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Minorities and Nation Building Strategies: Central European Lessons for the Netherlands*

In November 2004, the Netherlands faced a severe crisis in the relationship between the autochthonous Dutch population and Muslim minorities. A cell of fundamentalist Muslims assassinated Theo van Gogh; a filmmaker well known for his public appearances in which he would use insulting language regarding the Muslim population in the Netherlands. For two weeks after the assassination, the Netherlands was shocked by attempts to burn Mosques, Islamic schools, and churches and the violent resistance against arrest of two members of the terrorist cell in The Hague.

These incidents are not isolated. People visiting the Netherlands will recognize that this country has become a rather colorful nation with many minorities living together with the Dutch. The Dutch are proud of their history of being a free haven for many flows of refugees. All of these flows have more or less been assimilated into the Dutch society. Only recently at the end of the 1990's the government of the Netherlands formally recognized the fact that the country had changed over the past decades from an emigrant nation into an immigrant one. Since 1948 the Netherlands has faced a lot of newcomers as both refugees and immigrants from its former colonies Indonesia,

* This article is the result of a two-month study in three Central European countries: Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. From September until October 2004 the author was a visiting-fellow at the Teleki László Institute, Centre for Central European Studies in Budapest. This research project is part of the Master of Public Administration program executed by the Netherlands School of Public Administration, for which the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations selected him. The content of this article does not represent the Dutch policy towards minorities but his personal point of view. The author would like to thank Irina Culic, Gábor Czocho, Jaco Dagevos, Han Entzinger, Zoltán Kántor, Peter Mascini, Steven Ralston, Paul Scheffer, Florian Sterk, Susanne Westdorp, Hans Wilmink, Anton Zyderveld and Bianca Zylfiu for their comments and suggestions on a previous draft of this article. e-mail: p.vd.parre@freeler.nl

Surinam and the Dutch Antilles. In the late 1960's many people were hired as temporary workers from the Mediterranean. After some decades many Moroccans and Turks decided to stay and to bring their families to the Netherlands. However, in 75% of the cases their offspring still marry with men and women from the countries of origin and settle together in the Netherlands. Over the years the Dutch approach to deal with newcomers is one of assimilation with a strong focus on socioeconomic integration. Socioeconomic equality and equal opportunity of socioeconomic changes are the normative starting points. Meanwhile, on a socio-cultural level, there are many aspects that can be qualified as culturally liberal, even a more or less laissez faire approach to multiculturalism. In the last couple of years this has dramatically changed into an assimilation approach as well.

At present an important policy issue in the Netherlands is to look for ways to deal with the multicultural challenge the country is confronted with. The Dutch are used to learning from the experiences of the United States. But geographically closer to the Netherlands, the Central and East European Countries have a long tradition in dealing with this question too. These countries are strongly aware of their multicultural history. In the last thousand years Central and East Europe faced many migration flows and many migrant settlements kept their religion, culture and language over several hundreds of years. As a result of the peace treaties after the First World War and the border shifts thereafter, all the Central and East European Countries have many minority groups. Many of these minority groups have kin-states in neighboring countries. For many years cultural homogenization was clearly the aim of the applied strategies of assimilation in all these different countries and there even were several periods of "ethnic cleansing". After 1989 many of the new post-communist states recognized that National minorities are a part of the population with whom the majority share a common history in their constitution and laws. Nevertheless, this common history is still interpreted in a manner of nationalist myths of ethnic victimization with the neighboring states as oppressor by every Nation state, and likewise in a popularized manner by its national ethnic group. These myths coexist in a fragile combination with the idea of peaceful coexistence of the different ethnic groups at the local level. This history may offer experiences from which Dutch policy makers can learn.

I will start with a brief description of the main theoretical approaches. Here, an important question to be answered is whether a comparison between recent immigrant groups and historical minority groups can be made.

After answering this question affirmatively, I will give a rough sketch of the actual and historical situation in four countries: Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the Netherlands. Through this rough sketch I examine some general patterns in minority-majority interaction. After drawing conclusions, I will sum up some lessons Dutch policy makers might learn from the Central and East European experiences regarding the question of dealing with minorities in the Netherlands.

Theories on dealing with minorities

According to the World Directory of Minorities minorities are defined as: “non-dominant groups, not always numerically inferior to majorities, whose members possess ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics that differ from the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language”¹. From this definition it is clear that before all other things the question of dealing with minorities is a question of dealing with the consequences of collapsing cultures. Surveying the literature, two different approaches towards the question whether a comparison can be made between recent immigrant groups and historical minority groups can be found. The multiculturalism point of view defines all minorities as being equal, which would allow comparison. However, its relativistic approach towards cultures denies the sense of making a comparison for the purpose of learning from different situations². The nation-building point of view, on the other hand, makes a strong division between newcomers and historic minorities. In doing so a comparison between these different minority groups is in fact not allowed. After taking a deeper look at both normative approaches, I will argue that a more empirical approach focusing on the processes of majority-minority interaction and mutual cultural change is necessary and meanwhile allows the comparison of different kind of minority groups.

According to Dimitras³ Citizens, non-citizen residents and even non-permanent residents of states are qualified for protection under the norms that can be found in the United Nations “International Covenant on Rights of minorities” of 1994 and the Council of Europe’s “Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities” of 1998. Article 27 of the

¹ Minority Rights Group International: *World Directory of Minorities*. London: MRG, 1997. XV.

² Culic, Irina, István Horváth, Cristian Stan (eds.): *Reflections on Differences: focus on Romania*. Cluj-Napoca: Limes Publishing House, 1999.

³ Dimitras, Panayote Elias: *Recognition of Minorities in Europe: Protecting Rights and Dignity*. MRG Briefing, London: Minority Rights Group International, 2004. 1.

“International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights” spelled out that the protection of minorities’ civil and political rights cannot be limited to invoking general equality before the law, equal protection by the law, and non-discrimination. All existing minorities need to be acknowledged by states, and states are urged to ensure the survival and development of the identity of all minorities. The existence of minorities does not depend on decisions by the state, but is to be established on self-identification by the individual concerned, if no justification exists to the contrary.

Opposed to this view we find authors who share the opinion that the question of dealing with National minorities is really different from the question of dealing with new-coming minorities. As Kymlicka points out, National minorities become minorities outside their free will, while immigrants become so within their free will.⁴ National minorities are a by-product of nation-building processes inside states. It is not a question if states engage in nation building or not, as all states do, but the extent to which nation building is liberal or illiberal. Nation building is not an ethno-culturally neutral process in the sense that there is a sharp divorce between the state and ethnicity, and the state acts neutrally towards the language, the history, the literature and the calendar of the different ethnic groups inside its territory. Moreover, liberal-democratic states are not ethno-culturally neutral. On the contrary, by traveling from one liberal-democratic state to another in Western Europe it becomes clear that the culture of a specific dominant group is diffused within that particular society in every different state. Kymlicka defines a societal culture as “a territorially-concentrated culture, centered on a shared language, that is used in a wide range of societal institutions, in both public and private life (schooling, media, law, economy, government, the requirements of immigration and naturalization, the drawing of internal and external boundaries, and so on).”⁵ The combinational aspects of language and social institutions makes a societal culture something different from common religious beliefs, family customs or personal lifestyle. To realize societal cultures states selectively suppress ethno-cultural diversity. This attempt at diffusing a single societal culture throughout the whole territory of a state is defined by Kymlicka as the nation-building process⁶. In this process a number of tools are used:

⁴ Kymlicka, Will: Nation-building and minority rights: comparing West and East. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2000. 188.

⁵ Kymlicka, 185.

⁶ Kymlicka, 186.

1. official language policy; 2. attempts to create a uniform system of national education; 3. migration and naturalization policies (i.e., favoring co-ethnics in admissions decisions; requiring migrants to adopt a common national identity as a condition of naturalization); and 4. the redrawing of administrative districts to dilute the weight of minorities in each of them.⁷

Confronted with this diffusion of a particular societal culture, socio-cultural minorities will react in different ways. In brief there are three major categories of reaction: 1. assimilation; 2. challenge; or 3. migration.

Assimilation

After a certain period of time, minorities assimilate to a certain degree by learning the official language, the history and the political institution of the state they are living in. Most minorities are too small and territorially too dispersed to engage in competing nation-building processes. Moreover, they accept the assumption that their lives will change, and even more so that the lives of their children will change, and that they will be bound up with participation in mainstream institutions. Thus, they integrate into the political system, just as they integrate socio-economically.⁸ This is more likely to happen when the cultural differences between the minority and the majority are relatively small and when the minority does not believe they lose something highly valued by assimilating. In the point of view of Kymlicka, assimilation generally is the applied strategy of immigrants.

Challenge

According to Kymlicka those ethno-cultural minorities who are rather strong in challenging the diffusion of a societal culture are National minorities.⁹ National minorities are ethno-cultural groups that formed complete and functioning societies in their historic homelands prior to being incorporated into a larger state. Like the majority group they seek control over the language and curriculum of schooling, government employment, the way of dealing with public authorities, the requirements of immigration and naturalization in their region, and the drawing of the internal boundaries of their region. At the extreme, this can lead to secession, but normally, as in the case of Belgium and Canada, it involves some form of regional autonomy. Kymlicka interprets this as a trend in which Nation states more and more will shift into multi-nation

⁷ Kymlicka, 195–6.

⁸ Kymlicka, 191.

⁹ Kymlicka, 187–95.

states. And what is more important, empirical evidence exists that arrangements of self-government diminish the likelihood of violent conflict, while on the other hand refusing or rescinding these rights serve to act as a stimulus to escalate the level of conflict.¹⁰

Migration

Protestant groups like the Mennonites are a good example of minorities that feel forced to choose several times in history for the option of migration instead of the choice for assimilation as their numbers were too small to challenge the oppressing culture of a majority. In the beginning of the 16th century growing discontent with the Catholic Church led to the foundation of a number of new religious movements. The Mennonites are one of those and are named after one of their leaders Menno Simons from the small village of Wytmarsum in Friesland. He and his disciples first found refuge in the town of Groningen, which was soon followed by forced emigration eastwards to Eastern Friesland. From there they moved on to Western Prussia, into the Weichsel delta near Danzig (Gdansk). Until the first Polish Partition in 1772 the Mennonites were allowed to live according to their own principles. When, as a result of this Partition, the area around Danzig became a part of the state of Prussia, the situation deteriorated significantly. Their refusal to bear arms brought the Mennonites into serious conflict with the authorities, and once again emigration seemed the only alternative. In 1789, a first group of settlers set off for the southern parts of Russia. Catherine the Great, who needed farmers for the parts of Southern Russia, invited them. Since 1986 many of the Mennonites are leaving the former Soviet Union for Mennonite settlements in Canada and the United States.¹¹ The example of the Mennonites is no exception, as the Amish in the United States, the Huguenots in Western Europe and the Chinese settlements in Indonesia illustrate. When groups are large enough, territorially concentrated and strongly believe they will lose something highly valued by assimilating into a majority culture, they will try to migrate to a territory where they are allowed to have their own nation-building process.

¹⁰ Kymlicka, 188.

¹¹ Graaf, Tjeerd de: *The status of an ethnic minority group in the former Soviet Union: The Mennonites and their relation with the Netherlands, Germany and Russia*. Paper presented at the conference "The Status-law syndrome: Post-Communist Nation-Building or Post-Modern Citizenship?" October 14–16, Budapest, 2004.

The option of migration and the successful examples of minority groups who did so, make it clear in my opinion that not all immigrant groups may be assumed to be willing to assimilate. So the distinction between national minorities and immigrants is not an exclusive one, but an empirical one depending on the orientations of the minority group itself rather than whether it is a national minority or an immigrant minority. Orientations and cultures are not frozen but develop in interaction. The relative success of assimilation of a first generation is also of influence on the nation-building efforts of the next generation. For the children of a first generation of migrants to be born in their homeland is as much a matter of fact that is outside their free will as for the offspring of the National minorities. Both must live in multicultural surroundings: the culture of their parents and the culture of the majority society in which they somehow are being acculturated. The more successful the first generation is at assimilating, the smaller the chances are that the next generation will start its own nation-building project.

Both normative approaches, i.e. multiculturalism and nation building, share the same kind of shortcoming: a lack of attention towards the interaction between majorities and minorities. This interaction is at the very heart of the collapse of cultures. And in this interaction both cultures develop and change. The processes of majority-minority interaction and cultural change are worth comparing so we can learn from them in different empirical situations.

To analyze the complexity of majority-minority interaction one needs a multi-level approach. A helpful starting point is the theoretical framework of the Triadic Nexus of Rogers Brubaker.¹² The Triadic Nexus offers an analytical framework to analyze the nation-building project of a majority inside the political scene of the homeland, taking into account the international relations between neighboring governments, and the interaction of kin-state governments with their exterior kin-minorities. Zoltán Kántor made this model more dynamic by adding the nationalizing project of minorities to this framework.¹³ As this model still focuses on the political elites – those who are involved in politics, both in government and opposition – I feel the need to enlarge this framework to a quadratic nexus by introducing the street-level interaction of minorities and majorities into this scheme.

¹² Brubaker, Rogers: *Nationalism reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

¹³ Kántor, Zoltán: *Institutionalizing Nationalism*. (manuscript) Budapest: Teleki László Institute, 2004. Kántor, Zoltán: Status Law and 'nation policy': Theoretical aspects. *Foreign Policy Review*, Vol. 2, Nr. 2, 2003.

As elites do not always have a proper feel for what is going on at the street level, they need the support of the street level to implement their strategies. The need for this support is most clear during elections. So, in short, my analytical framework, which is necessary to give a rough sketch of the mechanisms behind the interaction between majorities and minorities, can be summarized as a multi-level approach focusing on the interaction between minorities and their majority peers. It is inside the context of a national political scene; influenced by the kin-politics of a kin-state towards its exterior living kin-minority; and influenced by the international relations between governments in the framework of an international community with its developing standards of international law. To analyze the interplay of the different relationships, four different levels of interactions are considered throughout this article:

1. The interactions between minorities and their majority peers.
2. The interactions of minorities inside the political scene of the home state.
3. The interactions of kin-state governments with the extraterritorial living kin-minorities.
4. The international relations between governments within the framework of an international community with its developing standards of international law.

From the Central and East European countries I chose to compare Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. This is because of the large Hungarian minority in both Romania and Slovakia, which is politically significant in both countries. Simultaneously, both countries have a much smaller and more assimilated kin-minority in Hungary. Between 1920 and 2004 the number of Hungarians in the neighboring countries decreased from 3.5 million to 2.5 million. According to Bárdi: “*Population loss, which can be interpreted within the framework of parallel nation building endeavors of Hungary and its neighbors, can be attributed to migration to the mother country, assimilation, the Holocaust, as well as a decrease of natural population growth*”.¹⁴ Below, I will briefly describe the situation of dealing with the question of minorities in Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the Netherlands.

¹⁴ Bárdi, Nándor: Hungary and the Hungarians Living Abroad: a Historical Outline. *Regio: Minorities Politics, Society*, 2003. 121 – 138. www.regiofolyoirat.hu See also the longer version of the study in Zoltán Kántor, Balázs Majtényi, Osamu Ieda, Balázs, and Iván Halász (eds.): *The Hungarian Status Law: Nation Building and/or Minority Protection*. Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2004.

Hungary

Due to its multicultural history as part of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy, many but mostly rather small groups of minorities live in Hungary. The Hungarians themselves form the absolute majority as there are 9.7 million Hungarians out of the total population of 10.1 million. The official language is Hungarian. Since the political changes in 1990, Hungary has established internal legal and institutional frameworks for the protection of minorities.¹⁵

The Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities offers the members of minority groups recognized by this act a combination of both territorial and personal autonomy.¹⁶ Newcomers, like the growing Chinese population, are excluded from this Act. Majtényi points out that the requirement of one hundred years of residence is disputable and even unnecessary, as even the members of National and Ethnic minorities recognized by the Act arrived in the country in several waves of immigration less than one hundred years ago.¹⁷ Finally, Majtényi questioned whether a minority like the Chinese can “grow old enough” to gain legal recognition of its minority status. At this very moment over a thousand local and thirteen national self-governments exist. The main tasks and responsibilities of self-governments lie in guaranteeing autonomy in education and culture.¹⁸

The relationship of Hungary with the neighboring governments and the Hungarian minorities abroad

Since 1990 Hungarian governments publicly declare a responsibility towards the Hungarians abroad. In 1990, Prime Minister József Antall declared himself the prime minister ‘in spirit’ of the 15 million Hungarians. This example was adopted by his successors. Even parties that are less overtly nationalistic realize that they can not appear to neglect Hungarians abroad, or ignore those at home who seek to support them. In the amended Constitution of Hungary (1989), Article 6 (3) states: “*The Republic of Hungary bears a sense of responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living outside of its borders and shall*

¹⁵ Mercator Education, www.mercator-education.org, 2004.

¹⁶ Hungarian Act LXXVII of 1993 on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities, Article 61 (1) qualify Bulgarian, Gypsy, Greek, Croatian, Polish, German, Armenian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovenian and Ukrainian ethnic groups as ethnic groups native to Hungary. At the moment this law was still in draft the Jewish population applied for being taken out from the Act. See Majtényi, Balázs: *Minority Rights in Hungary and the Situation of the Roma. Acta Juridica Hungarica*, Vol. 45, Nos 1–2, 2004.

¹⁷ Majtényi, idem, 138–9.

¹⁸ Klinge, S.: *Hungary files National Minorities Convention Report*. Brussels: Eurolang EBLUL, 2004.

promote and foster their relations with Hungary.” On the basis of this constitutional foundation Hungary established a Government Office for Hungarians Abroad in 1992, it created a Hungarian Standing Conference in 1999, which is meant to be a political bond between Hungary and Hungarians abroad, and finally on June 10th 2001 Hungary unilaterally adopted an Act on Hungarians Living in Neighboring States.¹⁹ This Act is generally referred to as the Hungarian Status Law. The aim of this Act is “*to comply with its responsibility for Hungarians living abroad and to promote the preservation and development of their manifold relations with Hungary, as well as to ensure that Hungarians living in neighboring countries form part of the Hungarian nation as a whole to promote and preserve their well-being and awareness of national identity within their home country.*”

In recent years, similar acts were adopted in Austria (1979), Italy (1991), Slovenia (1996), Slovakia (1997), Greece (1998), Russia (1999), and in Bulgaria (2000).²⁰ Moreover, in response to the Hungarian Status Law, Romania is actually framing one. Nevertheless, the governments of both Slovakia and Romania considered the Hungarian Status Law as a form of unilateral interference in their internal affairs, insinuating that they were not doing a proper job of protecting and promoting the rights and interests of Hungarian minorities under their jurisdiction. However, at the very moment the Hungarian Status Law was adopted this situation was improving in both countries thanks to the important political role of the Minority Parties representing the Hungarians in both countries. The inter-ethnic relations in both Romania and Slovakia were no longer a hot issue in either country. And, moreover, significant improvements were being made in terms of the protection and promotion of national minorities, and the Hungarian minority in particular. Also, the bilateral relations between Hungary and Romania and Slovakia were much better than in past decades.

Nigel Swain explains why the Hungarian Status law could increase tensions between Hungary, Romania and Slovakia that much in what he calls the co-existing of myths of national victim-hood in Central and East Europe. Swain:²¹

¹⁹ Hungarian Act LXII of 2001 on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring Countries (amended on June 23, 2003)

²⁰ Venice Commission (officially: European Commission for Democracy through Law), *Report on the Preferential Treatment of National Minorities by their Kin-State* adopted by the Venice Commission at its 48th Plenary Meeting, 19–20 October, 2001, Venice

²¹ Swain, Nigel: *The innocence of article eighteen, paragraph two, subsection e*. Paper presented at the conference “The Status-law syndrome: Post-Communist Nation-Building or Post-Modern Citizenship?” October 14–16, Budapest, 2004.

“How could Hungarian politicians genuinely believe that they were doing something unproblematic when they passed the bill? The obverse of the question was where did all the controversy come from on the other sides, given that in reality there were precedents for most of its provisions? The answer to both questions (...) is the persistence of nationalist myths of national victim-hood that dehumanize the ethnic other and make negotiation and reasoned discussion impossible. Victims do not see any need to consult with their oppressors. Victims seek redress on their own terms. Only politicians who viewed events through the prism of a myth of national victim-hood could innocently and unreflectingly have proposed measures such as Article 18 of the Status Law, which resulted in extreme intervention into the domestic policies of neighboring states. Only politicians informed by similar myths from the other side could have reacted so hysterically to the proposals. While myths of national victim-hood persist and the nations of Eastern Europe see themselves as victims and their neighbors as oppressors, incidents such as the status law and the scandal it provoked will be repeated.”

The relationship between the Romanian and the Hungarian governments worsened after Hungary adopted the Status Law. The Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Năstase even edited a whole book on this legislation.²² In his book he carefully explains that the Status Law is based on an ethnical conception of the human race that is closely related to racism and opposed to the universalistic concept of citizenship. Furthermore, the impact of the law regarding citizens from another country is extraterritorial and seen as interference in the territorial autonomy of the affected countries. Finally, besides all this, the Status Law is by its very nature an act of discrimination to people who can not benefit from it because of the fact they belong to another ethnic group. Here again the extraterritorial nature creates two categories of citizens in the affected states that would deteriorate the relationship between the minority and the majority in that country. Regardless of the critique on the Hungarian Status Law, Năstase’s government feels a responsibility for the fate of the Romanians living abroad. Ethnic Romanians of the Republic of Moldova are offered the Romanian citizenship regardless of whether they stay in Moldova or immigrate to Romania.²³ In an address to representatives of the Romanian Diaspora on 9 August 2003, Prime Minister Năstase announced that Romania is enacting similar legislation like the Hungarian Status Law, to enhance the relationship between Romania and the Romanians

²² Năstase, Adrian et al.: *Protecting Minorities in the Future Europe: Between Political Interest and International Law*. Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial, 2002.

²³ Iordachi, Constantin: *Citizenship and National Identity in Romania: A Historical Overview. Regio: Minorities, Politics, Society*, 2002. 34.

living abroad.²⁴ This is clearly the application of double standards, which can only be explained in the process of nation-building nationalism²⁵ and that is affected by the myth of national victim-hood regarding the historical oppressor.

After a year of negotiations, the Romanian and the Hungarian governments agreed on a bilateral treaty in which the application of the Status Law to Hungarians living in Romania is arranged. At least one third of the Hungarians in Romania have applied for the Status Law certificate through which one can benefit from the Status Law. Elderly Hungarians living abroad in particular cherish the symbolic attachment to Hungary. The negotiations between Bratislava and Budapest about a bilateral treaty to implement the Status Law inside Slovakia even took two years. Unlike Bucharest, Bratislava didn't agree on the individual benefit that the Status Law could offer. Finally, Bratislava and Budapest agreed upon the establishment of a joined Slovakian and Hungarian foundation, which handle the applications with regard to the Status Law and which will take care of the fact that the whole community is affected by the benefits the Status Law offers and not only some ethnic individuals or ethnic families. The way this joined foundation operates is comparable to the way Germany supports communities abroad to stimulate the German language and German culture. National and local governments have to be aware of the risks of ethnic closure and social exclusion that might happen between communities with different languages and cultures. To avoid this both communities have to be stimulated to invest in their mutual interaction. For this reason the Slovakian implementation of the Hungarian Status Law seems positive.

The interactions of neighboring kin-state governments with their kin-minorities in Hungary

Both the Romanian and the Slovakian minority groups in Hungary are rather small, and economically and culturally well integrated in Hungarian society. Both the Romanian and the Slovakian Constitution pay special attention to the kin-minorities in their neighboring countries. Neither Romania, nor Slovakia seems to be much involved with their small kin-minorities in

²⁴ Kemp, Walter: *The Triadic Nexus: Lessons Learned from the Status Law* Paper presented at the conference "The Status Law Syndrome: Post-Communist Nation-Building or Post-Modern Citizenship?" October 14–16, Budapest, 2004.

²⁵ Kántor, Zoltán: *The Uses (and misuses) of the Concept of Nation in the ECE 'Status Laws'*. Paper presented at the conference "The Status Law Syndrome: Post-Communist Nation-Building or Post-Modern Citizenship?" October 14–16, Budapest, 2004.

Hungary. Nevertheless, Hungary was able to make agreements with the neighboring countries concerning these minorities. The minority language communities in Hungary are able to make use of learning materials of their kin-states. Teachers are also educated in the kin-state. Hungary hopes that it can stimulate the neighboring countries to treat their Hungarian minorities in a proper way as well by means of this policy. According to the 2001 report by the Committee of Experts²⁶ on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, Hungary “*has undertaken an ambitious effort in drafting a form of a model legislation on the protection of minorities*”.

Romania

According to the population census of 2002, Romania has 21.681 million inhabitants of whom 90% define themselves as Romanians. The official language is Romanian. The number of languages listed for Romania is 15.²⁷ For much of its history, Romania was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy (Transylvania) and of the Ottoman Empire as well. Over the past decade Romania has lost around 1.2 million of its population. Compared with the census of 1992 1 million of the ethnic Romanians and 200,000 of the ethnic Hungarians have left. This is mainly due to emigration. Nearly everyone interviewed spoke of relatives in foreign countries and many of them are mentally prepared to emigrate to find a better future for themselves but also to help their relatives to survive.

In March 1990, Romania witnessed a severe nationalist clash of ethnic Hungarians and ethnic Romanians in the Transylvanian city of Târgu-Mureş. After 15 hours of fighting there were 6 deaths and over 100 wounded. Out of Romania's largest cities, Târgu-Mureş (300.000 inhabitants) is the only one with a nearly 50/50 distribution of both ethnic groups. On the basis of interviews with eyewitnesses and participants in this clash, Călin Goina²⁸ describes the process of action, interaction and reaction that facilitated the widespread use and intensification of ethnic framing.

In the unstable situation in the aftermath of the revolution of December 1989 ethnic affiliation became for a while one of the main criteria in the public arena. Before 1989 bureaucratic appointment operated according to tacit princi-

²⁶ Council of Europe, *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Application of the Charter in Hungary: Report of the Committee of Experts on the Charter and recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the application of the Charter by Hungary*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2001. 10.

²⁷ Mercator Education, www.mercator-education.org, 2004.

²⁸ Goina, Călin: *The Ethnization of Politics: the case of Târgu-Mureş*. (manuscript) 1999.

ples of ethnic representation. In the aftermath of December 1989 the distribution of positions became an explicit and highly contested element in the struggle for political and symbolical control of this city. The homogenizing elements of the Ceausescu way of nation building stimulated the Hungarians in Transylvania, in the context of the political democratization process, to articulate minority's rights to realize autonomous and separate institutions of the Hungarian language to ensure the survival and development of their culture. In doing so they developed organizations that were seen by their Romanian peers as a sort of 'Hungarian-only' organizations. So the issue of minority's rights was soon interpreted as a claim of ownership over the city. This was reason enough for some Romanians to create 'Romanians-only' organizations, which had as sole reason of existence the desire to counter-act and oppose the Hungarian initiatives. This ownership struggle erupted when the issue of school separation was raised. Local media switched during this process from mere presentation of the events to partisan presentation and ended up in making open appeals to violence. At this moment ethnic demonstrations and counter-demonstrations reached a mass dimension. Finally, after the clash it took a long time to re-build trust and shattered friendships between Hungarians and Romanians in Târgu-Mureş.

This clash is an important part of the collective memory in Romania and for a lesser part in Hungary. Many people interviewed referred in to it one way or the other and often spontaneously to this event. Everybody was reassuring that such a clash is not possible any more in Romania. And the very fact that this riot stayed isolated even in 1990 is a reason to have faith in this claim. It was found that Hungarians have no problems in speaking Hungarian in public and are treated as equals by their Romanian peers. Respondents assured me that the criterion of professional merit and credibility is gaining more and more weight for people to vote for a politician regardless of his or her ethnic affiliation. Still, the interaction between Hungarians and Romanians is somewhat restrained. This is easily explained by the fact that the Hungarian language is an unintended but real factor in ethnic closure.²⁹ Another factor of social closure is the difference in religion: Romanians are in general Orthodox, while the Hungarians are Protestants and also Catholics. Economically, the Hungarians and the Romanians are very much alike.

²⁹ see also Goina, 1999; Fox, Jon E.: *Missing the Mark: Nationalist Politics and University Students in Transylvania*, Draft, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj, 2000; and Lazăr, Marius: *Switching Antagonist Roles: Conflicting Identities and Majority/Minority Reactions. A Case Study on the Region of Szeklerland-Transylvania*, NEXUS Research Project paper, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj, 2001.

Instead of the one sided focus on the preservation of the Hungarian language and culture among the ethnic Hungarians in Romanian, it would be better for both the Hungarian and the Romanian government to promote the Hungarian language and culture in general to Romanian-Hungarians and Romanians alike. Quite a few Romanians seem interested in the language and the culture of their fellow Hungarian citizens and in the opportunities this will offer to find jobs in Hungary as well. Only the enforcement of mutual interaction will make the myths of victim-hood disappear over time. At street level these myths are still alive at present. Nevertheless, social research data already shows a strong improvement in the inter-ethnic coexistence of Hungarians and Romanians.³⁰ For many people interviewed the most important factor for this improvement is the participation of the Romanian-Hungarians in Romania's political scene.³¹

The interactions of national minorities inside the political scene of Romania

Minorities in Romania have a seat in the Parliament and in the Senate by right of their constitution. In their nation-building project, the Hungarian minority in Romania succeeded to augment this representation. By overcoming ideological differences they established a federation of civic organizations and different political parties: the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR). The DAHR finds its *raison d'être* in the nation-building process that unites the Hungarian minority in Romania. An important stimulus is the continuing confrontation of the Hungarian minority with the homogenizing tendencies of the nation-building process of the Romanian state, which causes sentiments as lack of protection of the Hungarian minority rights and lack of protection of the Hungarian language. United this federation participated in the Romanian elections in 1996, 2000 and 2004. Up till now the DAHR gained between 6.6% and 6.9% of the votes, enough to pass the 5% threshold, but also close to the maximum votes they can mobilize as an ethnic party with a population of approximately 6.6% of the total population.³² In the Romanian political scene, the DAHR became a significant political factor. In December 1996 it was invited to join the coalition. Inside and outside Romania this was seen as an unprecedented and outstanding event.

³⁰ Research Center for Interethnic Relations, *Ethnobarometer: Interethnic Relations in Romania*, Cluj: Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj, 2000.

³¹ See also Kántor, Zoltán and Nándor Bárdi: The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) in the Government of Romania from 1996 to 2000. *Regio: Minorities, Politics, Society*, 2002. 205.

³² Kántor and Bárdi, 195.

After the elections of 2000 and in order to isolate the extreme nationalistic Greater Romania Party, which ranked second in the elections, Prime Minister Adrian Nastase of the Socialist Party (PSD) signed several collaboration protocols, three of them with the DAHR, the party of the Roma (PR) and the German Democratic Forum of Romania (FDGR).³³

By the unilateral adoption of the Status Law by the Hungarian Parliament, the DAHR found itself in a bind. Although the DAHR is a supporter of trans-border affirmative action by Hungary, the unilateral nature of this action challenged their good relations with the governing party. Moreover, after successfully raising and addressing the issue for minority rights on the basis of citizenship and equal opportunity and meanwhile criticizing the Romanian majority for its nationalizing strategies, the nationalistic parties in Romania accused the DAHR of pushing an exclusively ethnic agenda, strengthening bonds with Budapest, advocating discrimination based on ethnicity, and demonstrating disloyalty to the state in which they are citizens.³⁴

The internal challenge for the leaders of the DAHR is to prove its effectiveness in cooperating with the governing parties instead of opposing the government in a more radical way. In the mean time, the more nationalistic parties inside Hungary have become explicit supporters of the more radical opposition inside the DAHR. The debate about the Status Law strengthens the already existing divide within the Romanian-Hungarian community. In 2004 some organizations of the DAHR left the federation, because they disagreed with the mainstream inside the DAHR concerning the way to achieve territorial autonomy for the Hungarian minority. As the claim for territorial autonomy for minorities is unacceptable for the Romanian-majority political elite, the mainstream inside the DAHR does not want to jeopardize its favorable central position inside the Romanian political scene by making strong claims for territorial autonomy. After the elections in November 2004, it became clear that the DAHR could maintain its position in the Romanian Parliament and it even became a member of the government coalition again.

Because of the ongoing migration of Hungarians from Romania to Hungary and because of the departure of some of its internal opposition to competing parties, the DAHR has reason to fear for its continuation in the near future. This could be a significant loss for both the Hungarian minority in Romania as well as for Romanian society as a whole, because thanks to the

³³ Niculescu, Toni: *National Minorities' Share of Power in Romania*. Bucharest, manuscript, 2003.

³⁴ Kemp, idem

crucial position of the DAHR in the centre of the Romanian political scene it was able to make considerable progress on core Hungarian minority issues, of which other minorities profited as well³⁵. As a result, inter-ethnic relations improved, but they still need continuous investments for improvement. Niculescu: *“Diversity integration, minority inclusiveness and participation were subject to political negotiation, pending on the electoral outcomes, according to short-term political agreements. Real progress can occur under severe monitoring of the West. For example, centre-periphery tensions would significantly decrease once EU regulations and principles regarding regional development and subsidiarity will be in place. Yet, as there is no acquis on minority rights, once the candidate states have concluded accession negotiations there remains no room for monitoring in this sense. This is especially worrisome given that minority rights standards in some of the EU member states themselves do not meet the criteria on minority protection, as laid down by the Copenhagen European Council.”*³⁶

Slovakia

The Republic of Slovakia has 5.4 million inhabitants, with a majority of Slovaks (4.3 million). Slovakia is a very young state as it officially separated from the Czech Republic on January 1st, 1993. The official language is Slovak. The major minorities are Hungarians, Roma, Ukrainian and Czech. Slovakia has a multicultural history and it was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. 597,400 people define themselves as Slovakian-Hungarians, which is 11.2% of the total population. Approximately 560 to 600 thousand people in Slovakia speak Hungarian.³⁷ In general Slovaks are Catholics, while many of the Slovakian-Hungarians are Protestants. Economically the Hungarians are more or less equal to the Slovaks. Between 1991 and 2000 around 46,000 Slovakian-Hungarians assimilated in Slovakia.³⁸ The Hungarians mostly live in the southern parts of Slovakia now, near to the Hungarian border. From 1945 to 1948 the Hungarians lost their citizenship and many were deported under the Benes Decrees. In October, 2004, the Hungarian Museum in the Slovakian city of Komarno offered an exposition on this subject. During the negotiations for the present coalition government in 2002, which the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) is part of too, this subject and the demand for territorial autonomy was explicitly banned from the agenda.

³⁵ Romanian Acts: <http://www.minelres.lv/NationalLegislation/Romania/romania.htm>

³⁶ Niculescu, idem

³⁷ Mercator Education, www.mercator-education.org, 2004

³⁸ Bárdi, Nándor: Hungary and the Hungarians Living Abroad, 121–38.

In 1995 Slovakia ratified the European Framework Convention of National Minorities. Under the successive governments of Mikulas Dzurinda, Slovakia took steps to make up for the poor record of national minority protection under the Meciar regime.³⁹ At present Slovakian-Hungarians speak their mother tongue freely in public. Only ten years ago this was something completely different. Speaking Hungarian in public was an open invitation to be told in insulting language that in Slovakia one has to speak Slovakian. All the young and middle-aged Slovakian-Hungarians are bilingual. During their studies the Hungarians like the Slovaks are confronted with much pressure to learn the Slovakian language as well as possible. As in Romania, Hungarians are easily recognized by their Hungarian accent. In Slovakian Cabaret this accent is used in the same funny way like the British make use of the French accent. However, Hungarians make the same use of the Slavic accent.

Like in Romania, the participation of Slovakian-Hungarians in the national government and at a local level, but also the presence of Slovakian-Hungarian athletes in the mass media has very much improved the general opinion about the Hungarian minority and the way it is treated in public. The Slovakian government is aware of the dangers of ethnic closure and enclosure, and it has stimulated interaction effectively.

The interactions of national minorities inside the political scene of Slovakia

The Slovakian-Hungarians followed the historical precedent of the DAHR joining the Romanian coalition in 1996 in 1998. The SMK is an association of three different parties with a slightly different nature: Christen Democratic, Liberal and Social-liberal. The first Dzurinda government abolished a controversial law on local elections, reintroduced school certificates in both the State and minority languages, and committed itself to introducing a new law on minority languages. At the end of this period, the SMK became more and more dissatisfied, due to the fact that the law on minority languages, adopted in July 1999, was too weak. The public administration reform did not take into account a redrawing of the two south-western regions with both a high concentration of ethnic Hungarians in the south of them, so

³⁹ Slovak Republic, Constitution of September 1st, 1992 and Amended: No. 244/1998 Coll., No. Amended: 9/1999 Coll., No. Amended: 90/2001 Coll.

Slovak Republic, Act on the state language of the Slovak Republic, 270/1995 Coll., and Amended: No. 260/1997 Coll., No. 5/1999 Coll., No. 184/1999 Coll.

Slovak Republic, Act on the use of languages of national minorities, 184/1999 Coll.

there was no progress on increasing opportunities for Hungarian-language teacher training, and finally, no perspective for a state-funded Hungarian University. The relations between the SMK and its coalition partners therefore became tense. However, in general, the parties appear to be able to resolve their differences within the coalition through the normal give and take of political compromise.⁴⁰

After the elections in the autumn of 2002, Dzurinda was surprisingly re-elected. As second strongest party in the coalition, the bargaining position of the SMK was further strengthened. Since 2002 Slovakia has faced an enormous number of institutional changes. The law on minority languages was amended. October 2004 the coalition agreed on a high level of decentralization of the national government authority accompanied by a decentralized redistribution of the national budget and the right of a package of potentially applied local taxations. On the first of September 2004, the Comenius University of Komarno opened its doors as a mutually-funded Slovakian and Hungarian University.

It would seem that the SMK smartly integrates its nation-building project as a federation of the Hungarian minority into the ambitious program of institutional changes that the Dzurinda government is engaged in. Finally, respondents noted that the criterion of professional merit and credibility is gaining more and more weight for people to vote for a politician regardless of his or her ethnic affiliation. For this reason SMK is winning more seats in Parliament, and also rising numbers of local representatives - more than can be explained on the basis of ethnic solidarity.

The interactions of the Hungarian governments with the Hungarians in Slovakia

The SMK is very comparable with the DAHR as a party that has its *raison d'être* in the nation-building process that unites the Hungarian minority. The fact that an apology for the cruelties happened under the Benes Decrees between 1945 and 1948 has still not been made, the taboo on territorial autonomy, and the discontent in the Slovakian mass media when a Slovakian-Hungarian member of the European Parliament addressed the European Parliament in his mother tongue, repeatedly confronts the Hungarian minority with the homogenizing tendencies of the nation-building process of the Slovakian state. By contrast, this stimulates its own nation-building project

⁴⁰ Kemp, *idem*

as a minority. The Hungarian Status Law challenged its credibility inside the government coalition and nationalist politicians used the situation to blame the SMK of ethnic discrimination.

Like Romanian-Hungarians, Slovakian-Hungarians are foreigners in Hungary. Although they speak Hungarian, their accent and dialect make it clear where they come from. Being treated as a foreigner in Hungary is a point mentioned by respondents. It seems to be more hurtful than being confronted with the nationalistic tendencies of Slovaks, since they are expected to act that way.

The Netherlands

In 2004 the Netherlands had 16.2 million inhabitants.⁴¹ On the basis of self-identification, the following minorities are found: among the Dutch around 350,000 have Frisian as their mother tongue and around 600,000 are able to speak this language⁴², of the 341,000 Turkish 8% defines themselves as Kurd, of the 295,000 Moroccans 34% defines themselves as Berber, of the 321,000 Surinamese 38% defines themselves as Hindustani, 37% Creole, 7% Javanese, and of the 129,000 Dutch Antilles 45% defines themselves as Curacao and 11% as Arubans⁴³. The Netherlands signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, but until now it has not ratified it.

As there is a strong link identified between a minority status and a weak socio-economic position, most Dutch policy efforts and social research projects are focused on the social and economic situation of the identified minority groups. Education as a strong indicator for success on the labor market is also of key interest. Children of minority groups have education in the mother tongue next to education in Dutch in the major cities with large concentrations of minorities. Despite its success⁴⁴ providing education in the mother tongue, besides the Frisian language, is being replaced by additional education in the Dutch language as an answer to the continuously weak re-

⁴¹ CBS (Dutch Bureau of Statistics), WWW.CBS.NL/STATLINE, 2004

⁴² Mercator Education, www.mercator-education.org, 2004

⁴³ Dagevos, Jaco, Gijsberts Mérove and Carlo van Praag (eds): *Rapportage Minderheden 2003: onderwijs, arbeid en social-culturele integratie* [Report on Minorities 2003: Education, Labour and Social and Cultural integration] Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2004. 17.

⁴⁴ See for example: Tesser, Paul and Jaco Dagevos: *Voorbij de etnische onderklasse? De integratie van etnische minderheden in het onderwijs en op de arbeidsmarkt* [Departing the ethnical underclass? The integration of ethnic minorities in education and on the labour market] In F. Becker, W van Hennekeker, M. Sie Dhian Ho, B. Tromp (eds.): *Transnationale Nederland*. Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2002.

sults in this part of the educational curriculum. On national television as well on several regional and local TV stations, minority groups have separate time to broadcast in their own language. They can apply for national, regional and local subsidies to maintain these programmes, but often these are also (partially) privately funded. In general these programmes are subtitled in Dutch as well. Normally, the Dutch majority population does not often view these programmes. However, when some conflicting opinions on for example homosexuality, equal rights for woman, or the Iraq-conflict are broadcast, that particular programme gains considerable attention in both the local and national media. Discussions about slashing subsidies for these programmes usually flare up and soon after disappear.

Freedom of religion and freedom of education are heritages from the past, anchored in Dutch Constitutional law and still strongly defended by the religion-based parties, but also defended by the Liberal and Social Democratic parties. In this culturally liberal climate, the newcomers have the right to have their own places for their religion and their private schools as well. The most visible are the Mosques and the Islamic University in Rotterdam, which is dedicated to Koran education. In the larger cities several Mosques have been built, while the Islam has a fast-growing religious population split up into several enumerations like the Protestant Church. At the moment the different denominations of the Islam in the Netherlands have around 1 million believers, and it is forecast that in a period of twenty years this number will double.⁴⁵

Despite this culturally liberal tradition, the politically correct interpretation of multiculturalism has created a divide between a part of the Dutch majority and its political elite in the past decades. To overcome this divide, the more rightwing parties are promoting cultural assimilation to improve the socio-economic integration of the immigrants, rather than investing in the augmentation of quantity and quality of interactions between members of the majority with members of the minorities. When we take a look at some of the social-scientific research results, it is clear that the Netherlands must take action.

Surinamese and Dutch Antilleans state they have a lot of contact with the Dutch majorities; while Turkish and Moroccans report much less contact, although this is slightly improving over generations and with a higher level of education.⁴⁶ In general Moroccans and Turkish have little sympathy for modern values. Instead they feel a strong attachment to their religion. In both respects

⁴⁵ Dagevos, *idem*, 2004. 17.

⁴⁶ Dagevos, *idem*, 2004. 321.

they differ from the Dutch majority and from the Surinamese and Dutch Antilleans as well.⁴⁷ Turkish and Moroccans more often use their own languages than they use Dutch, although the second generation reports a significantly higher use of Dutch.⁴⁸ It is not surprising that Turkish and Moroccans identify more with their own group than with the Dutch majority.⁴⁹ The attitude of the majority members towards the different minority groups is different. Turkish and Moroccans are more or less liked by 27% of the respondents, but more or less disliked by 34%. Members of the Dutch majority feel comfortable in interaction with Surinamese (55%), Turkish (40%) and Moroccans (28%), and not comfortable in interaction with Surinamese (15%), Turkish (28%), and Moroccans (38%).⁵⁰ By contrast, the members of the minority groups feel themselves comfortable in interaction with members of the majority: Surinamese (96%), Turkish (81%) and Moroccans (86%), and not comfortable in interaction with the majority: Surinamese (4%), Turkish (21%), and Moroccans (14%).⁵¹ These empirical data shows that the assimilation of the Moroccans and the Turkish in the Netherlands is rather unsuccessful.

The assimilation policy of the past few years has made especially the Turkish and Moroccans report a decrease in experienced tolerance. As the theory on nation-building predicts, pressure of the majority on assimilation will lead to assimilation, challenge and migration. Newspapers report tendencies of assimilation and of migration as well. Highly educated Turkish are thinking of remigration to their mother country as they no longer feel welcomed by the Dutch and do not see a way to rid themselves of the social control of their Turkish peers who are much less modernized than Turkish people in the major towns of Turkey.⁵² On the other hand, there are several international Muslim foundations that support Mosques and Koran schools in the Netherlands. Some of these foundations are listed as fundamentalist and as supporters of international Muslim terrorism. Empirical research is required to find out if fundamentalist Muslim foundations are developing a kind of nation-building strategy by organizing resistance towards governments in the Muslim world on the one hand and meanwhile executing Mus-

⁴⁷ Dagevos, *idem*, 2004. 328.

⁴⁸ Dagevos, *idem*, 2004. 331.

⁴⁹ Dagevos, *idem*, 2004. 332.

⁵⁰ Dagevos, *idem*, 2004. 366.

⁵¹ Dagevos, *idem*, 2004. 381.

⁵² Santing, Froukje: *Modern Turkije lokt remiganten: Hoogopgeleide Turken keren intolerant Nederland de rug toe* [Modern Turkey attracts remigrants: Higher educated Turkish wants to leave the intolerant Netherlands] *NRC Handelsblad*, January 7, 2005.

lim terrorism in Western countries. The belief of a collective victim-hood of Muslims worldwide plays an important role in this process.

The interactions of minorities inside the political scene of the Netherlands

The participation of members of minorities as members of the different political parties in the Netherlands is generally regarded as a result of their integration into the Dutch society. Until now, there have been no signs of minority-based political parties in the Netherlands. Because of this situation the question of dealing with minorities has been formulated in individual terms of equality in changes of opportunities, equal access to education, and non-discrimination. To realize equality of opportunities and access to education, affirmative action is applied in many policy measurements. However, this individual approach will soon be challenged, as it has been announced that a Muslim democratic party is to be founded in May 2005 to run in the local elections in the major cities in 2006.

The interactions of kin-state governments with minorities in the Netherlands and with the Dutch government

In recent history, when the governments of Morocco, Suriname and Turkey were classified as more or less dictatorial or rather authoritarian, both the different minorities and the Dutch authorities were anxiously aware of activities of spying and intimidation. As the governments of the main minority groups became of a more and more democratic signature this fear has faded away. Actually there are serious concerns regarding the recruitment practices of Islamist fundamental groups in and around some of the Arab-funded Mosques.

Both the governments of the Netherlands and the kin-states act upon the assumption that migrants will assimilate into the country of arrival. For some reason, the Moroccan government is an exception to this rule as it continues to see the Moroccans in the Netherlands as its citizens. Especially regarding the family law this is complicated: getting divorced is very complicated and the Dutch law unlike the Moroccan law does not accept that a man can be married to more than one woman. However, no significant action has been undertaken by the Turkish or Moroccan governments to strengthen the relations with their kin-minorities in the Netherlands, or to encourage the use of their mother tongue or enhance their cultural heritage.

West-European policy advisers advised the governments of the Central and East European states to adopt special minority rights, to improve both international security and to integrate minorities into society. Preserving the

language and the cultural identity of minorities is so valued that it is also an integral part of the Copenhagen criteria to obtain the EU-membership.⁵³ It is an application of double standards if the EU founding states does not apply the same criteria. For the Netherlands it is important to realize that states should protect and promote minorities within their sovereign jurisdiction. The necessary steps should be taken in awareness of the challenges of being a multi-nation society. In recognizing that it is a multi-nation society, the Netherlands have to actively guarantee the equality of opportunities, protection of minority rights, propagation of mother tongue languages, and to ensure the effective participation of minorities in public life. In fact these subjects are on the agenda of the Dutch policy makers. The socio-economic dimension of integration has enjoyed considerable attention. However, the socio-cultural dimension needs more attention in a mutual sense: both the majority and the minorities have to invest in their mutual perceptions and mutual conceptualization.

Conclusions

Confronted with the nation-building program of a majority, minorities react in three different ways: assimilation; challenge; or migration. The Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia react in all three ways. Over the decades their number has decreased due to both assimilation and migration. Still their number is large enough and they live geographically concentrated enough and have a strong sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture and language that they challenge the nation-building programs of the Romanians and the Slovaks by their own Romanian-Hungarian and Slovakian-Hungarian nation-building programs. Their challenge was successful since the Hungarians overcame their internal differences and became part of the national political scenes in Bucharest and Bratislava. As the historical materials show there is a thin line between tolerance and violence in both Romania and Slovakia between the majority and the Hungarian minority. The Hungarian language acts as an unintended but effective mechanism for social closure and enclosure. Differences in religion may

⁵³ See also: Council of Europe, European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Application of the Charter in Hungary: Report of the Committee of Experts on the Charter and recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the application of the Charter by Hungary, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2001. Council of Europe, Second report of the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities, submitted by Hungary, Council of Europe (ACFC/SR/II (2004: 003), Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2004.

strengthen this tendency, while being equal economically does not affect this. Indifference between these social groups easily develops into distrust fed by the myths of national victim-hood. Being active on both the national and local political scene offers the Hungarian minority an unintended means to prove their loyalty to their home states and to their commitment to their dignity as a minority and their minority rights as well. The case of the Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia proves that mutual interaction offers the only way out to social closure and enclosure.

The difference between national minorities and immigrants is an empirical one, depending on the orientation of the minority group in question. If the project of assimilation fails within the first generation of migrants, it is still possible for the second generation to develop its own nation-building program to challenge the societal culture of the majority. The children of a first generation of migrants being born in their homeland is as much a matter of fact outside their free will as for the offspring of the national minorities. Both face a life in multicultural surroundings: the culture of their parents and the culture of the majority society in which they somehow are being acculturated.

Dutch policy makers have to realize that any immigrant group of a significant number of people, who are active participants in a religion or life philosophy will mostly adhere to this practice and to the language that is accompanied by this practice as long as this language is not altered for the use of Dutch. As the experiences of the Central and East European countries teach us, oppression of collective identities can lead to assimilation, migration and the challenging of the majority, including the use of violence as well. It is important to understand the mechanism of nation building: the stronger the repression of the minority's sense of its distinct identity, the more the result is a strengthening rather than a weakening of this awareness.

At present, both the Dutch government as well as the kin-state governments are still acting more or less on the assumption that the immigrants will assimilate. It is debatable whether this assumption will prove to be correct for the children of the numerous and rather concentrated immigrant groups of a Turkish and Moroccan origin. The appeal of the fundamentalist Islam to young Dutch Muslims may be interpreted as a sign that this group is challenging the Dutch nation-building project with its own nation-building program. Myths of victim-hood play an important role in this process.