective to the state-centered, top-down approaches dominant in Citizenship Studies to-date. By looking at how citizenship is narrated, perceived, and utilized by different external populations, the book goes beyond institutional, macro-level analyses. This allows for an account of external citizenship through the lens of both kin-state and kin minority actors, providing an inclusive picture of the two 'sides' of transborder relations in the Hungarian case. Most existing analyses are limited to one side of this equation. The book contributes to an emerging literature which investigates citizenship from the bottom up.

The book also contributes to the extant scholarship on the enfranchisement of external populations. Most studies of external voting ignore transborder kin-minorities and focus only on single cases, therefore lacking the in-depth empirical evidence needed for generalizable comparative research. According to the *IDEA Handbook*, the number of individuals eligible to take part in external voting has doubled since 1970. As of May 2009, 190 million individuals in 115 states away from home countries were entitled to vote in the elections of their homelands (pp. 134). The impact of non-resident constituencies and the dilemmas of external enfranchisement are becoming ever more pressing, and we need empirically-grounded evidence to understand these dynamics. Pogonyi's book is a superb starting point.

Another substantial contribution of the study is its focus on the intra-ethnic divisions fostered by the Fidesz government's kin-state activism. As Pogonyi asserts, this activism has not sparked inter-state or inter-ethnic conflict, but it has caused *intra*-ethnic distinctions and cleavages. This may be the biggest consequence of Hungary's transborder engagement. Interviews revealed that non-resident citizenship made some external Hungarians realize the differences in nationhood conceptions between Hungarians abroad and Hungarians in the kin-state. Many respondents expressed hope that after naturalization, Hungarians in Hungary would not identify them as ethnic others. They saw non-resident citizenship as a means of blurring intra-ethnic boundaries. Tensions have arisen not only between resident and non-resident citizens, but also among transborder organizations and political parties. This has created and deepened rifts in the Hungarian transnation along the lines of party politics in Hungary. The study builds upon existing works about Hungary's expansive nation-building, and it advances our understanding of the consequences of institutionalizing citizenship beyond state borders.

This book is must-read for scholars and policy-makers alike. For graduate students, it serves as an example of a theoretically nuanced, empirically rich, and methodologically innovative study. Pogonyi's use of multiple methods and his inductive approach in the conceptualization of the research is to be commended. Finally, this book strongly demonstrates that the logic of transborder nation-building in the Hungarian case is really about *politics* within the kin-state. Expansive citizenship is one of the tools available to nationalist politicians. In light of the fragmentation and polarization that has emerged in Hungary and other parts of the world recently, the book suggests a cautionary note: an attention to political institutions and political culture *within* the kin-state may be the best way to keep states' expansive nation-building projects democratic and peaceful.

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