

Trajectories of identity formation in the post-enlargement era

The Hungarian example¹

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Introduction

Thinking of 1 May 2004, I still remember I felt that Hungary after decades of historical injustice of communism and knocking at the door of the European Union for membership for almost 15 years, finally got back on the main track of European history, like a derailed train is put back on the rails again. The six years which have passed since then, could be characterised as a learning process. The Central and Eastern European nation-states had to find their places at the table of common Europe, and also become capable of providing an adequate imagination of the nation for its citizens internally, which latter was and is particularly challenging because of still being in the unfinished period of post-communism.

The economic, political and legal effects of enlargement were analysed extensively, but less were written about the changes it caused in peoples' minds, and how it influenced their collective identity formation. This paper aims to explore the main dynamics of collective identity formation in Central and Eastern Europe, and inquiring into the nature of both national and European identities with a special focus on the Hungarian example.

In the theoretical part, the multiple models of identities are introduced for describing the diverse and plural nature of collective identities of the region. The underlying theoretical assumption of the paper is that identity formation is both a construction and an 'ongoing socialization process' by which actors continuously internalize the values and norms of the community and acquire new loyalties (Risse, 2004: 3). Additionally the civic-ethnic interpretations of identities and the East-West typologies of nationalism are explained in order to acquire a suitable approach for better understanding identity formation in the region.

This paper argues that there are unique characteristics of collective identities in Central and Eastern Europe, because of the following reasons: Firstly, parallel to gradually learning the

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role of membership of the Union, countries like Hungary are still in the 'extended transitional period' of post-communism, which seems to result in increasing number of anomalies in the social environment of democracy. Secondly, the self-understanding of EU itself has undergone a radical change. The passed six years could be indeed labelled as the identity crisis of the EU itself. Further, flexible integration is intensively reshaping the EU, which is becoming a multiple polity with various circles of members participating in different policy areas that result in a constant redefinition of inner and outer boundaries of the community. Finally, it is demonstrated in the paper that the ruling national elites have a key role in providing an adequate 'imagination of nation' (Anderson, 1983:6), in which role they often malfunction. This argument is supported by Hungarian examples of the recent past.

Theories and typologies

The issues of collective identities are in the focus of scientific investigation. Political scientists, historians, sociologists and socio-psychologists as well as theorists of nations and nationalism discourse aim to understand how collective identities like national, supranational or regional identities glue together contemporary political communities or also tear them apart in certain cases. Understanding the nature of collective identity formation can lead us to understand why some communities are more tolerant than others, why some actions of the political elites are supported and others not, why some EU developments are rejected in member states etc. Because of its strong legitimising factor, understanding the collective identities and their interaction in contemporary Europe is indispensable.

From the 19th century up until recent years, national identity had a peculiar and superior place among the collective attachments of individuals. European politics, philosophy, art and the 'way of life' all reflect the national pasts. But as European integration was born in Western-Europe in the 1950s, the possibility of another kind of identification was also established, namely the supranational identity of the citizens of the European Community. Although the Central and Eastern European countries could have only recently become involved in the project of common Europe, sharing this European identity can be traced back to earlier times.¹ Prominent writers and thinkers like Kundera, Szűcs, Hanák were all emphasizing their strong European attachments already in the 1980s (Kundera 1984, Szűcs 1983, Hanák 1986).

By definition, identity means the self-understanding of the individual, encompassing both self and collective elements. Local, regional, national and European identities all constitute different kinds of collective attachments that represent one's membership in a community.

Identity is not a static category; it is a dynamically changing element of our existence, which continuously gains new interpretations in our life-time. One of the often referred definition for national identity was given by Smith who emphasized the subjective nature of national identity and also listed the fundamental features of it as follows: ‘an historic territory or homeland; common myths and historical memories; a common mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members; a common economy with territorial mobility for members’ (Smith, 1991:14). Other important feature of national identity is its distinguishing character in relation to other individuals and groups. In order to define who we are we have to define who we are not. While we are forming our identities we continuously differentiate the category of ‘us’ from ‘them.’ (Koller, 2006; Pataki, 1986; Moore and Kimmerling, 1995).

National identities can be built around two poles: around the cultural and ethnic community or around the state. The first means that national identity is defined by decent and cultural elements as common myths, symbols, language and customs, the second signifies that belonging to the political community is defined by a certain territory with established political institutions and legal system and manifested in citizens’ rights and duties. In current nations, both have their relevance, and we do not find any European nation, to date, where only one pole dominates. However, as Friedrich Meinecke, Hans Kohn and Anthony D. Smith pointed out, the two kinds of identification were not born at the same time in all European nations (Meinecke, 1969; Kohn, 1955; Smith, 1986). There were two different nation-building models in Europe: the territorial and the ethnic/cultural. In the territorial model, the membership in the community is linked to a certain territory; the rights and duties are determined by the legal and institutional system. All citizens living in the territory are members in the community. France between 1789 and 1794 can be named as an example for this model. However, as Napoleon’s conquests began, the French nation-state started to redefine itself. The territorial state’s identity formation methods were extended by cultural and linguistic tools (Brubaker, 1992).² In Central and Eastern Europe, however, the birth of a universal citizenship concept was preceded by the birth of a national identity which was defined by ethnic, cultural and linguistic boundaries of the community and not tied to a certain territory. The political concept of the nation was born at a later stage in these nations.

Other side of the same coin is famous typology of Western and Eastern kinds of nationalism, which was born in the interwar period. Historians like Hans Kohn, Carleton Hayes, Alfred Cobban, in trying to find historical evidence for the causes of the World War I, made a clear distinction between nationalism of ‘the modern West’ and nationalism of ‘less advanced, inferior’ Central and Eastern Europe (Hayes 1926, Cobban 1944, Kohn 1955). ‘While English

and American nationalism was, in its origin, connected with the concepts of individual liberty and represented nations firmly constituted in their political life, the new nationalism, not rooted in a similar political and social reality, lacked self-assurance. Its inferiority complex was often compensated by over-emphasis.’ (Kohn 1955: 30) While this typology was often criticised by later theorists of nations and nationalism discourse claiming that they are reductionist, the differentiation between the Western and Eastern characteristics of nationalism remained an important explanatory factor in later scientific discourse too. (Smith 1986, Brubaker 1992) In this paper, both the civic and the cultural / ethnic components of collective identity are going to be portrayed in explaining national and European identities of this region, by also being aware that there are significant differences between the nation building models in Europe with respect to timing and method.

The other important theoretical question concerns the relationship of the various collective attachments. The multiple models of identity structure will be used in this respect. The collective identities of individuals can only be imagined as a multi-level structure. For individuals, the immediate vicinity, the town or village where they live, the region, the county, the nation, the European Union and even the global sphere all signify one of their geographical attachments. Nevertheless, for a long time the prevalent opinion was held that there is a certain hierarchy between these collective allegiances and national identity has a peculiar and superior place among these attachments. (Pataki, 1986) The complex social, political and economic processes and the mass migration in the second half of the 20th century caused theorists to use multiple models to describe and interpret individuals’ collective identities. Although the majority of theorists accept the concept of multiple identities, they differ in understanding its content. As Salazar claims, for example, aside from the most important national identity there are other ‘nation-related identities’ such as regionalism, stateless nationalism and supra-nationalism which constitute concentric circles of identities or, as he calls it after the Russian wooden doll, the ‘matryoshka of identities’(Salazar, 1998). For him, there is a hierarchy between allegiances, and the national identity is at the top of other identifications. Smith, talking about collective identities, emphasises that these are ‘pervasive and persistent’ and can be ‘situational’, but not completely ‘optional’. Therefore, ‘national identification possesses distinct advantages over the idea of a unified European identity’ (Smith, 1997:322-325). The Hungarian writer, Konrád argues that currently individuals can freely choose among their attachments. He sees an analogy between the multi-layers of identities and a ‘many-storey house’ and argues that the individual’s mind can as easily shift from one identity to another as we can visit different floors in a building (Konrád, 1997).

The self-understanding of Europeans can be also described by the post-national identity structure's identity-net model (Koller, 2006). This model not only indicates the multiple loyalties of individuals in contemporary Europe but also refers to functionalist, and neofunctionalist theories which argue that in line with the establishment new of supranational institutions and policy areas and due to the spill-over effect of integration, the European citizens' loyalties were transferred to new centres and their collective attachments became more differentiated (Haas, 1958).

Today, the individuals' complex structure of identities can be visualised in the identity net model (Koller 2006:48). The identity-net indicates the dynamic co-existence of individuals' collective attachments and also includes the time dimension. Individuals regularly decide which aspect or junction of their identity-net they activate in their every-day lives. It can be imagined as a net made from Christmas tree lights. The lights at the junction points of the net light up alternatively. It may be that they shed more or less intense light in different time periods. It may also be that either many of them or only a few are sparkling. Applying that analogy, individuals are also capable of changing their collective attachments regularly as well as their respective ranking and intensity. In this model the boundaries and the membership in the community, the process of identity formation, the process of 'inclusion' and the categories of the 'otherness' have different interpretations.

From the various forms of identities this study focuses on the national and European identities as two main categories of collective identification. Others could have also been legitimately involved, but because of the size limits of the paper I decided to on these two.

Finally, it should be asked how collective identities are formed. Here, the much quoted ethno-symbolist and constructivist debate of nations and nationalism discourse as well as the theories on the social identity formation should be referred. Ethno-symbolists argue that a common ethnic past, myths, and symbols rooted in a shared history are necessary for successful nation-building, and through the popular memory these elements form the identities of individuals. Therefore, without a common ethnic past, identity formation cannot be successful (Smith, 1986 and Armstrong, 1982). For constructivists, as opposed to ethnosymbolists, national identity is 'an intellectual artefact'. Symbols and traditions are young creations. In the 19th century, due to the pursuits of the nation-building elites 'entirely new symbols and devices came into existence: national anthem, national flag, personification of the nation', etc. (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). There are many structures in politics and society that were first constructed by the leading elites and later became accepted and admired by the majority of the population.³ Moreover, with the tools of mass-media and communication, construction

of identities has become easier and faster. It is enough to think about the diversity of communities in which we can obtain ‘imagined’ memberships (Anderson, 1991:6). As Anderson rightly argued, the national intelligentsia had a key role in this process. In the 19th century, the producers of the print market, ‘the lexicographers, philologists, grammarians, folklorists, publicists and composers’ glittered ancient histories and depicted ‘golden ages’ of history which became available for ‘the consuming public’ and thus the nation became an imagined community (Anderson, 1991: 71-75). Today, reporters, editors and internet bloggers are in a similar role.

Nevertheless, the establishment of collective identities in contemporary Europe should be looked at as not only a construct but also an outcome of a socialisation process. Therefore I agree with Smith who claims that construction could be effective in some cases and not in others. Thus, collective identity formation today should be interpreted from two angles. On the one hand it is a top-down process. National and European elites in sake of establishing a legitimised community (national or European), try to construct the symbolic and structural elements of common identification. On the other hand, it is not a mere construction, new identities are continuously formed as individuals adapt the values and norms of the communities in which they live and acquire new attachments.

From adaptation to emancipation

Our set of identities in Central and Eastern Europe in post-enlargement era could only be understood in retrospect and evoking the story of enlargement. It took 15 years to accomplish Eastern enlargement, which proved to be a hard process with many uncertainties. At the time of the fall of the communist regime, the EU did not have a clear strategy about how and when it should carry out Eastern enlargement. (Arató-Koller, 2009: 2006) Apart from expressing moral responsibility, and highlighting common historical and cultural roots, it was obvious that at the beginning of the 1990s, when the EU itself was struggling with economic recession, currency crisis and tried to define its outer voice in foreign policy, it was not the EU’s fundamental interest to provide green light to enlargement.⁴ Enlargement became a declared priority only at some moments in the 1990s (like Essen Summit of European Council in 1994 where the member states decided on the pre-accession strategy of the Central and Eastern European countries or the Luxemburg Summit in 1997 where they decided on the 5+1 states’ accession), but the vision of the future Union and the complex challenges of Eastern enlargement were not fully reconciled during the 15 years time.

Among the various shortcomings of the Eastern enlargement process, conditionality was widely criticized in the literature (See Grabbe, 2006, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005, Arató 2009 etc.). Although conditionality clearly pushed candidate countries towards democratic and market economy transition and resulted in the better alignment of CEE countries with the EU *acquis*, there were many uncertainties around it. ‘Many conditions were ambiguous, inconsistently applied and more demanding of candidates than full members.’ (Sedelmeier, 2008:806) At the Copenhagen Summit of the European Council in 1993, the conditions of accession, i.e. the so called Copenhagen criteria were declared as stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities (1); existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union (2); and acceptance of the Community *acquis*: ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union (3). While accomplishing the first two was the candidate countries’ responsibility, the third criteria proved to be a ‘moving target’, because it depended upon the further development of the Union, which was vaguely sketched therefore they were interpreted arbitrarily by the various institutions of the EU. (Grabbe, 2006:32, Arató 2009) At the time of longing for full membership, and being occupied with the hard tasks of transition, the Central and Eastern European countries did not complain about it so much, however, it was obvious that after gaining full membership the ruling elites and political parties of the new members will try to have a rather emancipatory voice at the table of European Union and will not be satisfied with the role of adopting agendas that are created by the old member states.⁵

The ‘myth of differentiation’ also resulted in not wished consequences. According to differentiation, on the basis of continuous evaluation of the candidate countries’ performances by the Commission, only the best prepared countries will be involved in the first wave of enlargement. This myth, which was maintained almost until the turn of the millennium, and withdrawn by deciding on ‘Big Bang enlargement’ in 1999, had negative consequences on the relationship of the Central and Eastern European countries. It contributed significantly to see ‘rivals’ in the others in the competition for gaining full membership in the EU. This was peculiarly unfortunate because the countries of Central and Eastern Europe could have developed a stronger and more successful cooperation within their own region. There were initiatives of sub regional integration like the Central and Eastern European Initiative or Visegrád Group, but they proved to be rather weak and less successful (Arató-Koller 2006: 209).

In 2004, the Central and Eastern European countries became part of the wished community. All enlargement waves constitute a challenge to identity formation in both the old and new member states of the EU. The former 'outsiders' of the EU suddenly became 'insiders' that require a redefinition of the former attachments. Depending on the political and economic similarities of the old members and newcomers, this process could be more or less lengthy and challenging.

In case of the Central and Eastern European countries that left behind communism in 1989, with GDP per capita much behind the EU average (app. 40% of it) and were in the process of transforming their political, legal and institutional systems, it was likely that differentiating these countries as belonging to 'they' and not 'us' would be felt much longer after accession. Mental boundaries and stereotypes could not vanish from one day to the other. Derogations and transitional periods e.g. delaying the opening of the labour markets of the old members contributed to maintain the categorisation of 'otherness' within the boundaries of the EU.⁶

Additionally, the first six years of the Central and Eastern European countries' membership in the Union could be interpreted as six years of identity crisis of the EU itself. It seems that the vision of common Europe created by the founding fathers is fading away, as new fragmentation lines appear in the integration process. The French no for the Constitutional Treaty, the failure of the Lisbon Strategy and the Irish no for the Lisbon Treaty were all signs of lack of support of the common Europe project. The most serious global financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression also spread over Europe within this period of time starting in the year 2008 and still having serious negative effects on Europe' economies. While EU member states tried to find answers – mostly national ones – to overcome the crisis, the validity of the Western, liberal capitalist economic model – which proved to be one of the underlying ideologies of establishing the common market in Europe – was globally questioned. The European Union therefore had to look into the mirror and try to provide a credible self-definition as well as a vision for the 'finalité politique' too. The EU managed to overcome the ratification misery around the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009, and helped out all the countries (Ireland, Greece, Portugal) that were most seriously affected by the crisis, come up with a new development strategy of the EU: the Europe 2020 and put the establishment of a more effective economic governance at the top of its agenda, which also led to modifications of the newly ratified Lisbon Treaty, but the question of the future of the Union remained in focus.

Without going into further details of integration history, another major development in European integration can have a direct effect on the identity of EU citizens, namely the concept of flexibility. The multi-speed, variable geometry or a la Carte Europe⁷ approaches became widely accepted in policy making and various sub-groups emerged within the EU as answers to the 'oversized EU challenge' (Stubb, 1997:287-288). Forming a new club and delineating its boundaries also means including the joining members and excluding those who do not participate in a cooperation, therefore flexibility is also about defining 'ins' and 'outs' in relation to the club. For example, Hungary is a club member of the EU and the Schengen regime but not yet included in the Euro-zone. Similarly, Norway is not an EU member-state, but because of its membership in the European Economic Area enjoys most of the advantages of the single market.

In line with the spread of flexible integration, the mirror of self-understanding of the Union becomes vague and uncertain. It is not so obvious to define who belongs to 'us' and 'they' any more. Being a member of the EU27, the euro-zone, the Schengen Zone or part of the European Economic Area or cooperating with the EU in frames of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement all represent a different type of 'club membership' and all in a way exclusionary in nature. Apparently, the value of these club memberships differs to a large extent. Thus, flexible integration can also be interpreted as forming new fragmentation lines within the Union and establishing new boundaries inside and outside the EU.

The establishment of the so called functional macro-regions, like the Baltic or Mediterranean cooperation or the just to be established Danube Region could mentioned as examples of this new trend.⁸ The macro-region aims to find the lost consent of people to the whole European project at various levels of their activity, including the national level, the regional level, the local level and even the level of the individuals. It also aims to foster the better use of existing financial resources, institutions and legal framework in order to enhance the level of cooperation between the stakeholders of the region without establishing new institutions, financial and legal structures. It is, therefore rather a catalyst to get things moving in the society, economy and environment than a new establishment. On the one hand, by fostering bottom-up processes they can contribute to the strengthening of the common Europe. On the other, they are regional sub-groups in the European integration that could work against the unity of the EU and create new fragmentation lines on the map of the continent. In Central and Eastern Europe, whose history is marked with the experience of the living together of various nationalities in multi-national entities (e.g. the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) or where the establishment of Danube Confederation or United States of Danube Nations is a recurrent

idea⁹, establishing a macro-regional identity like the Danube identity within the EU itself could be a way to strengthen our belonging to a smaller community than that of the EU.

If the trend of flexible integration continues, than the unitary vision of European identity will also be transformed and become more differentiated.

There has been a significant change in rhetoric of Central and Eastern European states with respect to European integration. After joining the Community, the Central and Eastern European states elevated the accession related constraints, and tried to express their national interest more intensively. The shift from adaptation to emancipation phase, i.e. that the nation-states more often question the previously unquestioned issues within the EU has obvious signs. Examples of the recent past can be mentioned for supporting this argument. The Czech president, Václav Klaus's Euroskepticism came to the fore, when he tried to prolong the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and emphasized the priorities of the Czech national interest over the EU membership. Or we can mention the example of Kaczynski brothers who became symbols of fighting for Polish national interests and protecting their homeland against Brussels. Or the Hungarian prime minister's, Orbán's example can be mentioned who by introducing the official program of the Hungarian Presidency in January 2011 in the European Parliament, was steadily emphasizing that he is firmly resolved to defend the 'Hungarian national interest' at all time. This could be continued with other examples; I just named a few in order to demonstrate the shift in the rhetoric.

National and European identities in Hungary

The aftermath of the fall of communism, did not bring the disappearance of national question in CEE countries, as it was expected by some theorists (See Gellner 1983, Hobsbawn 1992), but re-nationalization came to the fore. As Brubaker claims 'nationalism remains central to newly created nation-states, just as it remained central to politics in and among the newly created nation-states that issued from the post World War I settlement' (Brubaker 1996: 4). In Hungary, the national questions also came to the fore, as Örkény rightly emphasizes: 'The positive changes (of the transition) were accompanied by negative effects, when successfully achieved liberation and independence gave impetus to fetishization of the nation state...Hungary like other nations of Eastern Europe, had to catch up with the late nineteenth century Western Europe' (Örkény 2005:29) The issues of national identity were raised as the national elites started to rebuild their nation-states after the fall of communism. The context of national awakening, however, was different in each post-communist state. It

showed significant variations if it happened in newly formed entities (in the Czech and Slovak case), in a state with sizable minorities within its borders (Romania) or in a relatively homogenous state that have large minorities in the neighboring countries (Hungary). Moreover, it depended upon whether the establishment of the new nation-state happened as an outcome of peaceful negotiation - as in the case of the establishing the Czech and Slovak nation-states - or a bloody war as it was in the case of former Yugoslavia. Brubaker's triadic model which differentiates nation-building nationalism (1), mother-country nationalism (2) and minority nationalism (3) could be perfectly applied for sketching the different variations (Brubaker. 1996).

Interpreting national identity is a complex task in case of Hungary. This country, indeed, can be put into the middle of Brubaker's triangle. After the establishment of the political nation in 1989 the political elites started to use tools of 'nation-building nationalism' to re-establish the structural elements as well as the myths and symbols of the Hungarian national identity. Additionally, Hungary is a 'mother country' of sizable minority nationals in neighboring countries. Therefore, depending on the aspirations of ruling political elites (left or right government), ethnonationalism appear as a strong factor of identity politics form time to time. Moreover, Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary also contribute to the discourse of national identity with their 'minority nationalism'.

Nationalism is a significant psychological and political phenomenon in contemporary Hungary. The nationalist sentiments 'show a strong correlation with both the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* types of national categorization, as well as with ethnocentrism.' (Örkény 2005:37) Thus the civic, the cultural and the ethnic components of Hungarian national identity all have their relevance in interpreting the nature of this collective identity.

The most important peculiarity of Hungarian national identity derives from the language. The Hungarian language belongs to the Finno-Ungoric language family and has only a distant relationship with the Finns in Europe, which apart from some common words and a slight similarity in sounding could be hardly detected in everyday communication. Thus, the definition of 'otherness' on the basis of linguistic characteristics, always leads to a conclusion that Hungarians are different from all other nations of this region and Europe too and should be considered a unique nation in the Carpathian base. Both the Slavic and the Indo-European languages are representing 'otherness' for the Hungarians. The linguistic uniqueness of Hungarians in the middle of Europe is extended to cultural spheres too and contributes to engrave the image of 'island Hungary' into the minds of the Hungarians.

The small, linguistically and culturally peculiar nation which is proud of its thousand year old Christian past, with the era of communism 'lost its distinct personality and was consigned to the anonymous, drab realm behind the Iron Curtain, a sort of mysterious 'wasteland' beyond the reach of civilisation' (Kosztolányi, 2000). After the fall of communism, reinterpreting and re-defining the main components of national identity became essential. The consolidation of the Hungarian identity after 1989 proved to be a hard task because as in other the post-communist countries, Hungary became immediately affected by both globalization and European integration that provided an even more challenging context to nation-building.

Leaving behind the communist past could not happen from one day to another, and some thinkers – including myself – argue that Central and Eastern Europe still has not reached the end of this process, despite the fact that these countries became full members of the European Union. This region is still in the 'extended transitional period' of post communism. Dahrendorf's much quoted statement also supports this argument by emphasizing that 'it takes six month to change a political regime, six years to change the economy and at least 60 years to change the society' (Dahrendorf, 1990) i.e. habits, values, identity.

The not yet ended era of post-communism shows significant anomalies that do not make possible to develop the strong civic components of Hungarian identity. Lack of citizen identification with the public goods and affairs, lack of individual autonomy or civic responsibility, lack of historical consensus serve as serious obstacles of developing the civic components of national identity. For this reason, it can be claimed that there are certain deficiencies around the existence of the civic pole of Hungarian national identity.

Since the fall of communism, there has not been a consensus on the concept of the Hungarian nation. The (first and) last try to create a public consensus on the main components of Hungarian national identity and provide a suitable image for the Hungarian nation came from the first government after the change of the regime: the conservative Antall-government. 'Antall was a sincere democrat and would never have allowed his regime to be controlled by extremist...but the 'nationalist right was far from being under his authority' either (Frucht, 2005: 371).

Since then, the conceptualization of the nation appeared and disappeared on the agenda of politics in accordance with the ideological stand of the governments. As the political pendulum swung from left-to-right and back, the concept of the nation was re-, and other defined by the new governments: As it was redefined by the center-right wing, first Orbán government that entered into power in 1998 after the socialist Horn government, or as it is under serious redefinition now since April 2010, when the second Orbán government won the

elections. In general, when the socialist were governing Hungary, the concept of the nation was left rather untouched in the public discourse with emphasizing the country's 'non-national character', like it was under the era of Medgyessy from 2002 to 2004, the two Gyurcsány governments from 2004 to 2006 and 2006 to 2009 or its follower Bajnai, who entered into power in 2009 after the successful motion of non-confidence against the Gyurcsány government.

As result of this, the Hungarian national identity is overpoliticized and fragmented by political discourses of the various ideologies. There is not a minimum content of the Hungarian national identity which could be accepted by the competing ideologies, except the heroes and golden ages of the distant, medieval past plus 1848 and 1956. The occurrences of the late 19th and 20th century history were not processed and interpreted adequately (role of Hungary in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the World War I and II, the interwar period, the Trianon Peace, and also the communist era etc), although these are connected to the historical memories of oppression, deportation, occupation, genocide, captivity and war. The perceived victims and those who considered being responsible for these past occurrences creates ineffaceable boundaries within groups of the society, between 'they' and 'us'.

The political elites' contribution to the discourse on national identity determines significantly citizens' national attachments. Apparently, many of recent trajectories of Hungarian national identity formation show the signs of construction that supports the constructivist theories. Nonetheless, whether the government is reluctant to participate or actively involved in the discourse on the concept of the nation depends on its ideological stand.

In the post-enlargement era governing Gyurcsány and its follower, Bajnai's central-left governments were not willing to open up the public debate about the concept of the nation and were not keen to talk about historical memories either. They actually tried to avoid the national discourse which was declared by them as something connected to the right wing. This had the consequence that the right-wing and the extreme right wing¹⁰ started to revive the debate about the 're-establishment of the Hungarian nation'. All this happened in an ideological wrapping; and resulted in deep fragmentations in the society.

Coming to power with a two-third majority, prime minister, Orbán is a key figure of national awakening which is apparent in the construction of both structural and symbolic elements of the Hungarian national identity.

Shortly after his entering to power, in May 2010 the Hungarian Parliament accepted a new citizenship law that provides the possibility for ethnic Hungarians to claim Hungarian citizenship not living in the territory of Hungary just being able to prove their Hungarian

ancestry and a good command of Hungarian. Although the dual citizenship is an accepted practice in many European states, the neighboring Slovakia with significant Hungarian minority interpreted the new law as a threat to its national existence and accepted a counter law that declares the loss of Slovak identity in case of acquiring Hungarian citizenship. The change of the citizenship law is a clear example of mother country nationalism, and a turn towards ethnonationalism, by declaring that belonging to the Hungarian nation is defined by ancestry and language and not by territory.

The second, highly symbolic event happened in May 2010, when the Hungarian Parliament declared that 4 June - the date when the Trianon Treaty was signed in 1920 - is going to be celebrated as the 'Day of National Unity' in Hungary in the future. As it was in the 19th century, the leading elites of Hungary started to construct new symbols, 'invent new national practices' (Hobsbawm, 1983) for the sake of strengthening national identity.

Another striking trend in contemporary Hungary is the process of naming and labeling everything as 'national'. The Orbán government's program is named as the *Programme of National Cooperation* that aims to establish a new political, economic and social system in Hungary. Some of the ministries were renamed in order that their names include the word 'national'. Now, there is a Ministry for National Economy, a Ministry of National Resources and a Ministry of National Development in Hungary. The process of labeling institutions of the public sector as 'national entities' continued at lower levels of public administration too. Now there is a National Tax and Customs Authority and a National Media and Infocommunications Authority, just to name some examples. While in previous names the 'Hungarian' adjective was dominant, currently it is often changed for 'national' in the official names of the institutions.

The most evident symbolic example of constructing the new Hungarian identity is the 'Declaration on National Cooperation' regarding both its content and obligatory nature. The Hungarian government ordered all the ministries and public institutions to hang out this declaration in their buildings and also put it on their websites as a reference for Hungarians for determining their national identity, which practice was widely debated by opposing political parties, NGOs and civil society institutions.

The document's main aim is to recall historical memory, what was and is a common recipe of national awakers of the 19th century and today. According to the text, after forty-six years of dictatorship lasting from 1944 to 1990 and twenty years of transition from 1990 to 2010, Hungary can now act according to the principle of national self-determination. The document mentions 1956 as a glorious moment in national history that was unfortunately suppressed.

Interestingly no other such glorious moments of the Hungarian history appear in the text, not even the overthrowing of the communist regime in 1989. Indeed, the endeavors of the post-communist transition labeled as unsuccessful struggles that ‘led to vulnerability instead of freedom, indebtedness instead of autonomy, poverty instead of prosperity, and a deep spiritual, political and economic crisis instead of hope, optimism and fraternity’. Nevertheless, the April 2010 electoral victory of center-right wing FIDESZ (officially named as Alliance of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civic Party) is interpreted as a ‘revolution’ – creating a myth around it – a historical moment which marks a new era: the era of national cooperation built on a new social contract that aims to establish a new political, economic and social system. With regard to the concept of Hungarian nation, the document includes references to both civic/territorial and ethnic definition of the nation. On the one hand it refers to ‘everybody who lives, works or has an undertaking in Hungary’ on the other hand it refers to ethnic Hungarians by saying ‘every Hungarian wherever they live in the world and whatever their age, sex, religion and political views’. (See the Document in Annex)

The above mentioned pursuits of government to construct new symbols and myths of the Hungarian nation, however did not lead to public consensus at any level. Although the right wing celebrates the initiatives of the new government, the left wing and liberal parts of the society strongly oppose the process. Thus, the latest developments of identity politics and the shift in rhetoric rather contribute to engrave deep division lines in the society than establish a common platform for the majority of Hungarians which they can refer to in forming their national identities.

National holidays, symbols, myths divide contemporary Hungarian society, and the unprocessed elements of historical memory are prevalent in public discourses. For example the Hungarian cockade which symbolizes the 1848 Hungarian Revolution and was worn nationwide on the national holiday 15 March before, became marking the right wing attachment. In a consequence, though most of the Hungarians identify with 1848, the liberals and the socialist are not willing to wear the cockade any more.

In this context, the national interest and the concept of the nation is often misinterpreted and the public discourse on national identity remains highly politicized and full of ideological contents. Nevertheless, there is a major difference, compared to earlier years of post-communism: the current government enjoys the support of 2/3 majority of the Hungarian Parliament. Consequently, it can be expected that the ‘construction and invention of new national practices’ and symbols are going to be more effective than before.

In line with that, a new rhetoric was born with regard to Hungary's outer voice in relation to both the EU and other foreign policy orientations, which refers back to Hungary's more emancipated role. Rejecting the IMF's assistance in the summer of 2010 is a recent example of that. Where does this process of constructing the Hungarian nationhood and the establishment of a whole set of new symbols and myths lead can not be predicted. Nevertheless, it has obvious risks both in connection with further fragmenting the Hungarian public and also with the outer judgment of the country.

Since 2004, Hungary is part of a bigger political community, the European Union which may also represent a new element among the collective attachments of the individuals. To what extent, Hungarians incorporated the 'European dimension' into their multiple identities and how this newly formed identity relates to their other attachments – like the national identity - should be examined. The results of the Eurobarometer surveys are going to be applied for that. Eurobarometer surveys regularly ask the individuals how they feel about their citizenship in the EU.¹¹ In the Fall of 2004, 47% of Europeans felt themselves as nationals and Europeans at the same time, 41% national only, 7% European and national and 3% European only, which means that those who felt themselves to some extent attached to Europe were in majority in the European Union.¹² The Hungarian example indicates different results. In 2004, in the year of accession, it was Hungary where the feeling of belonging solely to the nation was the highest among the 25 member states of the EU. 64% of the Hungarians responded that they only feel their national citizenship, while it was only 41% in the EU25 and 55% in the United Kingdom.¹³

Interestingly, in the same survey, when Hungarians were asked about their national and European pride, i.e. about the emotional component of their identity, 92% of the respondents expressed their strong national pride (the EU average was 86%); while Hungarians were at the top of the list of Europeans who expressed pride in terms of belonging to Europe too. 87% of the Hungarians expressed their strong European pride, while it was only 68% EU-wide.¹⁴

To sum up, Hungary could be characterized with strong national identity and a strong emotional attachment to Europe at the same time.

When the degree of attachment was measured to various geographical entities, the multiple character of the Hungarians' identity appeared. 97% of the citizens expressed their attachment to the country (5% higher than the EU average), 89% to the region; 89% to city/town/village and 89% to Europe. This latter is much above the EU average that is only 67%. Consequently, more Hungarians felt attached to Europe, to the geographical entity than other Europeans.¹⁵ In 2005, one year after accession, the attachment to Europe was the strongest in Hungary among

the 25 member states. 92% of Hungarians expressed their attachment to Europe (it was 66% in the EU in general!), while 96% to the country, 88% to the region and 89% to the immediate vicinity. In 2006, Hungarians still expressed their very strong attachment to Europe, there was, however, a slight decline in it to 83%.¹⁶

One year after accession, there were many uncertainties around the evaluation of the country's membership in the Union. According to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in the Spring of 2005, while the majority of the citizens were positive about EU membership (54% affirmed that), the ratio of those who provided neutral answers, i.e. considered EU membership 'neither good nor bad' was much higher in the new Central and Eastern member states than in the old ones. The ratio of neutral answers was 43% in Hungary while it was only 27% in the EU25.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the support of EU membership in Hungary has been continuously fallen since enlargement (from 45% in 2004 to 34% in 2009).¹⁸

To conclude, despite the strong emotional attachment to European Union, the rational evaluation of Hungary's EU membership indicates a negative trend.

There is a direct connection between the trust level in the European Union and its institutions and the attachments of the individuals to a supranational community. Based on the arguments of 'civic' identity-building, it can be claimed when individuals tend to trust these institutions it also indicates their belonging to a political community which is above their national one. As the Eurobarometer survey results demonstrate, Hungarians tend to trust the EU in general and its institutions too. While in 2005, 44% of the citizens had confidence in the EU, in case of Hungary the ratio was one of the highest among the EU member states: 58%.¹⁹ Trust in both the EP and the Commission, was much higher among the Hungarians than in EU25: it was 71% and 65% in Hungary - referring to these two institutions - while only 52% and 46% EU-wide. This indicates that the civic component of belonging to a supranational political community is apparent in case of Hungarians. Other Eurobarometer survey results also demonstrate the high level of trust in EU institutions among the Hungarians. In 2006, two years after accession, 71% of the respondents, the highest ratio in EU25 trusted the EP, while 63% the Commission (the highest ratio in the EU). By comparing the trust level in institutions at the national and the Union's level, the individuals' attachments to various political communities (national and supranational) can be examined. Does the primacy of national structures prevail? Answers can be found in the 2010 Eurobarometer surveys. Due to the effects of economic and financial crisis as well as the shocks affected the Euro-zone, the trust in European Union in general has fallen from 48% in 2009 to 42% in 2010. The trust in national governments (29%) and national parliament (31%), are much lower than the trust in

EU institutions. Consequently, the EU citizens in general seem to trust the EU institutions more than their national ones, which is also true for the Hungarians. In 2010, 55% of Hungarians trusted the EU which was above the EU average and showed a slight increase (+2%) compared to the end of 2009.²⁰ In the Spring of 2010, 40% of Hungarians responded that they trust their national government, which is a significant increase (+26%) compared to the fall of 2009, that is probably due to the national elections held in Hungary in April 2010. The trust in the Hungarian parliament also increased significantly, thus currently 41% of Hungarians trust their national parliament.²¹

After accomplishing the biggest enlargement wave in EU history in 2004 and 2007, it was obvious for the olds and the newcomers that the influence and the power of the 27 member states would differ to a large extent. When citizens were asked about their perception of the EU in 2005, eight from ten people in the new member states while seven from ten people in the old ones indicated that the biggest countries have the most power in the EU. The Hungarian responses to that question were closer to the new member states average. 79% of Hungarians indicated that they believe that the bigger member states have most of the power in the EU.²² In the Fall of 2007, this ratio was even higher, 86% of Hungarians shared this view, while the ratio of those Hungarians who believed that Hungary's voice counts in the EU (51%) remained below the EU average (61%).²³

EU citizens were asked about their views of flexible integration, i.e. 'two speed Europe'.²⁴ In 2005, 42% of the EU citizens were opposing the idea that a group of member states are going to pursue a faster integration than the others, while 38% supported it in EU25. Interestingly, while in several old member states, e.g. in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Luxembourg, Belgium, Finland, Sweden those respondents were in majority who opposed this idea, most of the Central and Eastern European countries (except Poland) were for 'two speed Europe'. In Hungary, 49% supported it (it was 38% in EU25), compared to the 35% who were opposing it (it was 42% in EU25).

With regard to the meaning of the EU, the Union is represented first and foremost by 'freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the twenty seven Member states'. For most of Hungarians, similarly, freedom of mobility represents European Union; 52% of the respondents choose this answer. Cultural diversity (21%) and the common currency, the Euro (21%) follow that, despite of the fact that Hungary is not part of the Euro-zone. Consequently, the Euro has become a strong symbol of European identity not only in the countries that are part of the Euro-zone. It is a strong symbol in Hungary too.²⁵ Further, while peace was among the top of the three meanings for most the EU citizens, for Hungarians it only appeared after

freedom of mobility, cultural diversity and the euro. In 2009, however, there was a slight change in Hungarians' attitude: democracy appeared as one out of the three most important meanings of the EU.²⁶

In case of Hungarians, the European and national identities do not constitute competing elements of collective identification. According to a 2009 Eurobarometer survey, while in EU27, 12% of the overall population identifies the European Union with the possibility of losing their own cultural identity, it is only 4% – the lowest ratio among all Europeans – in Hungary.²⁷ Hungarians fear the least that their national identity would be threatened or dissolved in a greater Europe.

Conclusions

The collective identities in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe has unique characteristics. Countries of this region are still in the extended post-communist transition while as full members of the EU experience the practical side of integration. Therefore the nation-building that started after 1989/1990 continues to occur together with the redefinition of European identity, making it a complex and hard process. Shortcomings of the Eastern enlargement, the identity crisis of the Union itself as well as the new trend of flexible integration serve as major factors contributing to establish the overall context of collective identity formation in Central and Eastern Europe. Through the analysis of the Hungarian example, it was demonstrated that the national identity formation is overpoliticized and political leaders and national elites often malfunction in identity politics which leads to fragmentation of the national polity. Additionally, as the results of Eurobarometer surveys indicated, although two-thirds of Hungarians responded that they only feel their national citizenship, which is the highest ratio among the EU member states, they also expressed their strong emotional attachment to Europe. Further, the European dimension of Hungarians' identity is manifested in the high level of trust in the European Union in general as well as in its institutions, in spite of the fact that the support for EU membership has continuously fallen since joining the EU.

Annex

POLITICAL DECLARATION 1 OF 2010 (16 June) OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON NATIONAL COOPERATION*

„MAY THERE BE PEACE, FREEDOM AND ACCORD”

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, after forty-six years of occupation and dictatorship and two turbulent decades of transition Hungary has regained the right and ability of self-determination.

The fight of the Hungarian nation for self-determination began in 1956 with a glorious uprising that was eventually drowned in blood. The struggle continued with the political pacts after the fall of communism and led to vulnerability instead of freedom, indebtedness instead of autonomy, poverty instead of prosperity, and a deep spiritual, political and economic crisis instead of hope, optimism and fraternity. In the spring of 2010 the Hungarian nation once again summoned its vitality and brought about another revolution in the voting booths.

The National Assembly declares its acknowledgement and respect of this revolution fought within the framework of the Constitution. The National Assembly declares that a new social contract was laid down in the April general elections through which the Hungarians decided to create a new system: the National Cooperation System. With this historical act the Hungarian nation obliged the incoming National Assembly and Government to take the helm in this endeavour, resolute, uncompromising and with deliberation, and control the construction of the National Cooperation System in Hungary.

We, members of the National Assembly declare that we shall elevate the new political and economic system emerging on the basis of the popular democratic will to the pillars that are indispensable for welfare, for living a decent life, and that connect the members of our diverse Hungarian society. Work, home, family, health and order - these will be the pillars of our common future.

The National Cooperation System is open for every Hungarian. It is shared by Hungarians living in and out of Hungary. It is an opportunity for, as well as a requirement of, everybody who lives, works or has an undertaking in Hungary. We firmly believe that we will be able to change Hungary's future through the solidarity represented by the National Cooperation System and build a strong and successful country. This solidarity that releases tremendous energies and gives great hope to every Hungarian wherever they live in the world and

whatever their age, sex, religion and political views, after decades gives a chance to the Hungarians to fulfill their own goals at last. This is what we stake the coming years of our lives on.

DR PÁL SCHMITT

Speaker of the National Assembly

MRS LORÁNT HEGEDŰS

Recorder of the National Assembly

DR RICHÁRD TARNAI

Recorder of the National Assembly

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY

* The National Assembly adopted the Political Declaration at its session on 14 June 2010.

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Notes

¹ Although this paper uses the term European identity describing the supranational identity of EU citizens, it should be marked that European identity could be defined outside the EU context.

² Eugen Weber emphasized this change in his 'Peasants into Frenchman' (Weber, 1979) book and pointed out that France started to apply a wide range of cultural tools in order to form good French citizens from peasants.

³ For example, the existence of the greatest French national holiday is due to the choice of the elite of the time too. The republican delegates selected 14 July in 1880 to be the national holiday of France. Revolutionary days of 1830, 1848, 1870 were also options, but finally the delegates choose the day of demolishing the Bastille (See Nora, 1996:119)

⁴ Some authors like Attila Ágh further argued that it was never the EU's interest to accomplish Eastern enlargement. (See Ágh, 2006.)

⁵ In the accession negotiations only Poland represented a stronger negotiating position.

⁶ Even in case of the unified Germany East-West division within one state are still prevalent. The citizens of the Eastern block many times labeled as 'Ossies' by the West.

⁷ One of the most comprehensive typology of differentiated integration comes from Stubb who defined three major forms of differentiated integration: 'Multi-speed EU can be defined as the mode of differentiated integration according to which the pursuits of common objectives is driven by a core group of member states which are both able and willing to pursue some policy areas further, the underlying assumption being that others will follow later' (1); 'Variable geometry can be defined as the mode of differentiated integration which admits to unattainable differences within the main integrative structure by allowing permanent and irreversible separation between the core of countries and lesser developed integrative units.' (2); 'A la Carte Europe, based on the culinary metaphor 'allows each member state to pick and choose as from a menu, in which policy area it would like to participate, whilst at the same time maintaining a minimum number of common objectives.' (3) (See Stubb, 1996: 287-288)

⁸ Functional macro-region indicates a territorial unit, which encompasses various states (EU members and non-members) covers different areas of cooperation and is interwoven with multi-levels of competences. In that sense it is also an example of multi-level governance.

⁹ Danube Confederation plan of Lajos Kossuth in 1862 and Oszkár Jászi's proposal of United States of Danube Nations in 1918

¹⁰ This refers to the Hungarian extreme right wing, populist party: the JOBBIK.

¹¹ The following question is asked: *In the near future, do you see yourself ... ? (NATIONALITY) only; (NATIONALITY) and European; European and (NATIONALITY); European only.*

¹² Eurobarometer 62 (Fieldwork : October - November 2004)

¹³ Eurobarometer 62 (Fieldwork : October - November 2004)

¹⁴ The level of pride in newly accessed Central-, and Eastern European states was higher in general than in the old member states. See Eurobarometer 62 (Fieldwork : October - November 2004)

¹⁵ Eurobarometer 62 (Fieldwork : October - November 2004)

¹⁶ In 2006, 84% of Polish citizens expressed their attachment to Europe. See Eurobarometer 65.

¹⁷ Eurobarometer 63 (Fieldwork : May - June 2005)

¹⁸ Eurobarometer 72 (Fieldwork: October - November 2009)

¹⁹ Eurobarometer 63 (Fieldwork : May - June 2005)

²⁰ Eurobarometer 73 (Fieldwork: May 2010)

²¹ Eurobarometer 73 (Fieldwork: May 2010)

²² Eurobarometer 63 (Fieldwork : May - June 2005)

²³ Eurobarometer 68 (Fieldwork: September - November 2007)

²⁴ Although flexible or differentiated integration can have various forms (See Stubb), the Eurobarometer survey only measured people's attitude to the 'two speed' version.

²⁵ Eurobarometer 70 (Fieldwork: October - November 2008)

²⁶ Eurobarometer 72 (Fieldwork: October - November 2009)

²⁷ Eurobarometer 73 (Fieldwork: May 2010)