

**BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

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**The role of nationalism in Slovak-Hungarian relations**

**BACHELOR THESIS**

**Bratislava, 2011**

**Peter Václavík**

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**BACHELOR THESIS**

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**Peter Václavík**

## **Declaration of origin**

This thesis is my original work, carried out under the guidance of my thesis advisor Mgr. Dagmar Kusá, PhD., which has not been presented for a degree at any other university, nor has been published to date. All utilized sources are cited and referenced in the bibliography.

Peter Václavík.

Bratislava, April 30 2011.

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Peter Václavík.

Bratislava, April 30 2011.

## **Abstract**

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This thesis examines nationalism and national-populism in the Slovak-Hungarian relations. It focuses mainly on its occurrence in Slovakia, studying its various forms displayed in particular cases. By defining the concepts of *nation*, *ethnopolitics*, and the role of *emotions*, it provides a theoretical framework for the notion of nationalism, because these are assumed to be the key elements capturing the essence of nationalism in current Slovak-Hungarian relations. The last chapter of the paper analyzes the reasons why nationalism and national-populism are continuously persisting, and raises the question whether this persistence is perpetuated exclusively on a political level, or the ethnic bias is also encoded within a social level, which would thus mean that it persists irrespective of the political milieu.

## **Abstrakt**

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Práca skúma nacionalizmus a národný populizmus v slovensko-maďarských vzťahoch. Predovšetkým sa však zameriava na jeho výskyt v rámci Slovenska a poukazuje na to, v akých formách môže byť nacionalizmus vykreslený na konkrétnych príkladoch. Definovaním pojmov *národa*, *etnopolitiky* a úlohy *emócií* poskytuje teoretický rámec pre chápanie nacionalizmu v danom kontexte, pretože tieto pojmy sú kľúčovými zložkami na zachytenie podstaty nacionalizmu v súčasných slovensko-maďarských vzťahoch. V poslednej časti práca analyzuje dôvody prečo nacionalizmus a národný populizmus kontinuálne pretrvávajú a vyzdvihuje otázku, či sa toto pretrvávanie deje výlučne na politickej rovine alebo je etnická predpojatosť medzi národmi vrytá aj v rovine sociálnej a pretrvala by tak bez ohľadu na politickú pôsobnosť nacionalizmu.

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## **Introduction**

Nationalism is an intrinsic feature in the contemporary Slovak-Hungarian relations. The two countries are internationally infamous for their notoriously fragile and unstable political relationship. Unfortunately, the political aspect of Slovak-Hungarian relationship is also present on a social level between the two nations. The social aspect is displayed in the form of an ethnic bias and ethnic tensions.

These ethnic tensions and bias are palpable despite the lack of any “real” reasons on the level of common people, but with an apparent cause and motivation on the level of the *carriers* of the conflict, the political leaders.

In the paper, it is assumed that if the phenomenon of ethnic nationalism is either intentionally or unintentionally perpetuated by political leaders for their mutual political preservation, it appears that a social bias between the citizens of Slovak and Hungarian nations is rather a reaction to this phenomenon than an authentic impulse of individuals.

Therefore, in order to prove this assertion, the theoretical background of the essence of the pertaining nationalism must be examined. Furthermore, it will be explained in what forms is nationalism applied in the Slovak-Hungarian relations, and finally the work will provide the description of how this nationalism is persisted on a political level and what consequences does it bring to the relations between people of respective Hungarian and Slovak nations on a social level.



# **1 Defining the notions of nation and nationalism**

The fundamental assumption for the whole issue of defining the notions of nation and nationalism is that there are no scientifically unambiguous definitions, because the understanding of the categories of nation and nationalism are dynamic in time, and as diverse as the geographical locations within which it is used. Therefore, a selection of the most apt definitions from among various conceptions is offered to frame the proposed research of the role of nationalism in the Slovak-Hungarian relationship.

## **1.1 Nation**

The concept of a “nation” is undoubtedly at the foundation of the matter of nationalism. Its’ understanding may be conceived from two different perspectives - the political and the ethnocultural. In politically defined nations, the meaning of the term of nationality corresponds with that of citizenship, where members identify themselves in terms of certain political values (e.g. life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in USA), irrespective of ethnocultural diversity among citizens. Such understanding of a nation had predetermined also the international approach towards nations before scholars accepted the fact that the raising number of ethnic conflicts (e.g. nationalistic activities in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda) clearly indicates the relevance of what Donald Horowitz stated in mid 1980s by writing that “ethnicity has fought and bled and burned its way into public and scholarly consciousness” (cited in: Cederman, 2002, p. 409).

Intuitively, one would describe the “objective” criteria of a nation to be first and foremost the language, providing clear markers of boundaries, inclusion and exclusion of the members. Furthermore, nation is almost universally understood as ancient and primordial, continuous and ascending, moving inexorably towards self-consciousness and statehood (Suny, 2004, p. 6).

However, as Etien Balibar states, such self-description consists of two illusive beliefs that “the generations which succeed one another on a reasonably stable territory have handed down to each other an invariant substance..., and that the process of development, from which we select retrospectively, so as to see ourselves as the

culmination of that process, was the only one possible, that is, it represented a destiny” (Etienne Balibar, 1991, p. 86)

Approach criticizing the belief that nation has persisted since ancient times, and that it needs to be preserved from generation to generation emerged hand in hand with the theory of social constructivism. It is a theory that rejects the belief that the “sleeping” nations of the past just needed to be awakened. It is best described, in words of Ernest Gellner: “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist – but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on” (Gellner, 1983, p. 62).

What social constructivists claim is that a nation is a social entity sharing the same system of ideas, signs, associations and ways of behaving and communicating, conditioned by the act of recognition of the mutual rights and duties among persons, and only such an act turns them into a nation (Gellner, 1983, p. 7). The voluntaristic aspect of “recognition” in the proposed definition indicates that nations do not exist independently of one’s will, but vice versa, they come into being only if one realizes the need for the recognition.

However, the act of recognition requires the presence of an inter-subjective understanding of belonging, assuming that a nation is a collective body comprised of many individuals where one can never meet and come to know all of the members personally during one’s lifetime. Such was the definition of a nation provided by Benedict Andersen, who argued that a nation is only possible as “an imagined community” (Andersen, 2006, p. 6). In other words, nation is a purely social phenomenon viable only through imagining and through abstractly categorizing it in our minds.

## **1.2 Nationalism**

Since the fallacious understanding of a nation having the character of a static, primordial and ancient entity was largely refuted and rethought through the theory of social constructivism (e.g. Andersen, 2006; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1992), the scholars exploring the subject of nationalism had to take into consideration the constructivists’ remarks about the dynamics of the understanding of a nation, which

was engendered by completely different political, social and economic conditions of life changing over time.

This approach builds on the notion of nations being constructed and points out what tendency can be derived from it. It is often denoted as a developmental theory, resting upon a series of stages in a linear model of state- and nation-building (Olzak, 1983). Assuming the dynamics and the state-building tendency of a nation, the essential principle of the earlier nationalism was captured by Ernest Gellner who claimed that nationalism is “a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state should not separate the power-holders from the rest” (Gellner, 1983, p. 1).

Such understanding of nationalism ascribes a neutral connotation to it. It purely describes the normative principle of a pluralistic international political system, where nations dispose of an alleged “right” of being autonomous political units. In this sense, nationalism is a nation-based, state-seeking activity. On the other hand, Gellner was aware of the fact that due to the higher number of potential nations than that of the possible viable states, it is impossible to attain the international political system exclusively comprised of homogenous nation-states. He argues that “a territorial political unit can only become ethnically homogenous in such cases, if it either kills, or expels, or assimilates all non-nationals” (Gellner, 1983, p.2).

However, the developmental model proved to be inefficient in defining nationalism due to its expectations that ethnicity declines through the process of state-building, industrial expansion, urbanization, and other factors (Hechter, 1975; Smith, 1981b; Allardt, 1979; used in Olzak, 1983). Therefore, despite of the eloquent theoretical conceptualization of the category of a nation as a constructed and dynamic social entity, the recent developments in the field of ethnic politics proved the misconception of the normative principle provided by social constructivists that nationalism phase ends when achieving a nation-state. As Roger Brubaker argues, a state-seeking nationalism “has a self-limiting political career” because “when nationalist demands for statehood are fulfilled, the nationalist programme is satisfied” (Brubaker, *Myths and misconception in the study of nationalism*, 2002, p. 274). Politicians often make use of the potential of such ethnic nationalism for their own purposes and agendas. This is, for example, the case of Slovak nationalistic parties, who, despite already existing Slovak statehood are still calling for strengthening it.

The nationalism prevailing in the Slovak-Hungarian relations of the post-communist era also belongs to the category of having successfully fulfilled the demands for statehood. Despite that, ethnically-based politics has not withdrawn to the background. Even though it has never eventuated into a mass ethnic violence as, for instance, in the case of the former Yugoslavia, it is a particular case, which is rather characterized by ethnic tensions that “re-emerged” after the veil of socialist ideology under which it was choked was unveiled.

Brubaker’s account of nationalism takes into consideration also the nationalistic politics that does not cease to exist after the reorganization of political space along national lines, or the break-up of multinational states into would-be-nation-states, and furthermore he claims that “nationalism was not only a *cause* but also a *consequence* of the break-up of the old empires and the creation of the new nation-states” (Brubaker, *Myths and misconception in the study of nationalism*, 2002, p. 274). Thus, where Gellner’s state-seeking nationalism ends, Brubaker’s non-state-seeking nationalism begins, and its understanding also gains a negative connotation at this point, because it is no more a description of a normative principle, but it is perceived as something aggressive, xenophobic, and deplorable due to its manifestation of nationalist emotions, particularly those of hatred, resentment, and fear.

### **1.3 The role of the emotions in the process of ethnic mobilization**

By researching the principle of ethnic mobilization and appertaining ethnic tensions, the role of emotions can not be excluded. It consists of appealing to the emotional side of human behavior in contradiction to initiating a critical political discourse. The emotion-based mechanism of ethnic mobilization also explains the linkage between an individual and the collective identity. Roger Petersen (2002) analyzes the mechanism of how emotions affect human behavior.

He assumes that almost all individuals desire a few basic things: safety, wealth and status or self-esteem. When one of these basic desires is threatened, human behavior is motivated to act (p. 3). He defines emotions as “a mechanism that triggers action to

satisfy a pressing concern” (p. 17), where each particular emotion triggers a specific response. He argues that “fear prepares the individual to satisfy safety concerns; hatred prepares the individual to act on historical grievance; resentment prepares the individual to address status/self-esteem discrepancies” (p. 19).

To get a better picture of this mechanism, Petersen illustrates it on an example of a man walking in a dark wood, when all of a sudden he hears a strange animal noise and becomes afraid. He explains that “fear (the emotion) acted as a mechanism (an individual level, recognizable pattern) to cause action (fight/flight) to meet a pressing concern (safety)” (pg. 18).

Such mechanism explains motivation for action of an individual. However, in order to examine how this mechanism works in ethnic conflicts, it is necessary to add two other assumptions.

Firstly, that ethnic identification simultaneously generates a collective identity. By definition, ethnic identification must be placed into a social context, because an individual inevitably “identifies with” certain external circumstances of an ethnic environment. Therefore, an ethnic identity is a feature of an individual by which he identifies himself with his social environment (by whatever criteria, i.e. race, gender, ethnic group, etc.) and realizes the differences of another ethnic entities. This also implies that if a collective identity is a compound of individual identities, it follows that whatever affects a collective identity body as such, it affects an individual identity as well. This is the logic ethnic nationalism rests upon.

Secondly, that in terms of the analysis of ethnic conflicts, certain cognition must precede the emotional behavior (p. 21). This means that an emotional behavior is activated as a reaction towards certain theoretical information about one’s identity. This information is normally encoded into a specific interpretative ethno-national frame. Thus, it generates a “coding bias” in the ethnic direction (Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, 2002). For example, Slovaks has to be provided by putative cognition that Hungarian nation “intends to take the rule over their territory” in order

for the emotion of fear to be activated. Political actors take the advantage of this encoded ethnic bias, and use it as an underlying legitimization ground for their further statements, proclamations and stances towards respective political issues.

What follows from these two additional points is that they have to be kept in mind while answering the question of how a collective body comes to act as a coherent unit. This coherence is enabled by the means of narratives. Narrative is basically a mode of rhetoric that refers to a story created in a constructive way. Narrator directly communicates to its auditors, where he describes a sequence of events. In the context of nationalism, narratives are used as a significant instrument to describe the social process of an ethnic nation, and thus construct collective identity. Through these narratives, an individual is interconnected with the whole national group. The whole mechanism triggering emotion-based collective action is following: narratives provide an individual with the cognition that the basic desires (safety, wealth and status or self-esteem) of the collective identity group that he or she belongs to are threatened, which evokes the activation of the emotions to protect these basic needs, which often take place in a way of voting for a nationalistic political party.

The relevance of emotion-based approach to be taken into consideration stems from a simple precondition. It does not have to be scientifically proved, because it is the matter of a common knowledge that it is always easier to appeal to one's emotions in order to act than to give an uncomfortable and painstaking argumentation, especially when criticizing an opinion or an approach that is "inevitably and absolutely true", which is how majority of people perceive ethnicity.

#### **1.4 Understanding ethnopolitics**

Ethnicity and ethnic groups are notions that largely originate from the field of an anthropological examination. As such, ethnicity and ethnic groups do not dispose of a political character. They are rather defined as "categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves, and thus have the characteristic of organizing interaction between people" (Barth, 1969, p. 10). The anthropological perspective also

designates the particular characteristic features of an ethnic group and explores the genesis, structure, and function of such groups (for detailed analysis of ethnicity see Barth, 1969).

Nevertheless, the reason why not only anthropologists, but also scholars from the field of international relations and world politics turned their attention to ethnicity was the ethnification of politics, or, vice-versa, the politicization of ethnicity and the resultant ethnic nationalism. The interaction between ethnicity and politics happens at the moment when whatever entities, defined in ethnic terms (i.e. ethnic group, nation, nationality, tribe, etc.), bring their social, cultural, and economic interests, grievances, claims, anxieties, and aspirations into the political arena – the intrastate and/or the interstate arena (Rothschild, 1981, p. 8). Yet, ethnification of politics or politicization of ethnicity reflects the principle of ethnic mobilization (or ethnopolitics) which refers to “the political activities of complex groups whose membership is largely determined by real or putative ancestral inherited ties, and who perceive these ties as systematically affecting their place and fate in the political and socioeconomic structures of their state and society” (Rothschild, 1981, p. 9).

Ethnicity, defined in the anthropological terms as provided above is thus a collective identity founded upon sharing of a common language and customs of social interconnection. However, it is not to be mistaken with an ethnic nation. Ethnicity is rather what Gellner referred to as “pre-existing differentiating marks to work on”, when he speaks of the process of inventing of nations (Gellner, 1983, p. 62). In this sense, ethnic mobilization also includes a nation-building process where ethnic groups of similar traits converge into an abstractly categorized “imagined community” of an ethnic nation operating within a relatively large scale, which later on presents itself in the name of an ancient and primordial collective body. However, the idea of the process of forming into a collective entity depicts a political act, because in its most general meaning the term “political” means an act related to decision-making. The philosophy standing behind it is simple: having the political right of self-governance ensures the existence of a nation.

From this follows that even though a nation is specified in “ethnic” terms, the evolution of a nation into an imagined collective body is primarily to become an autonomous political player, who naturally strives for preservation of its identity defined in its ethnic attribution in the first place, and pronounce claims for its recognition of its national status in the second place.

Nevertheless, even though there might be thousands of scientifically justified explanations provided which point out the deceptive, fallacious, and demagogic rhetoric used by ethnopolitics nowadays, ethnicity still remains a powerful tool for a political preservation due to its character of being an identity feature, and hence easily understandable.

### **1.5 The interconnection between the four notions**

So far, the concept of nationalism in Slovak-Hungarian context was introduced as to be looked upon as a socio-political phenomenon rather than a theory of political legitimacy. The terms of *nation*, *ethnopolitics*, and *emotions*, were also analyzed. However, if these categories are about to comprise a unified theoretical framework to capture the essence of nationalism in the current Slovak-Hungarian relations, their mutual interconnection must be explained. It was already mentioned that any allusion to nationalism<sup>1</sup> automatically labels it as aggressive, xenophobic, and deplorable. In order to explain why this invokes a negative connotation, the essence of this phenomenon must be explored.

First and foremost, the basis of nationalism consists of ascribing a primordial character to nationhood. In this sense, a nation is almost generally conceived as an unquestionable, primordial, and ancient entity, whose characteristic features are static in time; regardless of the constructivists’ key remark pointing out that its modern understanding has developed over time as a consequence of changing political and social conditions of life (Andersen (2006) claims that the term “nation” has no more than 300 years).

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<sup>1</sup> - from now on, nationalism will be used exclusively in its ethnic context



Such prevailing misinterpretation invokes specific feelings about people's self-identification. They find themselves as "successors" of a nation's spiritual patrimony, which incites in them the feeling of responsibility to preserve the putatively "ancestral" ties among their national kinships. In this sense, being a member of an ethnic nation is conceived as a historically determined legacy which must be "naturally" followed by its members, because it indicates their "inherited", "ancestral", and "ever-lasting" national identity. Accordingly, a survival of their collective national identity at the first place ensures the persistence of their personal identity.

From this follows that national interests dominates over those of an individuals. This also implies, that such self-understanding of a nation, accordingly, grants legitimacy to politics which maintains the approach of pursuing these national interests. It is what was referred to as ethnopolitics.

However, the complete image of nationalism is formed when emotions are added into the mix. Stirring up emotions involves strengthening the feeling of fraternity ties among kin. It reminds them of being someone – being bearers of a historical legacy of a spiritual patrimony of their nations. If they feel personally alone in their lives, emphasizing their national belonging raises their personal dignity.

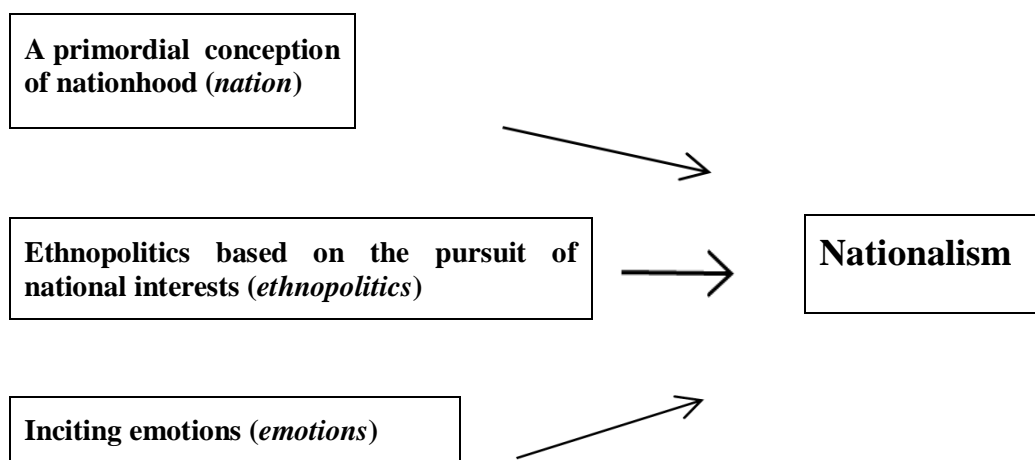
The three aforementioned emotions of fear, resentment, and hatred would not be possible to be incited unless "another" nation's "unacceptable" interests were at stake. So, for example, the Slovaks would not fear "annexing" of the southern parts by Hungary without the "aspirations" of those "bad" Hungarians; on the other hand, Hungarians would not feel resentment without Slovaks' "assimilation" politics carried out against their kin living there; and, in extreme cases, the respective nationals would not hate each other without those others being "evil" in their "nature". In other words, emotions are useful for ethnic mobilization due to pointing out the existence of "another" nation's antagonistic and irreconcilable interests and due to them providing a very strong and intimate link between an individual and a collective identity.

All the respective categories were presented here as the basic aspects constituting the essence of nationalism. Their specific use results into the emergence of nationalism.

The model in the Table 1 proposes that the phenomenon of nationalism is scientifically examinable as a convergence of these three aspects:

- 1) Fallacious use of the category of ethnic nation
- 2) Ethnopolitics gaining popular legitimization due to their ethno-national interest pursuit
- 3) Emotions used in a politically effective way

**Table 1**



Having provided a theoretical framework of what basic features comprise the essence of nationalism, the following chapter will now provide the examples from the current Slovak-Hungarian relations whose character corresponds with this theoretical model.

## **2 Application of Brubaker's analytical pattern of nationalisms' division into practice**

As mentioned in the first chapter, the examination of nationalism that concerns Slovak-Hungarian relations requires an analytical approach. It is an issue that involves behavior, rhetoric, stances and mass-manipulative abilities of political leaders rather than a question of philosophical or theoretical contemplation about political legitimacy of nation-states within the field of the international relations.

The latter approach describes normative principles deduced from developmental theories which take into account changing political, economic and social conditions of lives within the historical process, which consequently eventuate into formation of nation-states. Furthermore, in such approach, a nation is not fully-fledged unless it disposes of a political body, because the state apparatus is supposed to have the power to educate people in their national consciousness. To put it in Gellner's view, a nation could not be designated as a nation without possessing its own state; and that by achieving the form of a state, nationalism should cease to exist.

However, it is not the case of Slovak-Hungarian issue; the two nations already have their states, and yet, nationalism is present. Therefore, Brubaker's analytical approach of classifying various types of nationalisms will serve as a model for illustration of ideal types of nationalism in the particular Slovak-Hungarian setting.

### **2.1 The proposed model for defining nationalism in the contemporary Slovak-Hungarian relations**

Brubaker (2002, p. 277-278) characterize four types of nationalism which have flourished as a result of the reorganization of national lines in the post-communist Eastern Europe.

- 1) The first one is what he calls the "nationalizing" nationalism, which is founded upon a belief that a 'core nation', defined in ethnocultural terms, is in a weak cultural, economic or demographic position, which is seen as a legacy of a discriminatory policy against the nation from the period of time before it attained independence. This assumption justifies the use of a state power to promote the interests of a core nation to remedy and compensate the

grievances of the past. For instance, President Beneš' Decrees of 1946 in Czechoslovakia were aimed to "pacify" the Sudeten Germans and Hungarian minorities in order to promote the dominant position of a core nation of "Czechoslovaks", and thus, serves as an illustration of the phenomenon of nationalizing nationalism.

- 2) The second type of nationalism is entitled a nationalism of "external national homelands", which arose as a direct opposition to the "nationalizing" one. It asserts a right to monitor, support and promote the interests of "its" ethnonational kin in other states, particularly when they are threatened by nationalizing policies of the state they live in.
- 3) The third form of nationalism is the nationalism of national minorities. It is founded on the specific self-understanding of ethnic minorities, who characterize themselves more in "national" terms rather than in merely "ethnic" terms. It means that they seek to be recognized in such terms, from which follows their assertion for certain collective, nationality-based political rights. The examples of this form of nationalism also include the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries today.
- 4) The last form of nationalism is a defensive, protective, national-populist nationalism. It is mainly embodied in the rhetoric of politicians who maintain the stances of allegedly existing threats from outside. These putative threats purportedly aim to destroy the national economy, language, and cultural patrimony. It makes up threats by itself and it immediately provides a protection against them in return.

## **2.2 The political and social circumstances in the post-communist Slovakia**

Even though the Slovak-Hungarian relations are characterized by nationalism during the 20<sup>th</sup> century extensive amount of empirical data could be provided to prove it, this thesis will predominantly focus on more recent affairs, namely those of the post-communist period. Therefore, let us first describe the circumstances that enabled this socio-political phenomenon.

Following the 1989 collapse of the communism, pluralistic democracy with all its electoral attributes was reinstated in Czechoslovakia. The circumstances which were suddenly opened to political leaders were obvious. The political scene was open and the electorate was once again set into a position of a decision-maker after forty years. The vast majority of population has never before born such a responsibility. Taking into consideration the fact that the last democratic election in Slovakia (then Czechoslovakia) took place in 1946, a person that was 17 years old in that time, would already be 59 years old, when he or she could have their say in political affairs for the first time in their life in the free election of 1990. Therefore, it is the matter of a common sense to realize the practical novelty of both pluralistic democracy, and the resultant need of establishing a new institutional arrangement for the majority of population. George Schopflin (2000, p. 31) describes such disposition of the society: “the institutions of the state and civil society are weak and not trusted, whereas ethnicity has authenticity”. It immediately brought success to the politicians who grasped the opportunity and adjusted their rhetoric strategies in the way which best suited their drive for political gains, which apart from other things, included ethnopolitics.

### **2.3 Depiction of the “nationalizing” nationalism in the Slovak-Hungarian issue**

This type of nationalism concerns especially the Slovaks in their relation to the ethnic Hungarian minority, due to its historical geopolitical development which resulted in the fact that the Hungarian minority is the largest in Slovakia - 9.7% (Republic, 2009). As mentioned above, it is a “nationalizing” nationalism. It can be also summarized into a principle of an assimilationist policy. However, a crucial aspect of such nationalism is that it can be practically realized only if a nationalistic political body is in power at the time. In other words, “nationalizing” nationalism means to actively take political measures that are aimed to complicate practical exercise of ethnic Hungarians’ rights, i.e. active proposition of bills, open support of laws and policies, and other activities that are directly aimed to fulfill the goals of assimilation. As will be shown later on, unlike the last type of Brubaker’s nationalisms (the defensive one), political “action” is a required aspect in the “nationalizing” nationalism. .

There are three main political subjects in Slovakia to whom the elements of “nationalizing” nationalism can be ascribed – namely the Slovak National Party (SNS), the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), and SMER-SD. The most typical representative of such nationalism is SNS.

SNS views the Slovak Republic as a national state of ethnic Slovaks justifying the legitimacy of the Slovak statehood based on the historical, national, and Christian traditions of ethnic Slovaks. With respect to ethnic minorities, SNS’s policy is based on questioning their loyalty to the state. In its latest political platform, it openly accuses the Slovak Hungarian Coalition (SMK) and Most-Híd<sup>2</sup> of “acting as an institution of the Hungarian parliament”, and hence “SNS deems the presence of these parties in Slovak parliament to be unconstitutional” (SNS, 2010). In principle, SNS profiles both Hungarian minority parties as an extended arm of the Hungarian Parliament, whose priority stems from the “nature” of the Hungarian nation, i.e. the commission of an unforgiveable crime against the Slovak nation via forced Magyarization of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the existence of a multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Such ideological stance of SNS against the Hungarian nation in practice results in the aforementioned push for assimilation politics. For example, its support of the controversial *State Language Act* which seeks to “tighten up the supervision of the Slovak language...” where, in the case of its breach “...fines can reach up to 5000 €” (SME, 17. 7. 2009); or, the *Patriotism Bill* proposed directly by SNS, which was not enacted though, but ideas of which were later on incorporated into the *Law on the State Symbols* (Teichmanová, 2010).

In general, assimilation politics is noted for viewing the character of a state to be a “home” exclusively of one specific (ethnic) nation, whereas the other ethnic national groups are supposed to act in accordance to the will of the major nation. Such assumption generates the misconception that if state “belongs” exclusively to one nationality group, other nationalities are perceived as “guests”, or “visitors”.

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<sup>2</sup> two political parties promoting minority rights, composed mostly of Hungarian representatives

Accordingly, if these “visitors” do not respect the conditions (rules) of the “home nation”, nationalist immediately label it as an “undesirable” behavior of the minorities. In addition, they propose bills and call for strengthening the laws which would “resolve” this “undesirable” behavior. For example, many Slovaks feel resentment (or even hatred) when Hungarian language is spoken publicly, because they found it to be rude of Hungarians not to respect that they live in a country where Slovak language “is” the only allowed. This is also the cause of abovementioned laws and bills by SNS.

Besides SNS, there are two more political parties which used, or are using the nationalistic rhetoric and apply ethnopolitics as such. These are the parties who formed the ruling coalition with SNS after the election of 2006, namely Movement for Democratic Slovakia- People’s Party (HZDS-ĽS) and SMER-Social Democracy (SMER-SD).

HZDS-ĽS is a political party which presents itself as “nationally oriented” and “pro-Slovak” political force (Mesežnikov, 2009). Its nationalistic policy initially emerged around the issue of dissolving the Czechoslovak Federation and its consequent creation of the Slovak Republic in 1993; ever since it has portrayed itself as “the architect of the Slovak statehood” (Ibid.). However, the character of its “pro-Slovak” orientation and their “Slovak statehood” policy is manifested in its “nationalizing” nationalism towards the Hungarian minority. Since its first resounding success in the 1992 elections, HZDS regularly won all the elections (1994, 1998, 2002) until a new political party – SMER-SD - took the dominant position of electora; support in 2006. Yet, as the characterizing feature of “nationalizing” nationalism is to take active steps against national minorities, it is relevant to take into consideration only those years when HZDS disposed of the ruling powers – since 1992 to 1998; and since 2006 to 2010.

There is a specific case of nationalizing initiative worth remarking upon which concerns the political activities of the HZDS during their political domination from 1992 to 1998. It took place in 1996 in the form of ‘gerrymandering’, i.e. redrawing of district boundaries for the purposes of strengthening the position of governmental

party in the state administration. In particular, this policy targeted especially Slovakia's ethnic Hungarian areas, where the new law of reorganization worked to minimize the Hungarian voting power. This law pursued the policy of territorial administration restructuring which preceded a planned change of electoral law (which did not pass<sup>3</sup>). As a consequence, the regions in the Slovak South were turned from their historical East-West orientation to a North-South orientation, thus including a larger percentage of ethnic Slovaks.

However, in the case of HZDS, the primary goal was not to carry out procedures against Hungarian minority as such, but against the political body organized by ethnic Hungarians, who were traditionally formed as the best-organized opposition against the ruling party.

There is an evidence of HZDS's power aspirations in the form of its internal document titled "The Main Tasks of HZDS" leaked to the press in 1996, which recommended that "HZDS should work to strengthen its position within the Slovak society by continuing to reshuffle the personnel within the state administration..." (Krivý, 1998, p. 59). Nevertheless, "nationalization" does not have to be undertaken for the direct purpose of assimilation or marginalization of other ethnic communities, but it retains its "nationalizing" features even when it is a secondary consequence of political activity.

After eight years of absence from participating in the decision-making majority of the Slovak parliament, HZDS once again became a part of the governmental coalition in the year 2006. However, this time it did not hold the position of the strongest political subject in the coalition. Its "nationalizing" activities reduced to the scope of assenting and co-operating alongside with the other two coalition partners – SNS and SMER-SD. The latter party is the last to be introduced in its "nationalizing" activities.

SMER-SD was established in 1999 as a reaction, as an alternative party towards both the ruling coalition formed in 1998 and the opposition at the time represented by SNS

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<sup>3</sup> HZDS pushed for a majority voting system, which would be based on the districts draw up in this territorial administration. In effect, this would marginalize the ethnic Hungarian voters, who would not wield a majority in the regions traditionally inhabited by ethnic Hungarians.



and HZDS. It adopted the concept of a party of the “third way” (SMER). Its mainstream ideology declares a socio-democratic orientation, and advocates an etatist perspective on the relation of the state and socio-economic issues. The elements of nationalism are also popular among the party leaders. For example, Boris Zala, one of its principal ideologists described the “third way” concept of the party as a “renewed search for national meaning and historical anchoring of Slovakness” (Zala, 2002).

As in the case of SNS, the “nationalizing” political activities of SMER also refer to the amendment of the *State Language Act* and to the *Law on the State Symbols*, proposed and enacted in recent years. Whereas the former amendment tightened up the obligatory use of Slovak language, the latter enactment is more of a symbolical value.

It displays the fostering of the idea of Slovakness and the sovereignty of the Slovak nation within the Slovak republic, i.e. the symbolical sovereignty of a Slovak nation-state. This law prescribes to expose the Slovak flag, the text of the Slovak anthem and the Preamble of Slovak the Constitution on an appropriate and well-visible place at all public educational institutions (Teichmanová, 2010). Unlike the State Language Act, this law does not directly restrict individuals to freely exercise their identity, but its purpose is to appeal on the sub-consciousness of youths in order to shape and cultivate their belonging to the Slovak society.

Nonetheless, the crucial issue about this law consists in the introductory sentence of the Preamble of the Slovak Constitution, which states “We, the Slovak Nation...”. In this text, the “Slovak Nation” is not meant in the sense of a political nation, but rather in its ethnic sense. Thus, in certain cases, there are some schools and institutions for leisure time which teach exclusively in Hungarian language, but are obliged to have exposed the text referring to “the Slovak Nation” which explicitly leaves them out of the state-forming community.

In all of the cases mentioned above, there are observable elements of “nationalizing” nationalism, i.e. the use of the state power to promote the interests of a core (Slovak) nation, whose national consciousness “must” be strengthened. Such an attitude is legitimized on the basis of an alleged remedy for the past grievances, which neglected

the Slovaks' "natural" right for their autonomous statehood, and thus, all the "threats" against the statehood "must be diminished" by "strengthening" the Slovakhood. However, from the viewpoint of Hungarians living in Hungary such politics is unacceptable, because it "aggressively" strikes against the ethnic identity of their kin living in the neighboring state of Slovakia. Hence, the nationalism of external national homelands emerges as a direct opposition to the nationalizing one as a claim of Hungarian motherland to promote and support the interests of their kin living in Slovakia.

#### **2.4 Nationalism of external national homelands**

Regarding the nationalism of external national homelands in the context of Slovak-Hungarian relations, there are two major issues to be examined – the controversial Hungarian Status Law of 2001 (considerably modified in 2003), and the Dual Citizenship Law of 2010. These laws were presumably justified on the basis of the so-called 'Antall Doctrine'; i.e. the idea that the Hungarian parliament is accountable for the well-being of the Hungarian nation as a whole, irrespective of their state nationality.

This informal doctrine refers to a 'memorial' statement of József Antall, the first Prime Minister of the post-communist Hungary. At the beginning of his political career in 1990, he said: "Our government works for the 15 millions of Hungarians" instead of the country's 10 million Hungarian citizens (cited in: Osamu, 2004, p. 196). Since then, it has remained a part of the policy-making considerations for all mainstream parties in the post-communist Hungary. For instance, the creation of the Hungarian Standing Conference in 1998, involving all political forces sharing the attitude of "*Hungarian government for 15 millions of Hungarians*" from Hungary and from the neighboring countries, was the evidence of the effectiveness of this idea. Also, the former Hungarian government led by Ferenc Gyurcsányi declared itself as a government for the 15 million Hungarians (both examples used in: Osamu, 2004). Thus, accordingly, the following Status Law and the Dual Citizenship Law are both legal products being founded on this ideological background.

The Hungarian Parliament approved the highly controversial Status Law on 19 June 2001. The law offered certain benefits to ethnic Hungarians living in the neighboring states, like access to the labor market in Hungary and to educational opportunities, on the basis of their being ethnically Hungarian (Schöpflin, 2004). There were mainly two reasons why this law was considered controversial.

First, the Status Law stepped over the borders of neighboring countries, and was thus committing so-called “extraterritoriality”, which was against the international treaties Hungary had been a party to. The strong criticism was especially raised against the wording *unitary Hungarian nation*, which, needless to say, reminded people in the neighboring countries of the *Great Hungarianism*, or the era of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian domination of the region through nationalist policies, perceived by some as traumatic.

Second, the law-making process was not consented to and consulted with the concerned countries (Osamu, 2004). Taking into consideration that Hungary had already started the accession negotiations with the European Union (EU), she was diplomatically bounded to comply with the conditions and terms set forth by the EU. It also referred to the compatibility of the Status Law implementation with the European standards. In the official consultations issued by the Council of Europe’s Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), the Status Law of Hungary “needs to be aligned with the *acquis* upon accession” (Communities, 2002, p. 131). Therefore, Hungary had no choice but to amend the law in accordance with the ‘external forces’. The modifications were finished by the end of June 2003.

A controversial Dual Citizenship Law was passed by the Hungarian Parliament on 26 May 2010, entering into force on January 1, 2011. It removed the requirement for people to spend certain amount of time in Hungary if they want to apply for citizenship. They will just have to prove Hungarian ancestry and speak the language proficiently. As in the case of the Status Law, it evoked the concerns of “extraterritoriality” in Slovakia. From the perspective of the Hungarians living abroad of their motherland, the possibility of dual citizenship might sound attractive, but the worries of the concerned neighboring countries can be described as political analyst

Zoltan Kiszelly put it: “there could be conflicts, mainly with Ukraine and Slovakia, where a large number of Hungarians living along the borders. These countries are scared that if Hungarians live on both sides of the border, then perhaps in the future, it could serve as a legal basis for a future Hungarian government to modify the borders based on ethnic principle. They’re afraid this could endanger their young statehoods” (Euronews, 2010).

The concerns about modification of borders are fostered by another fact – the presence and political engagement of national minority parties in respective states. However, in spite of indisputable co-operation between the Hungarian Parliament and the representatives of Hungarians living abroad (the Hungarian Standing Conference), the elements of nationalism of ethnic minority parties are of a different character.

## **2.5 Nationalism of ethnic minorities**

Nationalism of national minorities refers to the political subjects which define themselves as representatives of “a nation within a nation”. In the context of the Slovak-Hungarian relations, there are two parties whose policies might be described as pursuing the interests of national minorities. These are the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK-MKP) and the Most-Híd (Slovak-Hungarian word for the Bridge). However, these parties need to be further distinguished because only the former can be truly specified as a “nationalistic” party in the context of the provided model.

SMK-MKP was established in 1998 as a legal successor of three Hungarian political parties unifying them into a single political subject. It was founded in response to the amendments in the new election law of May 1998, which prevented smaller parties from forming electoral coalitions. This law ordered that every single political subject within a coalition had to overcome a minimum threshold of 5% (see, for example, Mesežnikov, Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2006). Thus, SMK-MKP became the sole political subject claiming to represent the entire Hungarian community living in Slovakia, with the objective of strengthening their legal status.

In its political agenda of 2009, SMK-MKP states that “Hungarians comprise the most numerous ethnic community of Slovakia, which differs from the other ethnic communities in its capability to organize itself politically” (SMK, 2009). This is what Brubaker alluded to while specifying the character of nationalism of ethnic minorities. In other words, SMK-MKP can be defined as a depiction of this type of nationalism because of its party ideology asserting the national minority rights as the priority of their policy, and openly proclaiming that they are the representatives of a certain national minority.

On June 7, 2009, the group of four deputies and former members of SMK-MKP announced the foundation of a new party Most-Híd. According to its leader Béla Bugár, the main reason for founding a new party was the increasingly unacceptable style of SMK-MKP leadership led by Pál Csáky. He was charged by Bugár of disrespecting the basic principles of democratic decision-making and exhibiting tendencies towards authoritarianism and radicalism. The leaders of SMK-MKP struck back by accusing Bugár and other founding members that the motives behind the foundation of Most-Híd were their unfulfilled personal ambitions (Petöcz, 2009, s. 90). Later on, after Most-Híd had profiled itself as a “party of cooperation”, the SMK-MKP representatives labeled Most-Híd as a “party of assimilation” and accused them of a “betrayal of national interests” (Petöcz, 2009, s. 90-91). SMK-MKP explicitly states in its agenda that “minority politics of Slovakia is characterized by serious deficiencies, and political parties – besides SMK-MKP – do not have an efficient program in this scope...” (SMK, 2009).

Irrespective of political disputes between the leaders of these two parties, the fact remains that unlike SMK-MKP, the priorities of Most-Híd are not primarily the interests of Hungarian minority as such. Instead, it defines itself in terms of a civic rights party, or as mentioned above, a ‘party of cooperation’. It calls for mutual understanding between ethnic groups in the form of promoting the idea of a European civic society, where ethnic nationality, religion, culture, and language are a “private spiritual property and right” of every single citizen (Most-Híd, 2010).

Therefore, the approach of Most-Híd can not be defined as nationalistic, because it is not a party representing exclusively and only a certain part of a society defined in national or ethnic terms. Although it emphasizes the rights of national minorities, the party policy does not conceive these rights in terms of collectively defined national interests, but rather as respective interests of the individuals, who, at the same time, come under the category of a national minority.

With respect to nationalism of national minorities, it is necessary to point out the importance of official party policies. If a party proclaims to be a political representative of a particular national minority, the range of its maximum possible voter support naturally reduces to the extent amounting to the number of the national minority population of a given society.

However, if a party promotes primarily a civic rights policy, accentuating that these inherently include also the rights of national minorities to freely exercise their mother language, culture and religion, its voter support is dispersed also among non-Hungarian-based voters.

The importance of distinguishing between these parties' policies can be illustrated on the electoral behavior of the voters in the parliamentary election of the Slovak republic in 2010. When comparing the maps displaying the share of valid votes by territorial districts, the "nationalistic" and "non-nationalistic" aspect of the concerning political parties' policies can be illustrated on the districts where Hungarian nationals represent only a negligible part of a district population, i.e. the "non-Southern" parts of Slovakia. As these maps show (see Appendix 1), the percentage of SMK-MKP sympathizers did not reach over 1% in any of the "non-Southern" districts. By contrast, the outcome of the election was more satisfactory for Most-Híd. In almost all of the mentioned "non-Southern" districts (except of five), its support fluctuated between 1% and 5%. The declarations of civic rights policy of Most-Híd is certainly one of the most important reasons of their relative success in comparison to SMK-MKP. It must be acknowledged though, that many, especially young people, voted for Most-Híd, because it was an alternative to the ruling SMER. Nevertheless, in order to

represent such alternative, its policy simply could not be nationalistically, pro-Hungarian minority oriented, but had to imply elements of civic rights party.

In the mentioned election of 2010, SMK-MKP received only 4.33% of votes which failed to gain them a parliamentary representation due to the electoral threshold of 5%. On the other hand, Most-Híd succeeded to get support of 8.12% of votes. While accepting the provided distinction which denotes Most-Híd as a non-nationalistic party (due to its non-collectively defined interests of the minority), in contrast to nationalistic SMK-MKP, it seems that nationalism of national minorities will be present in Slovak-Hungarian relations only on a non-parliamentary level for at least four following years.

Yet, it is not to say that Most-Híd will cease to be the object of criticism of Slovak nationalistic parties who constantly label it as a Hungarian nationalistic party. This view is, more or less, prevailing among the Slovak majority, who do not necessarily see Most-Híd as a nationalistic party, but at least as a “party of Hungarians”, and, “for Hungarians”<sup>4</sup>. Slovak nationalist politicians are well aware of this prevalent opinion and make use of the presence of “Hungarians” in the “Slovak” parliament by using it as an empirical fact for their prospective accusations of any Hungarian politician of being a “collaborationist” of the “Great Hungarian chauvinism” (especially SNS). At this point, Peterson’s argument about appealing to emotions is observable – safety of the Slovak nation is presented to be threatened which consequently evokes the emotions of fear, or resentment to be activated. In other words, Slovak nationalists are artificially making up putative threats so they could propose a “political protection” against these “threats” in return. This approach is peculiar for the next type of nationalism.

## **2.6 Defensive, protective, national-populist nationalism**

The defensive, protective, national-populist nationalism is specific in its character, because it embraces exclusively the dimension of spoken narratives, statements,

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<sup>4</sup> The difference between „Hungarian-nationalistic“ and „party of Hungarians for Hungarians“ is that the former bears a negative connotation in terms of „anti-Slovak“, while the latter is neutral in terms of unconcern (i.e. if it is not „about“ me, then it is not „for“ me)

stances, and other thought manipulation. National-populism can be perceived from two perspectives. It is both a component part of each of the types of nationalisms mentioned above on the one hand, and an independently observable phenomenon on the other hand.

In terms of a component part of abovementioned nationalisms, national-populism is meant to be the stances, statements, and attitudes of the protagonists of respective nationalisms towards the activities of their perceived adversaries. For example, when the newly elected prime minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, introduced his objective to enact the Double Citizenship Law, the immediate answer of his counterpart, Robert Fico, was the warning that if a Slovak citizen asks for a Hungarian citizenship, he or she will lose the Slovak one (SITA, Fico: Maďari môžu stratit' slovenské občianstvo. Slota vytiahol Hitlera, 2010).

The latter (an independently observable phenomenon) approach refers to the narratives by which politicians call for strengthening of national consciousness. This includes the misinterpretations ascribing primordial features to the nation, and thus ascribes a specific character of nationhood. For example, Robert Fico or Ján Slota used to refer to King Svätopluk as the King of the “ancient Slovaks” (Kern, 2008). According to historical records, this king ruled ‘Nitra principality’ in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D., which stretched over the territory of nowadays Slovaks, Czechs, Hungarians, and some of the lands of Transylvania, Germany and Silesia. Since its name refers to the Slovak town of Nitra, it invokes the notion that Slovaks were dominating over these territories in this historical period, and thus preceded the impact of Hungarian Kingdom that took over the leading rule afterwards and last until the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

National populism is used in two situational settings. Its idioms are either used as a legitimization strategy by governments, or as a mobilization strategy utilized by the opposition (Brubaker, Myths and misconception, 2002, p. 278). The general pattern of such national populism is rather clear. First of all, its protagonists strive to incite the general feeling that the collective identity group is being somehow threatened, and consequently, the same political leaders propose themselves to provide a political protection against these putative threats.



The possible consequences of national populist appeals are definable in two ways. In the short term, it can prove to be sufficiently effective in drumming up the voter support; and in the long term, it can give a birth to a certain communication culture that is based on confrontation and conflicts (Mesežnikov, 2009, p. 61). In the latter case, it creates strong division lines between different population groups by emphasizing their collective identity, and thus polarizing the society into groups.

Concerning the issue of the Slovak-Hungarian relations, there are mainly three parties in Slovakia which are noted for national-populist idioms. These were already introduced in the section about nationalizing nationalism in Slovakia. Notwithstanding that some elements of national-populism could be also found in the statements of other parties' politicians (e.g. Christian Democratic Movement – KDH), the focus will remain henceforth on SNS, HZDS and SMER.

All three parties may be described as *etatist* parties, i.e. a preferred model of governance based on the strong role of the government. SNS traditionally considers an independent Slovak state to be the greatest social value and embodiment of a long-term emancipation of the ambitions of the Slovak nation. HZDS also shares this view; moreover it claims special credit for founding the independent Slovak Republic in 1993. According to SMER's Chairman Robert Fico, the government should be “the father of all citizens”, just like the church is the “mother of all believers” (Mesežnikov, National Populism in Slovakia - Defining the Character of the State and Interpreting Select Historic Events, 2009; Uličianska, 2008).

Their etatist positions on the character of the state are at the same time affected by ethnic and nationalist approach, which means that their rhetoric and stances lean towards the preference of the national principle over the civic one. The approach converging national and etatist principle normally results in advocating the “state's duty” towards the mission to build up the national identity (e.g. the abovementioned the SNS's proposal of the *Patriotism Bill*). Thus, national-populism naturally tends to mythologize historical events, and, interestingly, nationalists believe in some kind of a “mythological” rule of “the first nation”. In other words, it is “the first nation to come, the first nation to take” rule, or more simply, the so-called “argumentation” saying “We were here first!”

### **3 Persistence of nationalism: political or social phenomenon?**

In the second chapter, four types of nationalisms were analyzed in their practical depiction in the Slovak-Hungarian context. These were approached respectively. None the less, from the viewpoint of a complex insight, there is a noticeable interconnection among them; moreover, it contributes to their respective persistence. Therefore, the following chapter will examine in what sense these nationalisms are interconnected.

#### **3.1 Mutual interconnection between respective nationalisms**

Except of the national populism, all of the three preceding nationalisms consist of two different aspects. They are compound of both a nationalist policy-making aspect, and national-populist interpretative aspect.

The nationalist policy-making aspect is recognizable in the way it functions in its real sense, irrespective of what is one's attitude towards them is, i.e. *nationalizing nationalism* is a form of assimilation politics, *nationalism of ethnic minorities* refers to existence of parties which characterized themselves as a political protection of a national minority, and *external nationalism* is displayed in laws which are noted for their extraterritoriality.

All of these are empirically observable political activities. They have occurred on a political scene and had/have an impact over the lives of individuals. As such, these policy-makings do not involve any interpretations whatsoever. For example, without the additional national-populist interpretations and comments on certain nationalistic political measures, a citizen who is not affected by this politics directly (e.g. somebody living in northern parts of Slovakia) would not know anything about this political issue, and hence could not even draw his own opinion about it.

However, the reasons of why ethnic tensions and ethnic bias occurs are due to the comments and interpretations of these politics by national-populists. It is these interpretations and comments which stir up the emotions of some of the population and drum up the voting support for the nationalistic parties using them. In this sense nationalistic policy-makings serve as reference points for the populist protagonists; either to advocate themselves or denounce the others. In Table 2, the principal

attitudes, comments, stances and interpretations of national-populists towards respective nationalistic policy-makings are illustrated.

**Table 2:**

<b><i>Form of nationalism</i></b>	<b>Nationalizing (policy-making)</b>	<b>External (policy-making)</b>	<b>Ethnic minorities (policy-making)</b>
<b>National-populism by Hungarian protagonists</b>	Pointing out that the existence of Hungarian kinship abroad is threatened	Hungarian parliament to be a parliament accountable for 15 million of Hungarians instead of 10 living in Hungary	Advocates its existence to necessary in order to protect Hungarian minority politically
<b>National-populism by Slovak protagonists</b>	Legitimizes its assimilation politics	Displays it as a threat for the Slovak statehood and sovereignty	Referring to its presence as an empirical evidence of a threat coming from beyond borders

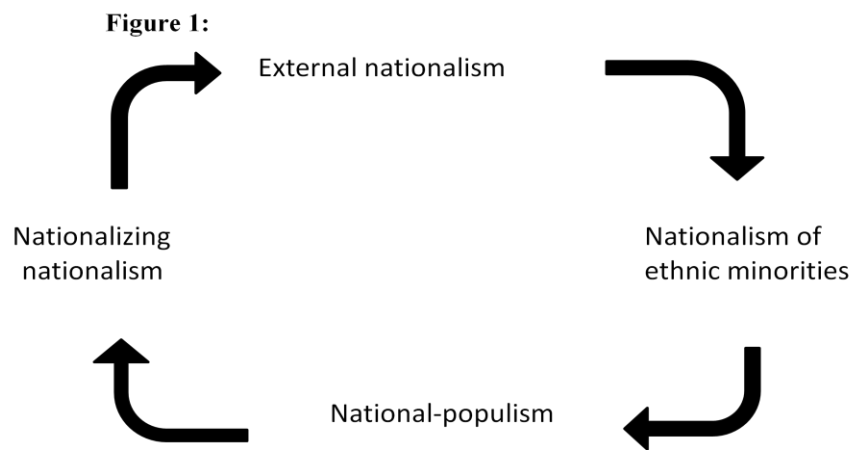
(Given interconnections are about to be read from the viewpoint of the nationalism in the column in its relation towards the appertaining one in the line)

By distinguishing between national-populist and nationalistic policy-making aspects, it can be clearly recognized that the reasons of ethnic tensions and ethnic bias emerge out of national populist statements, because they are the powerful tools which have the evaluative and opinion constructing capacity.

In this sense, national populism is a thought manipulation, which imbeds narrow-minded opinions to individuals by interpreting politics in an ethno-national frame and intensifies it by the use of emotional appeal mechanism. Therefore, it can be stated that ethnic tensions and ethnic bias in Slovak-Hungarian relations are to a great extent persisted by the political phenomenon called national populism due to its interpretative power which has a direct impact over the population opinion-making.

Without having the possibility of mutual commenting on, and referring to each other, the national populism would have an empty meaning. However, since it points out to something that is real (either political stances, or political activities of nationalistic protagonists) it persists. Therefore, it can be also asserted that national populism exists to a great extent in relative terms, i.e. in terms of interdependence between adversary national populist political protagonists.

This implies that the mutual interrelation between respective forms of nationalistic politics enables the persistence of national-populism. They require each other in order to refer to, and react on each other. In other words, they coexist. The Figure 1 proposes a graphical illustration of how their mutual reaction can be conceived.



In this figure, national populism part is meant to refer to narratives by which collective identity is constructed. It also refers to the way historical events are interpreted. For instance, The Treaty of Trianon is encoded into two different and incompatible ethno-national frames, i.e. Slovaks see it as a successful achievement of the emancipation processes, as oppose to Hungarians viewing it as a historical grievance tearing up their national kinship into the territories of several states. The other three nationalisms are supposed to be perceived as the interpretative national-populist aspects of each of them.

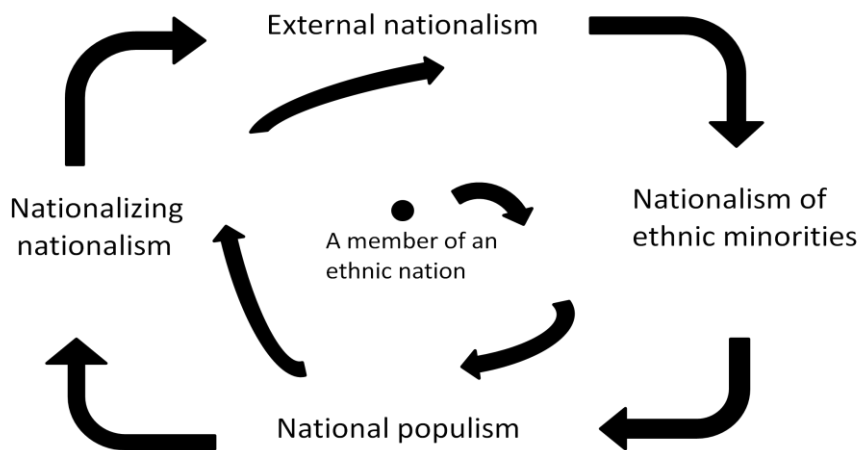
The figure 1 suggests that nationalisms correlate in a certain cycle. Any political measure or any theoretical justification of certain nationalistic attitude invokes a reaction by another form of nationalism. Consequently, a reaction invokes a counter-reaction, and so on. Therefore, it can be implied that such consistent inter-reacting towards each other makes the persistence of respective nationalisms (and their political protagonists) feasible.

For instance, the Dual Citizenship Law proposed by Hungarian government got a positive reaction by SMK. Contrary, it was highly condemned by Slovak national protagonists to be an initial step of Hungary towards its putative aspirations to ultimately annex southern parts of Slovakia. Therefore, the Prime Minister Robert Fico initiated a counter-law, which enabled a loss of Slovak citizenship if the

Hungarian one was requested to be granted. This again invoked a negative reaction in Budapest and the cycle went on.

In the figure 1, it was explained how nationalisms are persisted due to their interrelations. Another figure is now provided to illustrate how an individual is brought up in its political awareness.

**Figure 2:**



The cyclic principle among various nationalisms remains in time, only their political contents change. However, a member of an ethnic nation is set into this process. While a person is in its youths, his awareness about political issues is not profiled yet. By growing up into a political maturity, this person gradually becomes more informed about political scene he is affected within (at least passively as a voter). Without a critical approach towards politics, such person gradually identifies with the attitudes of one of the nationalisms.

Either he is a member of a Hungarian minority, or he is convinced that Hungarian parliament is accountable for 15 million Hungarians, or he finds the position of Slovak statehood needed to be strengthened, or he thinks that Hungarian minority should be nationalized in order to become more loyal to Slovak state. This is the process of how a social aspect becomes to be interconnected with the political one.

It is obvious though, that the second model cannot be generalized to the whole population, because there are many circumstances which affect the process of one's political growth into maturity (for example education). Nevertheless, it serves to provide a mechanism of how political nationalistic statements could be possibly

transferred into the nationalistic feelings occurring on a social level, i.e. ethnic bias and ethnic tensions.

In 2008, the Open Society Foundation and the Research Centre for Ethnicity and Culture published findings of their joint survey examining pupils attending 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades of primary schools (Petöcz, 2009). One of the objectives of this research was to find out how young people perceive members of ethnic minorities. According to the findings, the members of the traditional ethnic minorities (i.e. Hungarians and the Roma) were ranked most negatively; the ethnic Hungarians were ranked at the very bottom as three out of eight respondents (37%) perceived them negatively. Moreover, the findings also showed that a significant share of the respondents believed that ethnic Hungarians should not speak Hungarian in public at all. (Centrum pre výskum etnicity a kultúry, Open Society Foundation, 2008).

It is highly improbable that pupils of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades watch politics regularly. In spite of that, the study has showed that students were repeating in the public opinion poll the same phrases they heard in the media from the political leaders. At this juncture, it is disputable to find out whether national populism of political leaders had a direct impact on these youths, or these phrases were only reproduced to them by their social environment i.e. parents, school, friends, acquaintances etc. It might look like a trivial matter, but in terms of examining the authenticity of ethnic bias, a sample of people who are not affected by politics must be regarded; and if we cannot find out the demarcating line between the age when a child already formulates his political opinions stemming directly by statements of political leaders and the age when a child is still reliant to the opinions of his social environment merely.

Therefore, despite being aware that nationalism is self-perpetuated on its political level, it is improbable to reach a conclusion whether politics are the exclusive reason also for its social persistence, or the ethnic bias between nations is already encoded on a social level and thus would persist even if national populism would totally disappear from the politics.

## **Conclusion**

The paper observed nationalism in the contemporary Slovak-Hungarian issue and examined the reasons of the ethnic tensions and ethnic bias which follow as a consequence of this phenomenon. The purpose of the paper was to find out to what extent are the social aspects of this phenomenon interdependent to the political ones. In other words, the examined question was whether the political protagonists of nationalism and national populism perpetuate this phenomenon by their political activities, or the ethnic tensions and ethnic bias are already encoded into the respective Slovak and Hungarian nations, irrespective of the impact of politics.

For the purpose of this hypothesis, national populism was argued to be used in terms of a component part of any nationalistic policy-making and also in terms of narratives for constructing or strengthening the collective national identity. In both cases, it disposes of an interpretative power of thoughts manipulation, which also involves appealing on the emotions. This distinction was provided to argue that the comments and interpretations which national populism uses secure the persistence of respective forms of nationalism. Thus, the first part of the hypothesis was consequently answered, claiming that nationalism is a phenomenon whose political persistence is perpetuated by the adversary nationalistic political protagonists.

However, the paper could not sufficiently answer the second part of the hypothesis which asked about the authenticity of ethnic tensions and ethnic bias. On one hand, the process of maturing into a political adulthood is often related with one's gradual identification with a nationalistic politics and attitudes he is familiar with; but on the other hand, a research which was used in the paper showed that even the Slovak youths of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades already present themselves by attitudes noticeable for the features of an ethnic bias mostly towards Hungarian minority. Such attitudes are improbable to be received directly from the impact of political protagonists, since there is an assumption that these youths are not capable and keen on watching politics regularly.

## Resumé

Bakalárska práca sa zaoberá problematikou nacionalizmu a nacionálneho populizmu v Slovensko-maďarských vzťahoch, avšak predovšetkým sa zameriava na rôzne formy a dôsledky ich výskytu v rámci slovenskej politickej scény.

V prvej kapitole sú jednotlivo analyzované kľúčové koncepty *národa*, *etnopolitiky* a *emócií*, ktorých vzájomné prepojenie vytvára podstatu skúmaného pojmu nacionalizmu.

Pri kategórii etnického národa rozlišuje medzi dvomi rôznymi chápaniami tohto abstraktného termínu. Na jednej strane poukazuje ako je národ intuitívne chápaný v jeho každodennom použití a na druhej strane tento prístup z vedeckého hľadiska kritizuje a označuje ho za mylný. Bežný, intuitívny prístup totiž prevažne vysvetľuje národ ako primordiálnu, starobylú entitu, ktorá pretrváva v čase a z jej povahy vyplýva, že neúprosne smeruje k štátnej suverenite. Avšak argumenty sociálnych konštruktivistov túto mylnú predstavu vyvracajú, pretože tí tvrdia, že moderné chápanie národa je len myšlienkovým konštruktom, ktorý vznikol a začal sa zaužívať pred nie viac než tristo rokmi. Preto akákoľvek zmienka smerujúca do dávnej minulosti je považovaná za retroaktívnu a z vedeckého hľadiska za neprípustnú. No aj napriek tomu, že bežné chápanie národa odporuje vedeckosti, neodporuje politickosti, a preto pretrváva ako silná rétorická a mobilizačná zbraň v rukách nacionálnych populistov, ktorý svojimi výrokmi živia povedomie národa ako primordiálnej entity.

V spojitosti s takto chápaným pojmom národa tak vzniká akýsi legitimačný patent pre politiku sledujúcu etnicko-národnostné záujmy, pretože takáto politika sľubuje ochranu a zachovanie etnického národa. Avšak pre komplexné vystihnutie podstaty etnického nacionalizmu a nacionálneho populizmu sa v práci popisuje aj rola emócií.

Emócie sú využívané predovšetkým pre ich mobilizačné kapacity. Apel na emócie je politicky účinnejší než snaha o racionálnu argumentáciu, ktorá je zdĺhavá a málokedy pochopená. Princíp emocionálneho prístupu spočíva v tom, že jednotlivcovi je zdôrazňovaná jeho príslušnosť k etnickému národu, ktorá je vykreslená ako neoddeliteľná súčasť jeho identity, a preto je v ňom vzbudzovaný pocit záväzkov voči takémuto kolektívnemu telesu. Ak sa však národ ocitá v údajnej hrozbe, emócie



u jednotlivca sa aktivujú a jeho následné konanie zväčša smeruje k nárastu politického kapitálu u strán, ktoré túto údajnú hrozbu „spozorovali“ a poskytujú voči nim istú „ochranu“.

Mylná interpretácia národa v spojitosti s politikou využívajúcou apelovanie na emócie za účelom etnickej mobilizácie tak tvoria základný teoretický rámec pre vystihnutie podstaty nacionalizmu, ktorý je charakteristický pre Slovensko-maďarské vzťahy.

Potreba vyjasniť takýto rámec je v práci vysvetlená tým, že v oblasti skúmania nacionalizmu sú vo všeobecnosti poskytované aj iné vedecké interpretácie jeho významu. V práci sa konkrétne uvádza Ernest Gellner a jeho vysvetlenie, kde nacionalizmus znamená snaha národa vytvoriť štátny celok (tzv. state-seeking activity).

Preto je nacionalizmus v Slovensko-maďarskom kontexte prezentovaný ako sociálno-politický fenomén, a nie ako nejaká teória alebo ideológia. Z tohto predpokladu je preto v práci formulovaná aj nasledovná hypotéza:

*Ak je fenomén nacionalizmu vedome či nevedome udržiavaný politickými lídrami pre ich vzájomné politické prežitie, sociálne napätie medzi občanmi slovenského a maďarského národa je skôr reakciou než autentickým podnetom jednotlivcov.*

Takáto formulácia v sebe implicitne zahŕňa, že pre skúmanie daného javu sa vyžaduje analytický prístup. Na túto analýzu je v práci použitý model Rogera Brubakera, ktorý rozdelil nacionalizmus na štyri rôzne formy jeho výskytu: „nacionalizujúci“ nacionalizmus, nacionalizmus externých domovských krajín, nacionalizmus etnických menšín a defenzívny, protekčný nacionálno-populistický nacionalizmus.

Tieto štyri formy nacionalizmus sú následne v praktickej časti znázornené na konkrétnych príkladoch, ktoré vykresľujú podstatu skúmaného fenoménu.

V ďalšej časti práce sa dokazuje platnosť hypotézy. To si v prvom rade vyžaduje poukázať na vzájomné prepojenie medzi jednotlivými vysvetlenými formami nacionalizmu. Na tento účel je poskytnutá tabuľka, ktorá udáva postoje jednotlivých nacionalizmov voči ich nacionalistickým oponentom, (resp. partnerom), a taktiež vysvetľuje, že vzájomnými reakciami a vzájomným prepojením medzi nacionalizmami ako takými získava každý z nich svoju vlastnú politickú prestíž.

Avšak na to, aby bolo možné zistiť druhú časť hypotézy, ktorá sa pýta, či je sociálne napätie medzi jednotlivými národmi len akousi reakciou na nacionalistickú politiku alebo skôr autentickým podnetom, bolo potrebné skúmať do akej miery politika a názory politických lídrov korešpondujú a formujú svetonázor jednotlivca. Toto prepojenie je taktiež graficky znázornené, pričom sa tu vykresľuje cyklus vzájomného pôsobenia nacionalizmov a ako sa do tohto nacionalisticky fungujúceho cyklu postupne začleňuje jedinec v procese jeho politického dospievania.

Avšak, do protikladu k takémuto cyklu je následne uvedený výskum Nadácie otvorenej spoločnosti, ktorého výsledky poukázali na to, že už aj u žiakov ôsmych a deviatych ročníkov (skupina respondentov, u ktorých je vysoká pravdepodobnosť politickej nezrelosti) je pestovaná istá etnická predpojatosť najmä voči ich maďarským spoluobčanom.

Práca dospela k záveru, že fenomén nacionalizmu v súčasných slovensko-maďarských vzťahoch pretrváva najmä preto, že rozliční nacionalisticky orientovaní politickí lídri stavajú svoju rétoriku na vzájomných reakciách voči ich rovnako politicky založeným protivníkom, čo im zaručuje vzájomné politické prežitie. Avšak v otázke či je nacionalizmus živený výlučne politickými podnetmi alebo je od politického vplyvu nezávislý práca nedokázala poskytnúť jasnú odpoveď.

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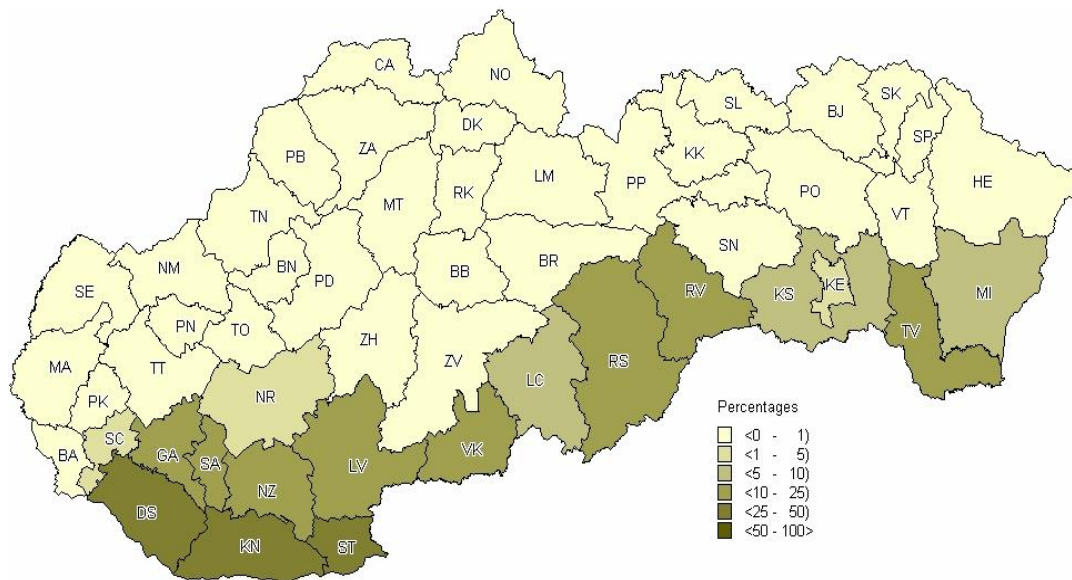
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## Attachments

### Appendix 1: Share of valid votes by territorial districts

#### SMK-MKP



#### MOST-HÍD

