

Nationalist Affects of Pride and Trauma in Hungary: Defending Europe at the Trianon Border

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INTRODUCTION

This paper argues that different and contradictory forms of nationalism can coexist within society. Attention to geographic visions, territorial discourses and border policy allows us to distinguish these different forms of nationalism. Hungary in the past five years provides an example of such coexistence. The migration crisis in 2015 prompted the government of Hungary to build a border fence along the boundary with Serbia and Croatia. Although it meant to prevent migration passage through Hungary, it also demarcated the border which separates Hungary from transborder Hungarian communities in Serbia's Vojvodina region.

Such an outcome contradicts the dominant nationalist discourse, championed by the Fidesz government, which aims to eradicate boundaries and recreate a unified but transborder Hungarian nation. The border between Hungary and Serbia is a Trianon boundary, created at the Trianon Peace Treaty in 1920. Trianon transferred two-thirds of the country's territory, including Vojvodina, to Hungary's neighbors. The Trianon trauma sustains transborder nationalism in Hungary to this day.

What effect did Hungary's southern border wall have on nationalism in the country?

To justify border security and avoid the clash with the dominant transborder form of nationalism, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz government articulated an alternative affective storyline of the border, which reframes it as Christian Europe's defensive line against the invading Muslim immigrants. In this nationalist storyline, Hungary represents Europe's border fortress and a proud and heroic defender of the continent's Christian civilization. This new geopolitical role echoes a popular understanding of Hungary's medieval history and the myth of Christendom's bulwark, memorialized in the event of the Nandorfehervár Battle (1456) and personified by the battle's heroes, János Hunyadi and Mihály Szilágyi. Consequently, Hungary's southern border has recently become a location where two contradictory nationalist affects and

the forms of nationhood coexist – the Trianon trauma/transborder nationhood and the Nandorfehervar pride/rampart nationhood.

The most general theoretical finding indicates that the justification of border walls requires the reframing of the national territory in line with the geography articulated by border security and away from the spatially expanded vision of nationhood. The geography of border security becomes a territorial template for political actors to articulate a new bounded, walled geography of nationhood. The content of security discourse, therefore, is entirely comprised of nationalist ideas and visions about ethno-cultural homogeneity, territorial integrity, sovereign statehood, etc. A successful reframing of the nation's geography is a matter of politicians' skills to craft a convincing geopolitical storyline in favor of the border wall that would combine security and nationalist arguments.

The paper is based on a discourse-analytical study of politics of Hungary's border fence in 2015 and my fieldwork along the Hungarian-Serbian border in 2019. It is divided into four parts. First, I outline the concept of national territory and classify types of nationalism in their relation to border. Second, I introduce Hungary's transborder nationalism. Third, I trace the discursive emergence of the alternative form of nationalism, rampart nationhood, in parallel to the physical construction of the southern border barrier. Fourth, I introduce a museum in the border village of Asotthalom, which commemorates and reconciles the contradictory affective discourses of nationhood.

BORDERS, TERRITORIES AND NATIONALISM

This study goes beyond a simple explanation that nationalist narratives securitize border and that border security policies reproduce the nationalist narratives of othering. This paper complicates this theoretical argument without necessarily rejecting it. Rather a static ideology, this study understands nationalism as a territorial discourse, which is shaped and updated within a geopolitical context. Instead of speaking of Nationalism as self-evident, singular or static concept, I argue that it can have multiple forms and geographies that are in opposition to each other. Some of these discourses might oppose the border wall. Nationhood can operate in broader or narrower spatial forms. The imagined national space can extend beyond sovereign political borders to encompass ethnic kin in neighboring countries. On the other hand, it can also exclude certain portions of the state territory from the nation, manifested in ghettos of various kinds in different historical periods and geographical contexts. Which of these geographies becomes hegemonic and materializes into a particular border regime, depends on a political context.

I distinguish two forms of nationalism. The first is territorial nationalism. It aims to reify existing political borders/territory and turn them into national borders/territory. National borders refer imagined spatial boundaries of the nation. Often national and political borders overlap. It is a result of social spatialization: when institutional, popular and everyday discourses over a long

period institutionalize political sovereign borders as ‘natural’ limits of the nation’s homeland (Paasi, 1996). Benedict Anderson (2016) has shown that colonial projects led not just to independent states but homelands. Educational, cultural, media and political institutions all play a role in the transformation of political territories into national territories. Cartographic images of the state (logo-maps) where borders define the territorial contour (geo-body) of the country play a significant role in the transformation of political boundaries into national borders. Michael Billig’s (1995) account of banal nationalism fits with this definition. Border discourses play a particularly important role as they differentiate homeland from the foreign land both spatially and normatively (Megoran, 2017; Sahlins, 1991).

Such institutional discourses can be at odds with other prominent, notably historical discourses of nationhood that define the nation’s space in a more expanded form to include places of historical and religious importance beyond the state’s political borders. In such cases, political and national territories, and consequently, political and national borders, can be incongruent. In the case of Hungary, many people differentiate between political borders and national borders. The latter generally refers to a larger spatial unit, often defined in physical geographical terms as the Carpathian Basin. It corresponds to the territorial extent of the Kingdom of Hungary before the Trianon Treaty in 1920, which transferred large parts of the kingdom to Hungary’s neighboring countries. During my research interviews in Hungary, I asked the respondents, where do they think are the national borders of Hungary. None of the answers referred to the internationally recognized post-Trianon borders. The respondents usually located the national borders inside the territories of neighboring countries. This is the second form of nationalism: extra-territorial or transborder.

Extra-territorial/transborder nationalism is a nationalist discourse that is oriented outside of political borders, outside of the state territory, hence, extra-territorial. Yet, despite its spatial orientation beyond the political boundaries, it is not territorial as it does not claim sovereignty over an external land. Instead, its object is primarily people, usually understood as ethnic kin or a part of the transborder nation. Hungary is a prime example of such a form of nationalism. Rogers Brubaker and other scholars of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe have described such extra-territorial nationalist policies of ethnic kin (Brubaker, 1996; Csergo & Goldgeier, 2004; Pogonyi, 2017; Waterbury, 2010).

The next chapter explains in more detail a transborder or extra-territorial nationalism in Hungary, followed by the third chapter on the emergence of a territorial form of nationalism in 2015. The final, fourth, chapter describes the coexistence of these two distinct forms of nationalism at Hungary’s southern border.

HUNGARY'S TRANSBORDER NATIONHOOD

All of Hungary's current borders are the legacy of the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty, one of the peace treaties agreed by the victorious powers in Versailles after World War I. The Treaty transferred approximately two-thirds of the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary (itself part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) to neighboring countries. Pre-Trianon 'Great Hungary' roughly coincides with the geographic extent of what is known as the Carpathian Basin. The Hungarian delegation's environmentally deterministic discourse at the Versailles Treaty equated the 'natural borders' of the Carpathian Basin with the political borders of Hungary (Antonsich & Szalkai, 2014). In today's everyday and political vocabulary, the two geographical units – Great Hungary and Carpathian Basin – are practically synonymous.

As a result of Trianon, three million 'ethnic Hungarians' (based on the census of the period) found themselves beyond Hungary's new borders. Many of their descendants today still identify as Hungarian. More than a million of them possess Hungarian citizenship and hundreds of thousands vote in Hungary's parliamentary elections.

According to a widely accepted understanding of nationhood in Hungary, the Hungarian nation extends beyond the state's territorial (Trianon) borders. In addition to the 10 million citizens of Hungary who live inside the state's borders, the nation includes 'Hungarians beyond the border' (*határon túli magyarok*). They live in the neighboring countries but within the areas once belonging to Hungary.¹ According to this geographical imagination, the state's boundaries and the nation's boundaries are different.

Hungary's border fence does not merely demarcate an international political border between two sovereign countries and create an obstacle to migrants from faraway places. The barrier physically separates Hungary from a quarter of a million 'Hungarians' in Serbia's northern region. The region – Vojvodina – was part of the Kingdom of Hungary until 1920. The Trianon Treaty allocated the area together with its population to Yugoslavia.

The loss of territory and people after the imposed Treaty, following the defeat in the Great War, produced a strong sense of victimhood in Hungary's geopolitical culture. "Trianon Trauma" is a common term to describe the geopolitical affect. In the wake of Trianon, Hungarians expressed

¹ The absolute majority of these transborder Hungarians live close to Hungary's state borders. They are spread across all seven neighboring countries of Hungary but within the limits of what is known as a physical geographic area of the Carpathian Basin. According to the most recent official statistical figures by the neighboring states, there are between 2 and 2.5 million 'Hungarians beyond the border'. Half of them live in the Romanian region of Transylvania, almost half a million live in Slovakia and about a quarter of a million lives in the Serbian region of Vojvodina. These statistical figures, of course, are only indicative. Different countries count 'ethnicity' differently. A variety of political, cultural and institutional factors are involved in ethnic categorization of population. People, who are identified by their state of residence or by Hungary as 'Hungarian', due to their last name or family origins, might not themselves identify as such. Some of these transborder Hungarians might identify with more than one nation or none at all.

the shared affective condition in the image of *Csonka-Magyarország* (mutilated, dismembered Hungary). The term was prevalent during the interwar period and directly implied the policy of territorial revisionism. The Communist regime banned the phrase, but it regained publicity after the regime change in 1990.

Territorial revisionism was a dominant geopolitical vision in the interwar period (Pap & Reményi, 2017). Admiral Horthy's revanchism, who led the country during this period and into an alliance with Nazi Germany, sought to return the 'lost territories' to the 'rightful owner.' For a brief period during World War Two, Hungary recaptured some of these areas from Czechoslovakia and Romania. However, following the defeat of Nazi Germany, what returned was not the lost territories but the borders created by Trianon. The location of the 175 km long Hungarian-Serbian border has not changed since Trianon.

Territorial revisionism lost its appeal in the subsequent decades among Hungary's political elites. Instead, politicians and intellectuals of the Socialist regime de-emphasized a territorial conception of the Hungarian nation at the expense of a culturalist conception. The latter differs from a Gellnerian definition of nationalism as a quest for the congruence of political and cultural boundaries. Gellner's definition better suits the discarded territorial revisionism of the interwar period. This new culturalist vision had a complex understanding of political and cultural borders. It recognized the "division between states, but no longer the division between the Hungarian nation" (Waterbury, 2010, p.47).

In the 1970s and '80s, Hungarians 're-discovered' ethnic kin and their folk culture in the neighboring countries. Minority rights of these Hungarian communities against the nationalizing programs of their countries of residence acquired a political salience in Hungary (Brubaker et al., 2006; Waterbury, 2010). In 1989, after the regime change, the new democratic Parliament amended the 1949 constitution to codify Hungary's transborder nationalism. The amendment stated: "The Republic of Hungary bears responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living outside its borders and shall promote and foster their relations with Hungary." Prime Minister Jozsef Antall announced himself to be the "Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians in spirit".² The policy of protecting ethnic Hungarians beyond the border became one of the three most central foreign policy directions ever since (Tóth, 2002; Waterbury, 2010).³

In the following decade, the successive governments of Hungary institutionalized the vision of transborder nationalism under the policy of nationhood (*nemzetpolitika*). Since 1990, the

² Hungary's population is about 10 million and it was thought that about 5 million ethnically Hungarians live in neighboring states. According to the latest official statistics, their number is at least half of that. However, "15 million Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin" has become a political commonplace despite different demographic figures. In a 2017 article on the Hungarian government's website, Prime Minister's international spokesman wrote that "About one-third of the 15 million-strong, ethnic Hungarian community, lives outside the borders of Hungary, mostly in the Carpathian Basin". <http://abouthungary.hu/blog/ethnic-hungarians-a-nation-in-a-united-europe/>

³ The other two foreign policy priorities were Euro-Atlantic integration and stable, friendly relations with neighbors.

governments have established numerous agencies and institutions to develop economic, cultural and political links with transborder Hungarians. The Office for Hungarians Beyond the Border, set up in 1990, coordinated these governmental efforts and directed *nemzetpolitika*. Zsuzsa Csergo and James Goldgeier (2004) identify Hungary's institutionalization of transborder ethnic links as a primary example of trans-sovereign nationalism. The authors define 'trans-sovereign nationalism' as a form of political organization, which instead of forming a nation-state, reproduces the nation across existing state borders. This nationalist program aims to "virtualize" sovereign territorial borders. According to the guiding document of *nemzetpolitika*, *The Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad*, "the borders of the nation stretch as far as the influence of the national institutions, which help to maintain the national identity" (NPÁT 2013, p.14).

Since 2010, Prime Minister Viktor Orban and his party Fidesz have accelerated the program of national unification beyond the borders. Towards this end, the Fidesz-led Parliament adopted a series of laws and legal changes in 2010-2011. First, the Act of National Belonging codified Hungary's transborder nationhood into law by declaring that "all members and communities of the Hungarian nation, subjected to the jurisdiction of other states, belong to the single Hungarian nation" (Parliament of Hungary 2010, p.12). The Parliament also adopted a new constitution which further affirmed transborder nationhood. Second, the government granted dual citizenship to Hungarians beyond the border. Third, the Parliament granted voting rights to non-resident citizens of Hungary. The new elections law explicitly defines "Hungarian citizens living beyond the borders" as "a part of the political community" (Parliament of Hungary, 2011, p.2). Since then 1.1 million foreign citizens have acquired a Hungarian passport (NPKI, 2020). A few hundred thousand of them have voted in the 2014 and 2018 general elections.⁴ Fidesz received more than 95% of the votes cast among non-resident voters in neighboring countries.

MIGRATION, BORDER WALL AND RAMPART NATIONALISM

In the second half of 2014, immigration into Hungary grew sharply. During that year, a total of 42,000 applied for asylum in Hungary, compared to 2,000 in 2012. These were mostly Kosovars, but also those from more distant places such as Africa and the Middle East, who transited through Hungary to reach Germany and other western and northern European countries. Despite rising numbers, immigration did not attract much attention from the Hungarian public at the end of 2014. Only 3% identified this policy area as one of the two most important issues facing Hungary (15 percentage points less than the EU average of 18%) (Eurobarometer, 2014).

The Kosovo Wave ended in March 2015 but the topic moved to the central political stage at the end of April after two shocking events. First, Fidesz lost a parliamentary seat in a by-election to

⁴ Unlike the residents of Hungary, transborder citizens of Hungary vote for party list only. They do not vote for district representatives.

a candidate from radical right-wing opposition party Jobbik on 12 April. Jobbik's victory highlighted the general trend in the public opinion surveys of the previous months that showed that Jobbik was catching up with Fidesz's nationwide rating (HVG, 2015). Second, a ship transporting migrants capsized near the island of Lampedusa in the Mediterranean and more than 800 people on board died on 19 April. A tragedy of such proportions elicited the feelings of sympathy and compassion among the European public (De Genova, 2017, 2-3). The event prompted the EU leaders to agree to relocate 60,000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy, which housed the highest number of refugees, and from outside the EU and distribute them across all member states. Distribution criteria included GDP, population size and unemployment rate. According to the formula, Hungary would have accepted 1,134 asylum seekers (European Commission, 2015a).

These new domestic and European developments seriously undermined Viktor Orban's position. Both developments had immigration in common. At home, Fidesz was losing popularity to a challenger, which had been articulating a xenophobic nationalism and displacing Fidesz as the most vocal defender of the nation against the foreign danger. For months, Jobbik had been advocating for strict border control against what they described as "flood," "tsunami" and "invasion" of "criminal" immigrants. Jobbik's discourse of threat was an example of 'protectionist nationalism,' which Csergo and Goldgeier (2004) had identified a decade earlier as a form of nationalism found in some European countries but distinct from Hungary's dominant, trans-sovereign nationalism. The new geopolitical context of large-scale migration, however, allowed Jobbik to tap into the political force of such nationalist discourse and gain tangible success.

At the European level, Orban stood out from the rest of the EU heads of states with his anti-immigrant position but he was fast losing popularity with the changing 'structure of feeling' within the EU about the fate of migrants. The Prime Minister's spokesperson Zoltan Kovacs identified the positive emotions, such as compassion and sympathy, that people have for refugees and immigrants who face terrible conditions on their way, as the main problem for his government. The task for the government was to engage in "communicative struggle," take the initiative and change the narrative (Kovács, 2019).

On 17 June, Hungary's Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto announced the government's plan to build a four-meter-tall barrier along the 175km-long border with Serbia. Szijjarto described the decision as a Hungarian alternative to the common EU proposal to relocate and resettle refugees. The announcement of the border fence marks a decisive shift in nationalist discourse in Hungary. The politics of nationhood broadened beyond *nemzetpolitika*. Orban's debate on border security and immigration with the EU leaders and arguments directed at 'Brussels' started to shape new affective geography of Hungary's nationhood and national borders.

The discursive construction of danger emphasized the scale and number of foreigners arriving in Hungary and Europe. First, Fidesz members repeatedly used a historical analogy of the Great Migration Period between the 4th and 6th centuries AD to underscore the magnitude of the

problem. At a press briefing on 1 July, Orban argued that “the question we have to deal with is not a question of asylum, and not even a question of economic migration, but a modern-age mass migration which will remain with us for a long time as one of the greatest challenges determining politics in Europe” (Orban, 2015a).

Second, by July, Orban had appropriated the metaphor of “flood,” which Jobbik had already introduced in the previous months to describe the rising number of immigrants entering Hungary during the Kosovo Wave. The latter itself is a part of the metaphor that interprets human mobility in terms of large flows of water. “Flood” has a long history in fascist discourse (Theweleit, 1987). In his annual speech at the Balványos summer camp (25 July), which gathers Hungary’s conservative circles in a majority-Hungarian micro-region in Transylvania (Romania), Orban used the term “flood” three times to describe the scale of immigration into Europe. He declared that the “real threat is not from the war zones, but from the heart of Africa,” from where “hundreds of millions” would “spectacularly breach” the North African “line of defense,” which would “no longer protect Europe from a vast flood of people” (Orban, 2015b).

The discourse of “flood” and “mass migration” shifted the focus towards demography and implied a threat to society’s ‘way of life.’ At stake, Orban argued, was Europe’s survival as a distinct civilization and Hungary’s survival as a nation. At the beginning of June, Orban was asking, “what will our continent be like after such a wave of migration?” Anti-immigration policies at the EU level were necessary to maintain the continent as a “Christian Europe” and prevent its transformation into a “multicultural Europe” (Orban, 2015c). The entry of a large number foreigners with different civilizational backgrounds (“Islam, the Asian religions”) would lead to the “extinction of European values and nations – or, to be more precise, their transformation beyond all recognition,” declared Orban at the end of July (Orban, 2015d; 2015b).

These formulations of the object of protection indicate a shift in the nationalist discourse. Orban justified anti-immigrant border security with civilizational discourse rather than more familiar ethnonationalism. The opposition between Europe’s Christian civilization and Asian/African/Muslim immigrants constituted the politically salient meaning of nationhood. Hungary, as part of Christian Europe, was under the threat of extinction from a civilizationally different and not an ethnically different enemy. Rogers Brubaker (2017) defines this form of nationalist discourse as “civilizationism.” According Brubaker, civilizationism can become a form of nationalism whenever “the content of national culture or national identity is specified in civilizational language” (p. 1211). The sociologist has observed that civilizationism among the European populists unmarks territorially defined national identities and politicizes the “supra-confessional civilizational divide between (Judeo-) Christianity and Islam” (Ibid.). The lack of emphasis on national differences meant that this civilizational discourse defined Hungary’s national territory in terms of its position inside “Christian Europe” and not against the neighboring nations/states.

The discourse downplayed the sovereign-territorial meaning of the southern border, which is the central problem in Hungary's transborder nationalism. Instead, Orbán's civilizational discourse emphasized the EU/Schengen territoriality to identify the border as a defensive line against the outside danger. The civilizational geography articulated in Orbán's storyline removed the political-sovereign layer. In its place, the border fence would demarcate "Christian Europe" from faraway places of danger (e.g. "heart of Africa"). This geography of nationhood and security no longer defined the space south of the border as Serbia or any specific country, but a route, a corridor, or a channel, diverting the 'flood' of 'mass migration' towards Hungary and Europe. Hungary's southern border would replace Europe's "line of defense" previously (presumably, before the Arab Spring) performed by the countries in North Africa (Orbán, 2015b).

In response to the Serbian government's protest, Orbán tried to reassure his Serbian colleague that his border policy was "in no way directed against Serbia or the Serbian people." He also promised to open more border crossing points for "law-abiding people – be those Serbs or Hungarians" (Orbán, 2015a). The civilizational discourse allowed Orbán to avoid the familiar tension between Hungary's transborder nationhood and the southern border. It allowed him to de-emphasize the meaning of the border as a line dividing two sovereign states. National differences between Hungary and its neighboring countries were irrelevant in the new story of nationhood and its protection. The only relevant distinction was between "Christian Europeans" and "Muslim immigrants."

The construction of the fence started in July. It had an effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy, creating what it meant to prevent. Fearing that the route would soon be blocked, people on the move rushed towards Hungary to reach their European destinations before the border closure (Frontex, 2016; Thorpe, 2019). The number of irregular border crossings from Serbia into Hungary increased from 500 a day before the announcement in June to 3,000 a day at the end of August, reaching a monthly total of 52,000 in August (Thorpe, 2015; Police, 2015).

Besides this policy blowback at the border, Orbán's anti-immigrant discourse faced a new challenge in the political arena after two tragic events. On 27 August, police found 71 people suffocated to death in a truck in Austria, 30 km from the Hungarian border. The car was transporting Iraqi, Syrian and Afghan immigrants from the Hungarian-Serbian border to Munich. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who was attending a migration summit in Vienna, said everyone was "shaken" by the news and urged for joint action to solve the migration crisis (Thorpe 2019, p.67). A few days later (2 September), the image of a dead child – Alan Kurdi from Syria – on the Turkish coast moved the world leaders and further encouraged to take a welcoming action towards immigrants (Adler-Nissen et al., 2018). This materialized in a new relocation scheme to cover additional 120,000 people (European Commission, 2015b).

In response, Orbán accelerated the construction of the fence and dramatized the geopolitical storyline in the first two weeks of September. He claimed, the EU leaders were "almost encouraging" migrants to arrive by proposing the relocation scheme against "the will of Europe's citizens". In contrast, building a border fence was a "common sense" approach in a "battle for

[Europe's] fate" and the "only chance of satisfying our citizens' legitimate demands and desire for security" (Orban, 2015e; 2015f).

On 15 September, the 175km-long fence was completed.⁵ The legislative amendments entered into force and Orban declared a state of emergency in the counties neighboring the southern border.⁶ In the previous days, nearly 10,000 people were crossing the "green border" into Hungary every day (Thorpe, 2019). The people arriving at the border from Serbia suddenly found themselves stuck at the border. The government mobilized riot police, including counterterrorism commandos, and armored vehicles on the Hungarian side of the border at the Roszke border crossing point. On 16 September, as the migrants on the Serbian side chanted "Open the Gate!", some started throwing water bottles and rocks across the barrier. Police fired tear gas and water cannon in response. As the situation escalated, some of the migrants managed to open the gate, leading to confrontation, which ended with numerous injuries and the arrest of eleven migrants.

The images of frustrated, angry young migrant men trying to breach the border barrier were on the front pages of pro-government newspapers the next day and played continuously on Fidesz-friendly TV channels. In contrast, Fidesz gave a political directive to the loyal media outlets not to show pictures of migrant children to discourage sympathy among the wider public towards the people Orban thought were attacking Hungary (444, 2015). "War on all fronts!" was the headline of *Magyar Nemzet*, the conservative daily newspaper, also referring to Hungary's political wrangling at the EU level (Lukács, 2015). Orban himself qualified the incident as an "armed, organized attack on Hungary" (2015g).

On 21 September, Orban (2015h) went to the Parliament to make a case for the military's deployment at the border. There, he redefined the problem as "invasion":

Millions of migrants are besieging the borders of Hungary and Europe. Millions more are setting out. As a result, our borders are in danger, our way of life is in danger, and Hungary and the whole of Europe are in danger. What is happening now is an invasion; we are being invaded.

Recalling the newspaper frontpage from a couple of days ago, Orban promised to "fight a battle on two fronts." The first front was against the "European left" who "look upon migration as an opportunity to accomplish their historic goal: the elimination of nations." The second front was against the "invasion" to "protect the borders of Hungary and Europe" and urged the audience to "prepare for a long struggle."

⁵ The border fence was extended westwards and on 16 October the Croatian-Hungarian border too was finally fenced and closed. The fence covers only about a third of the whole Croatian border perimeter since the rest follows rivers Mura and Drava.

⁶ In March 2016, the government expanded emergency to cover the whole territory of Hungary and since then, has been extending its duration every six months.

Orban enriched the geopolitical storyline with a historical myth to ground it in Hungary's geopolitical culture. Protecting Europe was Hungary's "historical and moral duty," declared Orban in the Parliament (2015h). Orban had underscored this point earlier in July as well: "while protecting Hungary, we protect the European Union [and] this is not unprecedented in Hungarian history, we are used to it, we fulfill our obligation" (2015i). The idea that Hungary has historically been a bastion of Christendom is an established knowledge within the Hungarian geopolitical culture. According to a Gallup poll in 2000, 71% of respondents in Hungary agreed that "Hungary has been the bastion protecting the West for a thousand years" (Száráz, 2012). The Constitution states on the first page: "We are proud that our people have over the centuries defended Europe in a series of struggles."

Two days later, during his meeting with Bavarian politicians in Germany, Orban remarked that due to the geographic arrangement of the Schengen Area, Hungary served as an external border for Germany. Orban described himself as "the captain of the border fortress" and underscored his "duty to come here and report on the situation" (Prime Minister's Office, 2015). Fortress captains are well-known figures in Hungarian popular history (Pap & Reményi, 2017). One of the most famous fortress captains was Janos Hunyadi, who fought in the Battle of Belgrade (*Nandorfehervar* in Hungarian) in 1456 and halted the Ottoman invasion. This battle gave rise to the popular imagination of the country as a historic defender of Christendom.

Earlier in March, during his address to Hungary's diplomats, he noted that "Janos Hunyadi is painted on the wall of my office, which is called the Nandorfehervar Room and so I am constantly reminded of what can happen in the Balkans" (2015j). In an interview to a Swiss newspaper on 12 October, Orban (2015k) once again referenced the Nandorfehervar Battle to explain that Hungary's advocacy for "urgent action" against immigration was not simply self-centric but conditioned by its historical mission to save Europe from foreign invaders:

We are sitting here in the Nandorfehervar Hall of the Hungarian Parliament Building. This mural here shows how Hungary defended Europe against the Ottoman Empire. If you look at the churches depicted here – Notre Dame, Westminster Abbey, Stephansdom and Cologne Cathedral – you can see that none of them stand here in Hungary.

The everyday visual reminder of the historical battle no doubt contributed to Orban's re-imagination of the "migration crisis" along the Balkan Route as a military invasion of Europe and himself as a proud and brave fortress captain, defending the continent's Christian civilization from Muslim invaders.⁷ In this updated geopolitical storyline of immigration into Europe, the clash at the Roszke border crossing point between the Hungarian riot police and immigrants on 16 September symbolized the clash of civilizations and the defining moment when Orban's southern border barrier halted the "invasion." During the annual conference of the Hungarian

⁷ The Hunyadi-Orban comparison emerged already in the summer of 2015. One right-wing Hungarian blogger wrote on 22 July (the day of commemoration of Nandorfehervar) that "Orban today is doing what Janos Hunyadi did 559 years ago – defends his people, his home and all of Europe" (Csúri, 2015).

Diaspora Council in Budapest in December 2015, attended by Orbán, one of the members held a banner that read: “Nandorfehervar 1456 = Roszke 2015” (Deputy Prime Minister’s Office, 2015).

The discourse of invasion and the myth of Europe’s historical protector further marginalized the problematic coexistence of the security fence and the Hungarian communities outside of it. It offered a storyline that would include these transborder communities in the national effort to survive the invasion and protect the rest of Europe. This military-historical discourse of invasion and protection framed the border fence as a national symbol, as a modern manifestation of historical pride of the nation. Orbán enlisted the whole nation, whether inside the territory of Hungary or outside of its border, who identified with this national pride and history, as a border guard and a defensive bastion of Europe. Hungary was a rampart nation and Orbán was the captain of the fortification (Berezhnaya & Hein-Kircher, 2019).

Rampart nationhood offered a simple, coherent vision that erased local, regional contradictions and territorial divisions of Hungary’s transborder nation. The myth reframed the geography of nationhood and security. Orbán’s story geo-graphed the nation as a whole, regardless of political-sovereign borders, as a defensive bastion of ‘Christian Europe.’ The specific location of the border fence was not important because it merely manifested and symbolized the border-ness of the whole nation. It could have been a hundred kilometers inside the territory of Hungary and the geopolitical storyline would not alter. This thick brushstroke marginalized the spatial complexities of the new border fence concerning Hungary’s divided nationhood and that it did not exactly separate ‘Christian Europe’ from ‘Muslim empires’ outside of it.

Beyond the spatial vision which erased more local territorial differences and the meanings of the Hungarian-Serbian border, this storyline also reframed the temporality of nationhood. The introduction of Nandorfehervar into the storyline of the border fence diverted the nation’s historical gaze away from the trauma of Trianon and towards the more heroic moments of the past when the country was greater in size and more powerful and Trianon had not yet happened. Recreating this medieval pride and glory in the 21st century meant to erase Trianon borders and hide the border’s contradiction with divided nationhood.

The geography of protection articulated in the storyline of the border fence enabled Orbán to make a nationalist case for border security without provoking a direct contradiction with transborder nationalism. This storyline defined the meaning of national territory as a part of a wider civilizational space of ‘Christian Europe’. The old tension between the nation and the sovereign border, which marks the neighboring territory and divides the nation, was gone. Transborder Hungarians became a non-issue. The myth of Christian bulwark affirmed Hungary’s territoriality and elevated the meaning of the southern border as a defensive perimeter. The new geography of nationhood, therefore, facilitated rather than hindered border security policy.

Table 1. The structure of Hungary’s nationalist discourse of danger

	Transborder nationalism	Rampart nationalism
<i>Danger</i>	Cultural assimilation	The end of nations & Christianity
<i>External enemy</i>	Neighboring nationalizing countries	Immigrants
<i>Internal enemy</i>	MSZP (The left)	The EU/Hungarian left, Brussels
<i>Policy</i>	Nemzetpolitika	Border Security

TRANSBORDER AND RAMPART NATIONHOOD MATERIALIZED

In the first two months of 2015, Asotthalom, a small village a few kilometers north of the Hungarian-Serbian border, found itself in the center of a narrow migration corridor. Approximately a thousand migrants a day, mostly Kosovars, passed through the village or surrounding areas in January and early February. The village soon acquired the title “Lampedusa of the Balkan Route,” after the Mediterranean island, which has long been a focal point of migration into Europe. Asotthalom happened to attract the largest number of migrants because the main interstate highway on the Serbian side approaches the borderline within 500 meters just south of the Hungarian village. The proximity to the border made this place a perfect point for migrants to depart from the highway and reach the territory of Hungary only 500 meters away.

In January 2015, Asotthalom’s Mayor Laszlo Toroczkai, who at the time was a member of Jobbik, started to publicly advocate for a border fence against migrants (Serdült, 2015).⁸ He also organized a defense structure, made up of field guards (*mezőőr*), i.e. those who patrol outside of the village, and civil guards (*polgárőr*), within the village, to keep the migrants out of the area. To this day, the road sign at the entrance of the village notifies the passengers that Asotthalom is protected by field guards, civil guards and CCTV cameras. The text on the road sign is superimposed on the background image of the statue of Janos Hunyadi, the Fortress Captain of Nandorfehervar.

In 2012, Toroczkai opened the Monument of Hungarian Martyrdom outside of the village and about 500 meters from the border. The monument represents a tree with branches cut and a nest made of barbed wires on the top. Mythical eagle-like bird, *Turul*, which is Hungary’s national(ist) symbol, sits in the nest, holding a sword in its beak and looking towards Subotica, the largest Serbian city on the southern side of the border. The base of the tree has the shape of

⁸ Toroczkai gained country-wide fame in 2006 as a leader of anti-government riots. He is a founder of an ultra-nationalist and territorial revisionist group Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (*Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom*, HVIM). The title refers to the 64 counties that made up the Kingdom of Hungary before 1920.

the Great Hungary map. The monument commemorates the massacre of Hungarians in Vojvodina at the end of World War Two by Yugoslavian partisans.⁹

In the following years, Toroczkai built an open-air museum around the monument: Delvidek Memorial Park. *Delvidek*, meaning “southern land,” refers to the southern region of pre-Trianon Hungary, most of which was transferred to Yugoslavia. Using *Delvidek* rather than *Vajdasag* (Hungarian name for Vojvodina) is usually a sign of territorial nationalism as the former conveys the historical belonging of the concerned geographic area to Hungary. The latter does not have such a political and historical connotation. In Serbia, using *Delvidek*, especially by politicians, can be viewed as a territorially revisionist discourse (Szerbhorváth, 2014).

The new addition to the museum includes information boards on the cities of Delvidek. The text is only in Hungarian. Beside a paragraph-long general historical information, each city’s information board includes a table showing the change among the city’s demographic groups by nationality/ethnicity over time. Most of these tables show a general trend of the shrinking “Hungarian” population in these cities and the increasing number of “Serbians.” These figures reinforce the central discourse of *nemzetpolitika* around the danger of cultural assimilation and demographic replacement. These alarming numbers are juxtaposed with the images of noteworthy buildings and the scenes of everyday life from the past when these cities were part of Hungary.

In 2018, Toroczkai opened a new addition to the Delvidek Memorial Park: a replica of the Nandorfehervar (Belgrade) fortress during the famous battle in 1456. Small action figures of Hungarian soldiers are defending the fort against the Ottoman forces on the other side of the river, who are laying the siege and preparing to attack. The background of this miniature exhibition features “Nandorfehervar 1456” and a photo of a Janos Hunyadi statue.

In July 2019, Toroczkai unveiled a statue of Mihaly Szilagyi in the center of Asotthalom, who was another fortress captain next to Janos Hunyadi during the Nandorfehervar Battle. According to Toroczkai, the “hero” of Nandorfehervar “defended not just Hungary but whole Christian Europe.”¹⁰ The statue should remind Hungarians today of the virtues of “heroism, courage, self-sacrifice” and make them feel “truly proud” (Toroczkai, 2019). The museum and the statue in Asotthalom indicate that Orban’s discourse of rampart nationhood has materialized in the border landscape. The myth of Nandorfehervar has enriched the ‘structure of feeling’ of the southern border. The sense of victimhood associated with the Trianon trauma has come to coexist with the pride in the heroic defense of ‘Christian Europe.’

⁹ The information table at the monument alleges that 40,000 Hungarians were killed.

¹⁰ The names of Hunyadi and Szilagyi were inscribed on the automatic guns of the white supremacist terrorist Brenton Tarrant who killed 51 people in Christchurch NZ in March 2019.



Photo 1. A miniature replica of the Nandorfehérvár Battle. Author: Gela Merabishvili.

CONCLUSION

As immigration grew and emerged as a political problem, Orbán faced a challenge to address the issue without damaging the narrative of transborder nationhood. The public explanation for pursuing immigration control at the border in full force shifted Orbán's nationalist discourse towards the demographic make-up of Hungary and Europe. He stressed the civilizational difference of the incoming immigrants to identify the danger and the necessity for a border fence. The national myth of Hungary's unique role during the medieval wars between Europe's Christian kingdoms and the Ottoman Empire enabled Orbán to articulate the border policy in a nationalist language. Rampart nationhood erased Hungary's territorial divisions along interstate borders. The storyline included the whole nation inside 'Christian Europe.'

The politics of Hungary's southern border in 2015 illustrates a shift in the dominant form of nationalism, and more precisely, in the political practices of nationalism. The new geopolitical

context of migration created an opportunity for political actors to successfully articulate and advance a security discourse framed in nationalist language. The border emerged as a central element of the new nationalist-security discursive field as a defensive perimeter necessary for the survival of Hungary as a Christian European nation.

This case study has shown that nationalism, border and territory are flexible concepts. Their meaning depends on political discourses. Hungary's nationalist discourses in the past three decades have operated with two spatial forms. The first is the Carpathian Basin, which signifies the country's transborder nationhood. This is a legacy of a long history of statehood within such territorial format. Trianon, as an affective storyline, refers to this map of Hungary, the one that the Treaty ended. The second is 'Christian Europe' as a nation of nations. This is a civilizational discourse of nationhood, which constitutes the meaning of national identity in opposition to the civilizational other: the Muslim immigrant. The myth of Nandorfehervar signifies this territorial format.

These territorial formats of nationhood allow a politician with oratorical skills, such as Orban, to create multiple dangers and enemies, define political problems as a matter of national importance and switch from one discourse to another according to political context. Therefore, contradictions between geographies of nationhood and border security are not set in stone. An alternative meaning of national territory would reframe the national task in a way to complement, rather than compete, with the geography of security. But these shifts in the form of nationalism occur in parallel to the changes in the discourse of danger. As a result, the development of a geopolitical storyline over a political problem involves a co-constitutive redefinition of nationhood, security and the border.

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