Nation-State, Nationalism, and the Prospects for Democratization in East Central Europe

Máté Szabo*
Department of Political Science, University of Eke, Faculty of State and Law, I364 Budapest, Egyetem tér 1–3, Hungary

Recent political developments in East Central Europe have resulted in contradictory and ambivalent tendencies towards the nation-state in post-communist democracies. The liberation from Soviet influence and the dissolution of the Soviet Empire have created political space for the reconstruction of sovereignty in former Soviet-dominated states. This liberation and the institutionalization of new constitutional structures has become a “national” issue. The reaffirmation and resurrection of national unity, national traditions, national culture, and national interest are current themes in post-communist politics.

Recent political developments in East Central Europe have produced contradictory and ambivalent tendencies vis-à-vis the nation-state in post-communist democracies. The emancipation from Soviet influence and the dissolution of the Soviet empire opened up a political space for the reconstruction of national sovereignty in the former Soviet-dominated states. The liberation from Soviet rule and the institutionalization of new constitutional structures became a “national” issue. National unity, national traditions, national culture, and national interests, formerly neglected and marginalized factors, were reaffirmed and resurrected in post-communist politics. In this “national renaissance” in Eastern Europe, very different political traditions and tendencies were awakened and reconstructed. Their relationship to the values of pluralist democracy and human rights was

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1. My understanding of East Central Europe is linked with the concept of the Hungarian historian Szűcs (1988, 1991). The analysis of East Central European states is actually reduced to Poland, Hungary, the former GDR, and Czechoslovakia, because in the Baltic states and Western Republics of former Yugoslavia problems of dissolution of federal statehood and recent state- and nation-building processes are still going on. Meanwhile, in the countries listed above the new political system is already institutionalized and thus the levels of problems are quite different there.
sometimes overshadowed by their anti-modernist and traditionalist orientations. As Deutsch (1969, p. 55) commented on the nationalism in Eastern Europe:

The psychology of total disregard for individual rights was cultivated in Eastern Europe by nationalism. Almost every nationalist move or movement by one nationality produced nationalist countermovements by its neighbours, and both nationalism and counternationalism agreed in disregarding the rights of individuals.

Parallel to the tendency to stress the nation-state and the nation as ultimate values and actors on the political universe, the political élite of the new, post-communist democracies expressed the wish to join the European Community and NATO. The same political forces which preached national engagement and the rebuilding of the nation-state and culture, pleaded for European integration (or reintegration) as a precondition for the stabilization of democracy and the modernization of the economic system. Paradoxically, in Eastern Europe there are at the same time both nationalist and integrationalist political forces.

During the process of system transformation, national consciousness had been reshaped in Eastern Europe. The construction of new elements in national identity had different levels. First, there was a selective reconstruction of the past. The traditions of the communist systems were severely criticized, or directly rejected as alien elements of national history. Parallel to this, pre-communist and anti-communist traditions experienced a rather undifferentiated and uncritical revival, Interwar traditions, and even older traditions, of nationalism and a nation-state were being integrated into new political identification patterns. The present condition of the nation and of the nation-state was seen as the phase of starting, restarting or continuing those nation-building processes, which had been interrupted by communist intervention. Conflicts with rivals and challengers, neighboring nation-states or ethnic minorities re-emerged. The vision of the future of the nation and nation-state in East Central Europe, from the point of view of the handling of the past and the present, had little to do with the resurrection of national traditions or the restoring of the nation-building processes. As Hobsbawm (1990, p. 177) postulated,

at the end of the 20th century, the diminishing economic and political competence of nation-states toward global challenges contradicted the idea of new nation-states in Europe; ... in fact, the first thing most such hypothetical new European states would do is, almost certainly, apply for admission to the European Community, which would once again limit their sovereign rights, though in a different manner from their previous situation.

The foreign policies strategies of the new European nations were all aimed at membership in the European Community, but this membership, which limits their sovereignty, was contrary to the traditions of the nation-state in Eastern Europe. The European Community is the symbol of modernity, democracy, and civic culture for East Europeans, but the past and present of these nations, which was being resurrected by the post-communist national revival, generated counterproductive tendencies.

In the following paper, I will discuss the historical-cultural background of the recent political developments in East Central Europe. Elements of the pre-communist and communist past, the present problems of the social-political transformations, and some visions and strategies for the future will also be analysed.
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Pre-communist Traditions

Empires Versus National Cultures

According to the historical scheme of Gellner (1991), nation building in Eastern Europe was confronted with the existence and predominance of religious and dynastic-based empires in the 18th and 19th centuries. Development of a national consciousness and of nationalism originated in the ethnic and culture-based framework, that is, from the culture-based nation (the German *Kulturnation*) of Meinecke (1928). Eastern European culture-nations tended to build up their own nation-states according to the logic of “one nation—one state,” and their objectives conflicted with the existence of multinational empires and the independence of other nations in the framework of empires. The imperial past was not concerned with the idea of national autonomy, and the ethnic and cultural mixtures which developed were hard to organize according to the logic of nation-states (Deutsch, 1969, pp. 37–67). In this situation, as pointed out by Szücs (1991), a direct connection developed between national and historical consciousness. Emerging culture-based nations, without the traditions of the nation-state, tried to find their historical predecessors before the establishment of empires. The existence of a nation and of national consciousness was rooted in ancient and medieval times by nationally minded intellectuals. Nationhood in East Central Europe was overloaded by functions of modernization, democratization, and state-building. Popular expectations regarding the dissolution of the Austrian–Hungarian monarchy united national, social, and democratic issues in the popular mind, as pointed out by Peter Hanak, a Hungarian historian who analysed the letters captured by the censorship and written by soldiers and prisoners of war during World War I to their families (cited in Hobsbawm, 1990, pp. 127–130). Deutsch (1969, pp. 49–52) stressed also the strong affiliation of ethnic and social impetus of nationalism, which was directed to both the élites and the empires. According to Gellner, the dissolution of empires was retarded in this region until recently because the Soviet Union had succeeded in re-establishing and even extending the traditional Russian Empire on the basis of a new, secular legitimation. Culture-nations striving for independence from the Russian-Soviet Empire and involved in their conflict with each other have dominated the political scene in Eastern Europe in recent decades.

Despite the existence of the imperial framework preserved in the Soviet Union, nation-building and state-building proved to be the mainstream tendency in East Central Europe. The dissolution of the Austrian–Hungarian and Soviet empires were both followed by the establishment of nation-states. The pre-communist political traditions of the new nation-states were based on the experiences of the interwar period. This short period in the existence of nation-states was overshadowed by the military–political threat of fascist Germany and the communist Soviet Union, although the foreign threat and military conflict were not the only factors that contributed to the loss of sovereignty by these nation-states.

Unstable Nation-states

In his analysis of the interwar social–political conditions of this region, Seton-Watson (1982) concluded that the unresolved problems of modernization and democratization resulted in sharp national, social, and political conflicts, and led to a crisis of democracy and the establishment of authoritarian regimes. With
the exception of Czechoslovakia, a weak bourgeoisie, strong agrarian and feudal structures, and traditional military-bureaucratic élites produced conditions which were unfavorable to a democratization also hindered by fascist and communist threats and by different national conflicts. Popular expectations regarding the establishment of nation-states with higher social and democratic standards on the ruins of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy were largely unfulfilled. According to Hobsbawm, the interwar conditions of the nation-states in East Central Europe reproduced the national conflicts and problems of the former empire and “most of the new states built on the ruins of the old empires, were quite as multinational as the old prisons of nations they replaced.” Hobsbawm (1990, p. 133) further argues that the establishment of nation states in this region was even a step forward toward later fascist and communist violence against ethnic groups:

The logical implication of trying to create a continent neatly divided into coherent territorial states each inhabited by a separate ethnically and linguistically homogeneous population was the mass expulsion or extermination of minorities. Such was and is the murderous reductio ad absurdum of nationalism in its territorial version.

The interwar period seen as the full bloom of nation-states in East Central Europe was hardly a proper basis for progressive political orientations—with the exception of Czechoslovakia. This is to be stressed, as opposed to the conservative-nationalist tendency in post-communist countries to resurrect all anti- and pre-communist traditions as a healthy basis for political culture in the new democracies.

Conflicts of democratization and nationalism in Eastern Europe occurred when the common enemies of both, the imperial orders, were dissolved. There are some elements of an analogy between the situation in the interwar period and post-communist conditions today, in the sense that democracy and nationalism could cooperate in the underground and in the opposition against an anti-democratic imperial order, but after the breakthrough and in the process of establishing a new political system, conflict and differentiation between them appeared inevitable.

Interwar traditions were also upheld in the most influential political parties of the post-1945 period, the East European communist parties. One of the main targets of the critique by communist parties in the interwar period was “bourgeois nationalism.” The critique of nationalism made communist parties attractive to the Jewish population and to national minorities, and this, together with their pro-Soviet and internationalist orientations, contributed to the image of the communists as “alien to the nation.” On the other hand, in the framework of a “people’s front” in the resistance the communists tried to establish political coalitions with the “patriotic”–nationalist opposition to the fascists, which helped their acceptance by other political forces in the postwar period (Hobsbawm, 1990, pp. 146–148).

To sum up, the impact of pre-communist traditions on recent political developments in Eastern Europe includes an ambivalent relationship between democratization and nation-building in the region. The national consciousness and the idea of a nation-state developed against supranational empires, and this united nationalists and democrats in a common political camp against the empires and their élites. But after the dissolution of the empires, the new nation-states were not able to establish stable democracies. Authoritarian regimes, suppression of minorities, national conflicts, and involvement with the fascist–communist confrontation dominated the political scene in East Central Europe until the end of the Second World War.
Communist Rule and the Nation-state

Stalinist “Internationalism” and Defensive Nationalism

Between the end of the Second World War and the communist takeover, coalition governments characterized by the presence, and sometimes predominance, of Soviet-backed communists, ruled in East Central Europe (Fejtő, 1974). During the democratic interlude, communist parties played their political role as parts of a Soviet-directed network. They fought their former allies, the national-democratic oriented liberal and rural-peasant parties which defended national independence against Soviet dependency and tried to uphold Western connections. The former “democratic” coalitions split and became communist-dominated. Communist politics in Eastern Europe was deeply involved in the Soviet imperial strategy engineered by Stalin, and the forces insisting on national and bourgeois values were driven underground by the supporters of the Soviet Stalinist model. Following and copying the Soviet model was often exaggerated, as for example, the serious experiments to produce cotton in Hungary which were propagated by the communists as a major innovation.

The suppression of all non-communist political groupings by the communist takeover produced a type of “negative coalition.” Partisans of the old, authoritarian-nationalist regimes were persecuted in the same way as liberals, social democrats, or reform communists. In the political emigration and in the underground opposition against Stalinism and communism, representatives of the different political directions built some political solidarity, which occasionally reached the level of joint political action. A good example of an anti-Stalinist and anti-communist national upheaval and protest was the Hungarian revolution in 1956 (Lomax, 1976). From the reform-communists to the supporters of the Horthy regime and the Catholic Church, national mobilization occurred against the Stalinist, pro-Soviet regime. Of course, in the dynamics of the revolution and protest, splits and conflicts among the different political orientations and traditions appeared, but the national character of 1956 was upheld during the decades of communist rule.

Paradoxically, suppression sometimes even strengthened nationalism. Nation-states had not been abolished by the new order. In terms of social mobilization and assimilation, the Stalinist modernization policy with forced urbanization-industrialization and extreme centralization could even have developed further the processes of nation-building. The communication and economic relations were highly inward oriented, were isolated from European and world economic trends, and favored some autarchic tendencies. As Deutsch (1969, p. 63) summed up: “Communism has not abolished the nation-state . . . If we judge by an analysis of transaction leads, it may have even strengthened it.”

Post-Stalinist Prospects

Post-Stalinist communist systems tried to integrate elements of national legitimation, and to destroy the unity of nationalism and anti-communism (Miklós Szabó, 1988). During the post-revolutionary “restoration” policy of János Kádár, after the first waves of counter-revolutionary violence and suppression, leading representatives of the “populist” intellectuals reconciled themselves with the new regime, which was ready to support national culture and identity to a certain extent and to give up Stalinist patterns of “internationalism.” Communism and nationalism
had a certain limited space in which to cooperate and work together in Eastern Europe: both pleaded for total social mobilization, both emphasized social issues and both disregarded human rights and pluralism (Deutsch, 1969, pp. 52–59).

The national autonomy and independence of individual communist countries was limited by the threat of Soviet intervention and by the institutions of cooperation of the former socialist countries. The Soviet-dominated Eastern bloc was built on economic and security integration mechanisms such as the Warsaw Treaty and COMECON, which functioned as “transmission belts” for the Soviet center (Gáti, 1991). There were more and more cooperative elements built into these integrative institutions during later development, but their compulsory character was preserved by Soviet military forces in crisis situations, such as that in Hungary in 1956 or that in Czechoslovakia in 1968. The effects of the integration of socialist countries were overwhelmingly counterproductive, and strengthened the wish for national autonomy and for Western integration (Csaba, 1991). In the shadow of internationalist slogans, national foreign trade and policy patterns were maintained.

Crises in the planned economy, centralized one-party rule, and international conflicts opened up more possibilities for autonomous “national” policies within the Eastern bloc in the 1970s and 1980s. This political space was used in different ways in the context of the foreign and domestic policies of the individual Eastern countries. In analysing the policy of Kádárist Hungary, for example, Gáti (1986) has shown that the communist political elite was faced with a double legitimation challenge: loyalty to the Soviet center, and the seeking of legitimation by the nation and civil society. In the Hungarian case, less independence from the Soviets in regard to foreign policy was the “prize” for domestic economic–social reforms oriented toward social–national expectations, which produced a type of national support for the Kádár regime (Gáti, 1986). In the case of Romania, an autonomous foreign policy with a strong Stalinist domestic policy was mixed with nationalist tendencies. The general trend in East Central Europe was the use of the political space by the communist élites to gain national support by formulating autonomous foreign and domestic policies. In these experiments, as in Hungary and Romania, pre-communist patterns and traditions reappeared, together with the problems of national minorities, national interests in foreign policy, emphasis on national traditions in culture and history, discussions on the reinterpretation and “messages” of national history, etc. Throughout the 1980s, nation and nation-state re-emerged in the communist politics of East Central Europe, with linkages to the pre-communist past.

These developments in autonomous and foreign and domestic policies and the emphasis on national development did not coincide necessarily with democratization and liberalization in the former socialist countries. The well-known example of Romania in the 1980s has shown that the emphasis on national elements and anti-Soviet orientation could coexist with a post-Stalinist and authoritarian orientation (Brown, 1989). The same differentiation among nationalists and liberal democrats had been going on at the level of political opposition. Political opposition in communist states had been divided by the national issue.

According to Schöpflin (1979), there was already Hungarian opposition between national–populist and liberal–democratic tendencies. Of course, there was a variety of acceptance of the national issue, at the level of both the communist élites and the alternative political groups, depending on different domestic and international factors in the individual East Central European countries.
At the beginning of the process of system transformation, the unity of the Eastern bloc and the solidarity of the socialist countries was highly endangered. There were more or less open tensions and conflicts both between the Soviet Union and the East Central European states and among the latter, articulated even in the integrative organs concerning the different economic and political issues. The opening up by Gorbachev contributed to the speeding up of the formulation of independent national and international policies by the members of the bloc. The different developmental and political orientations resulted in a web of conflicts and tensions which prepared the way for the decomposition of the integrative mechanisms. The process of democratization in 1989–1990 was the first sign of the dissolution of the Soviet empire. National-building and democratization processes in East Central Europe were again put in the framework of the nation-states, which proved to be the basis of political freedom and cultural identity against the Soviet empire and the communist ideology. National protest movements and nation-wide alternative organizations emerged as leading forces of the breakthrough. During the process of institutionalizing the new political system, the common enemy with its monopoly on the political power, the communist party, disappeared and differentiation at organizational and ideological levels occurred between the nationalist–democratic forces. The first “founding” elections and the discussions of the policies of the first freely elected governments produced different cleavages among the new political movements and directions, and the national issue had an important role in this process.

National Issues in System Transformation

The system transformation and democratization processes in East Central Europe had a two-fold connection with nation and nationalism. First, national problems and grievances as mobilizing issues against communist rule divided and united the new actors in the political field. Second, national unity, as represented in “umbrella organizations,” all-embracing “national fronts,” agreements on round table talks by all “national” political forces to constitute a new political community, “national institutions,” and national leaders, was accepted as a symbolic and integrative force claiming to be supported by the whole of the political community. The first aspect was a problem of policy input and output and of agenda setting, and the second a matter of polity-building and of institutional setting. The two levels were connected with each other: national issues could integrate the political community, but could also divide it. National issues appeared in the system transformation as unifying and mobilizing forces against the old system, but later they may have created cleavages reflecting a new political differentiation. The movement organizations and political leadership of the first protest period could sustain the restructuring of political conflicts. As long as the communist party maintained political–administrative control, the countermovements were connected in a national front with national leaders. After the dissolution of the communist monopoly of power, and the establishment of new political opportunity structures, national leadership and national unity had to fit into a pluralistic political field.

The processes of system transformation in East Central Europe had a similar dynamics, but with considerable national differences (Máté Szabó, 1991). There were characteristic steps one could identify in these processes. The first step was the timing of the crisis, when the destabilization of the old political institutions and élites and the emergence of new political forces occurred. In this phase, different
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strategies of élite reactions interacted with the dynamics of the protest. The opening up of new political spaces, agreements on a framework of transition, and the division in the old élite between conservatives and reformers were distinctive features of this phase. There was everywhere some kind of cooperation among all new non-communist political groupings, but the character of organizational and strategic unity could not be predicted at that time.

The next phase was that of the breakthrough, the dissolution of the communist monopoly on political power and political-administrative control. This occurred in East Central Europe in a non-violent way, through bargaining. But there were considerable differences as to whether mass mobilization was necessary to push the communists into bargaining and accepting compromises with the new political forces. Round table talks were typical for this phase, which established temporary institutions entrusted with the task of achieving political change. After the first free elections political cleavages emerged among the new political organizations. The former “national unity” movements against communist rule, as well as organizations of “national fronts” have dissolved faster or slower, and transformed themselves into multiparty systems.

The institutionalization of a new political system followed similar patterns: constitutional change; free elections; and differentiation of the new political forces according to the poles of government opposition. The distribution of power occurred according to the recently established rules of the game in constitutional-liberal democracies. The very end of the process—institutionalizing new political systems—was still far away: stabilization of new institutions, formulation of new policies, and acceptance of rules of the game by the political culture was a long-term process. During this phase, differentiation of the original “national” unity became necessary and interest articulation occurred along the lines of political cleavages, political ideologies/programs and institutionalized political opportunity structures.

During the process of system transformation, a structural change in the social-political objects has been going on. Social movements, mobilized by crisis and protest, set up transitory coalitions with temporary organizational consequences. The emergence of party systems was an important step in the process of institutionalization. With the free elections, the new distribution of power and formulation of national policy resulted in the creation of new institutional structures, which represented the “national” interest within pluralistic, conflict-based modern societies. The distance between the “national unity” embodied in the “umbrella organization” or the “round table” and the establishment of public and constitutional institutions was great, but East Central European societies had to cross it in a short period of time. Fast and conflict-ridden political learning processes marked this development, which was different even among East Central European countries. But there were some common elements based on common historical and cultural heritage and geographic, economic, and social ties to Western Europe, especially when we compare this dynamics with the post-communist development in the Balkans and in the former Soviet Union.

Some of the important distinctive features in East Central Europe were the absence of the violent ethnic and territorial conflicts which followed the dissolution of multi-ethnic federal states, like the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Despite the fact that territorially-based ethnic minorities did exist, they did not provoke the violent mobilization of majorities, nor did they serve as starting points for that kind of mobilization. Ethnic violence seemed to be under control in this region, where new political institutions, a constitutional framework, and political parties
were used as accepted channels for the distribution of power. Whether the political tradition of living together of different ethnic groups and an understanding for and experience with ethnic minorities, or a sense for political compromise and the rule of law, was a distinct characteristic of the political culture in Central Europe, as suggested by Mlynar (1988, p.49), and whether the recent political learning processes from social mobilization to political institutionalization have been successful, will not be discussed here. In the following section, I will try to compare the democratization processes in East Central European countries and to analyse both their common and their distinct characteristics.

Poland

Crises in the communist system in Poland seemed to provoke cycles of social protest in a long-term dynamics. The cycles of crisis and protest since 1956 have constituted a long learning process for the ruling and opposition political élites (Wagner, 1981). A peculiar type of social coalition emerged in the Polish civil society during the long-lasting conflicts. The Catholic Church as an influential "national institution," opposition intellectuals, and discontented blue collar workers shaped the specific mixture of "Polish national resistance" against the political élite and institutions. National traditions of political culture were in opposition to the state as an alien, foreign power. Meanwhile, the nation became identified with an anti-élitist civil society (Ash, 1985).

Compromise between reformers and the communist élites, which secured them a certain proportion of seats in the legislature, made the process of breakthrough and the redistribution of political power between 1989 and 1991 longer than anywhere else in East Central Europe (Strobel, 1990). In this process, the former opposition organization, Solidarity, embodied and united the functions of a social movement, trade union, and political party, and "represented the nation." The internal fragmentation of Solidarity was delayed by the length of the transitory period which witnessed the dissolution of communist power (Holzer, 1990). Lech Walesa's leadership reflected the unity of the Polish nation and the anti-communist protest, although seeking national unity, which slowed down the process of party formation and resulted in a semi-presidential constitutional system, produced an unfavorable atmosphere for political pluralism (Zubek, 1991).

The institutionalization of a pluralist democracy was paralleled by painful and conflict-ridden differentiation processes within the Solidarity constituency. National–conservative and liberal groupings formulated different political strategies for a social–political reconstruction. Walesa's intermediary role did not prevent the polarization of nationalist and democratic forces. The severe economic crisis which had mobilized the people against the communist system also endangered political stability and enhanced political polarization in post-communist Poland. Previously unifying and integrating national issues now divided former partners, and the organizational unity of Solidarity and its multifunctional character were destroyed (Holzer, 1992).

The Polish case was a good example of the strong integrative and disintegrative functions of national issues in the process of democratization in East Central Europe. Social solidarity, Catholic social and moral values, national traditions, and democratic aspirations created strong mobilizing forces in Poland in the course of the last decade, but the organizational and symbolic unity illustrated by Solidarity and its leader Walesa could not be preserved in the framework of a pluralist democracy. Strong organizational unity even hindered the development
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and differentiation of a multiparty system, as a result of the divisive issues of formulating unpopular governmental social and economic policies, and enhanced by an electoral law which incorporated the fragmenting effects of a pure proportional representation. In the process of institutionalization, some elements of pre-communist Polish political culture re-emerged, such as a strong national leadership and its extra-constitutional role in permanent political crisis management. The pro-Western orientations in domestic and foreign policy resulted from a consensus among the relevant political actors, though potential issues for populistic-chauvinistic mobilization (anti-Semitism; anti-German and Russian sentiments; territorial questions; and Polish minorities) in a deepening economic social crisis should not be excluded on the basis of such developments as the astonishing success of Tyminski and his party in the 1990 presidential elections.

Hungary

Compared with Poland, since 1956 there has been considerably political stability in Hungary. Kádárist policy opened up possibilities for enterpreneurship in the second economy, and the formation of a civil society at the economic level (Frentzel-Zagorska, 1990). A much less politicized civil society thus emerged than in Poland, and there were no cycles of political crisis and protest before 1988. Rather, Hungarian opposition was an intellectual subculture, without social-political ties to the churches or to wider stratas of blue collar workers. Fragmentation and differentiation of opposition intellectual groups had already developed prior to the system transformation, and their potential for political bargaining with reformers in the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party was much greater than in Poland. No recent repressions, such as the martial law in Poland, had burdened the relations between state and society for decades. Thus, no “umbrella organization” representing national solidarity could be established, and instead only a temporary unity of oppositional groups for bargaining with the communists existed (Körösényi, 1991a).

Despite the absence of a strong national unity organization directed against communist rule, however, national issues were quite important in the Hungarian transformation to democracy. The biggest popular mobilizations in 1988–1989 occurred on the occasions of the commemoration of the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the reinterment of its leader Imre Nagy, an anti-Ceaucescu demonstration in 1988, and the anniversary of the Hungarian national and democratic revolution of 1848 (Muravchik, 1990). During the breakthrough phase, joint action by relevant opposition groups was established, and the division between more nationalistic or democratic groups was overshadowed by the common cause of anti-communism. However, during the round table talks in the summer of 1989 the unity of the opposition groups was dissolved. The first divisive issue was on whether to accept or reject a strong presidential leadership similar to the Polish model, when radical liberal democrats organized a successful plebiscite against a strong and directly elected presidency, supported by populists and reform communists.

The differentiation of Hungarian oppositional movements was institutionalized in a fragmented party system (Körösényi, 1991b). The electoral campaign was already going on during the conflict about the presidency, and adversarial political behaviors emerged among the nationalist, liberalist, and socialist political camps, all of which divided or fragmented into a number of political parties. There were also symbolic and culturally-oriented divisive issues among the parties with
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respect to the market, Western orientation in foreign relations, and political pluralism predominating. The Hungarian electoral law was based on the West German model and could elect the six main political parties into the national parliament in the elections of spring 1990, thus avoiding the representation of fragmented splinter parties, or the misleading national coalitions. Hence, the Hungarian party system was an adequate and stable representation of plurality within civil society. The rather weak presidency has not had the national integrative character of a Havel or a Walesa, nor were there national unity organs at the level of the party system, or influential national leaders in Hungary (Korosenyi, 1991b).

The main conflict on national issues emerged within the liberal opposition and the Christian-democratic oriented government coalition. In the background of this conflict there was the highly sensitive issue of Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries. The government coalition elected in 1990, led by Prime Minister József Antall, stood for political responsibility for the whole Hungarian culture-nation, and was ready to risk open conflicts and tensions over this with the governments of these neighboring countries, despite the liberal and socialist opposition parties’ pleas for a conciliatory treatment of these issues. As a result, tensions and conflicts emerged with respect to issues of foreign policy and national questions in Hungarian policy concerning Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. There were even troubles about the political representation of the not-very-numerous ethnic minorities in Hungary.

In light of all these conflicts on national issues, one should ask the question whether this represented a real cleavage within Hungarian society? Studies of voting behavior have shown that the social bases of the nationalist and liberal parties were not as divided as one would suppose according to their parliamentary behavior. Experts spoke of a “reversed adversarial politics” which is initiated by an intellectually motivated political elite, rather than about the civil society itself. Nevertheless, at the time of such dangerous foreign policy situations as the August, 1991, Moscow coup, all political parties represented in the parliament were rapidly able to guarantee a national consensus. Political organizations advocating extreme nationalism, irredentism, or anti-Semitism have been present on the margin of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition, and their extended mobilization could be expected only in times of severe social and institutional crises (Bozóki, 1992).

German Democratic Republic

In the case of the former German Democratic Republic, we are confronted with a very special situation. The division of a German nation-state into two parts, where relatively autonomous social and economic development occurred, had been caused by the Cold War. Issues of unity and reunification were made a taboo subject in the former GDR and the mobilization of opposition groups after the 1953 worker protest was hindered by the strict administrative-political control, which ultimately reduced them to an intellectual subculture (Fricke, 1984). Political space for a counterculture in the 1980s was provided by the Lutheran Church. New social movements in the GDR were connected with youth subcultures based on the model of the FRG and were focused on peace, ecology, or feminist/gay groups. Discussions of national unity or reunification were not present in their political universe, a universe which was more concerned with democratization, non-violence, and ideas of an “alternative” Third Way for the GDR. The communist elite was much less responsive and open to social–national demands

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than in Poland or Hungary, and the opposition counterculture found it difficult to survive (Rytlewski, 1989).

The official GDR, by rejecting the course of reform in the Soviet Union and other former socialist countries, suppressed signs of crisis and denied social and political tensions. Destabilization occurred in the summer of 1989 through the well-known migration of GDR citizens via Hungary and other countries to the FRG. This mass exodus of migrants destabilized the political system of the GDR and through their “exit” also supported the possibility of a “voice” option and of political change, and manifested the weakness of “loyalty” to the old system (Hirschmann, 1970, 1992).

The former socialist countries, such as the Soviet Union and Hungary, directly or indirectly contributed to the rapid opening up of the political space in the GDR. The first wave of protest, in autumn, 1989, was engineered by the avant-garde of the Church-based alternative subculture and reform-oriented intellectual elites. The political objectives of the “civic movements” (Bürgerbewegungen) were directed towards democratization and modernization of the GDR and the normalization and opening up to the FRG, but was not focused on a short term reunification of the two German states (Knabe, 1989).

Mass mobilization of wider social strata through the protest movements, and the continuity of migration after the opening up of the German border, modified the political scene and put the reorganization of the nation-state on the agenda. The process of German reunification was connected with factors beyond the borders of the GDR, which were related to the internal dynamics of democratization in a specific way. We should note here the decisive shift in the nature of political issues through the mobilization of the protest, which led to a reconstruction of the political scene away from the dominance of the “civic movements” and towards the re-establishment of political parties connected with their Western counterparts. Although the civic movements without strong Western supporters were able to play the role of an avant-garde in the breakthrough and in the dissolution of communist rule, they played a rather marginal role in the institutionalization process (Muller-Enbergs et al., 1991). The early mobilizing role of the umbrella organizations diminished in the process of institutionalization of a new political system in the GDR. No national leader from the GDR emerged and the integrative political personalities of the reunification process came from the West, for example Chancellor Kohl, or former Chancellor Willy Brandt. The merger of the Eastern and Western political parties played a big role in the re-establishment of the national political community, and the differentiation of the West German party system was directly “mirrored” in Eastern Germany. The dynamics of the West German political scene contributed decisively to the creation of the international conditions for German reunification. The round table talks and the first free elections in the spring of 1990 were overshadowed by the campaign for reunification (Thaysen, 1990). The national issue was clearly connected with modernization, democratization, economic development, and the European option. East Germans accepted directly the constitutional structures and socio-economic institutions of a highly modernized West Germany.

The dissolution of the GDR directly confronted the less developed civil society and civic culture in that country with the realm of pluralist democracies, which was bound to produce tensions and conflicts on national issues, such as the riots against refugees since the summer of 1991. German reunification represented a challenge for all Eastern European minorities divided into different nation states.
or empires. It also offered a hope of reunification or independence according to the right to self-determination if favorable political conditions existed. In this sense, the German model is as important again for the process of nation-state building in Eastern Europe as it used to be in the 18th and 19th centuries. But the problems of a German nation-state and nationalism differ from those in the other East Central European states. State-building and nation-building processes in Germany have been directly connected with the process of European integration in this case. Meanwhile, other East Central European countries have had only indirect contact with the Western integration processes. In Germany, which was a member of EC and NATO, the former GDR was met directly with the rules and institutions of the EC, for example with the European settlement of refugee status. Nationalist mobilization or ethnic conflicts with refugees are present in Germany, but they have a very different meaning than in Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia because of Germany's direct membership in the Western alliance. Thus, the German example is inadequate as a model for other East European countries because no other states in the region had powerful parts of their nation integrated into the Western economic and security order.

Czechoslovakia

The period of crisis in Czechoslovakia was even shorter than in the GDR. Following the post-1968 “normalization” process, and with strong backing from the post-Stalinist Soviet leadership, all reform-minded communists were excluded from the Czech-Slovak Communist Party, and even the Soviet reforms of the 1980s were ignored by the communist elites, just as in the GDR. The opposition groups developed in an intellectual subculture, and strict and rigid political-administrative control forced them to unite. Strong repression by, and the rigidity of, the communist rulers helped to emphasize national and democratic issues in the opposition discourse. Political solidarity, ranging from non-conventional artistic groups to former reform communists, emerged ultimately in the form of Charter 77 (Kusin, 1972, 1974).

The breaking down of barriers in the other East European countries in 1989 led to a mobilization of Czech and Slovak society. Cycles of protest demonstrations were met by violent administrative-political rejection, which helped to strengthen national unity and solidarity against the regime. Escalation of the conflict and international processes (such as the breakthrough in Hungary, GDR, etc.) initiated social mobilization and the breakthrough in autumn 1989. The triggering factor had a national symbolic character: at a protest march in Prague in memory of a student killed by Germans during the occupation, police brutality and rumors about a student victim provoked and mobilized the public. National unity developed rapidly, mobilizing both the blue collar workers and the intellectuals for political change. Czech and Slovak “umbrella organizations”—Civic Forum and Public Against Violence—were established and constitutional arrangements for a peaceful change and new elections were agreed in the round table talks. National and democratic issues were joined, broad umbrella organizations for national mobilization emerged, and the national leadership of Havel and Dubcek was widely acknowledged and institutionalized in the presidency and leadership of the parliament.

During the electoral campaign and the formulation of governmental policies in the phase of institutionalization, this national unity and the merger of national and democratic issues was dissolved. The traditions of the one really functioning
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multiparty system of the interwar period re-emerged, but so did the unresolved problems of nation-building and of conflicts in Czech and Slovak relations. The different political cultures of the two parts of Czechoslovakia were mirrored in the electoral results of 1990. The elections were held in the period of the political dominance of the umbrella organizations of the protest and mobilization, but these could not preserve their unity when confronted with the polarizing issues of economic-social reforms and state-building. The differentiation of liberal and democratic groups within the Civic Forum, and the issues of Slovak autonomy or even secession divided the former Forum-parties and reshaped parliamentary representation. The national leadership of President Havel and Dubcek was affected by the Czech-Slovak dispute and by the anti-communist purges (Smutny, 1992).

The characteristics of the institutionalization and differentiation processes were connected in Czechoslovakia with the re-emergence of the issues and cleavages of nation-building and state-building (Kusy, 1991). The dissolution of interwar Czechoslovakia and the creation of the Czech Protectorate and the German-supported Slovak state of Hlinka and Tiso seemed to represent a living political tradition to many Slovaks organized in separatist-secessionist political groups. In the discussions on succession or on a new political federation, important constitutional decisions were postponed and elements of political demobilization emerged. The difference between the political culture of the more Westernized and industrialized Czech parts, and the less developed and overloaded with social-economic and ethnic problems Slovak part, produced long-lasting effects on the process of modernization. A nationalist mobilization potential was concentrated in Slovakia, while the political traditions and culture of the Czech parts had West-European orientations (Rak, 1991).

Summary

To sum up, in analysing the East Central European democratization processes, the transitory character of national mobilization and leadership was emphasized. The institutionalization of a pluralist democracy and the dissolution of a communist power monopoly led to a differentiation of the political scene, with conflicts and tensions among national and democratic groupings. Issues of nation- and state-building were closely integrated with the democratization process of Czechoslovakia and the former GDR. A general problem seems to have been the institutionalization of the political representation of ethnic minorities, and the provision of political space for them in the new democracies. The establishment of new constitutional structures had to meet demands for pluralization and democratization in a situation of an economic-social crisis, which could result in ethnic-based or nationalist social-political mobilization.

New democracies had to establish their relations with the other nation-states in the region, and in the continent as a whole, and to respond to the challenge of European integration and problems of nation-building in Central Europe. What is the future of the nation-state in the conditions of the post-communist democracies? The intellectual and political discussions going on about alternative futures for the nation-state in the New Europe try to answer these questions and analyse the experiences of nation-states in East Central Europe. Intellectual and political discussions on the perspectives and alternatives for nation-states are, of course, faced with the rather uncertain future of this region.
Post-Communist Tendencies

Analysts of the process of democratic transformation in East Central Europe have stressed the ambivalent character of nationalism in this process. Some of them postulated a type of polarization between nationalist–conservative and European democratic political forces. According to Michnik (1991, p. 348), the well-known Polish politician, the most important political cleavage in post-totalitarian Europe has been that between “supporters and leaders of a democratic, pluralist and tolerant Europe” and of “nation centrist authoritarianism.” After the defeat of communism one could observe the return of an elementary ethnic identity. The emerging nationalism was ambivalent: it involved elements of emancipation from the Soviet rule, but at the same time it produced old and new conflicts among nation-states and among ethnic groups and their political leaders. Rupnik (1991) questioned whether communist suppression and persecution could initiate learning processes in East European nationalism which would enable it to become more tolerant and pluralist or whether it would restore its fundamentalist character as a “freezing in a fridge.” Staniszkis (1991) saw in nationalism an important force for mobilization and solidarity against the atomization–privatization of the communist past. According to her, the dominance of nationalism was inevitable in societies with fragile and discontinued traditions of civil society and civic culture. The development of civil society and the stabilization of its institutions in the economy, law, politics, and culture could counterbalance the central and uncontrolled role of national revival in Eastern Europe. Another argument resulting from these considerations, was that East Central European countries should extend their political ties with each other, and reduce their potential and actual conflicts of the national past and present for the sake of a democratic and European future. The idea of a Central European federation and even of statehood as a step toward this direction has been present in the intellectual–political discourse in these countries.

The Utopia and Reality of a Central European Community

There is a tradition in the intellectual–political discourse of the former opposition intellectuals of ideas about crossing the political frameworks in East Central Europe and moving beyond nationalism and the nation-state. In the 1980s, the discussions started by Milan Kundera, György Konrád, Vaclav Havel, and others resulted in the postulation of some common traits in the East Central European cultural identity, which were seen as a possible origin for alternative political developments within the Soviet bloc, an opening up to Western Europe and the demanding of more autonomy form the Soviet empire (Ash, 1990; Herterich and Semler, 1989; Busek and Wilfinger, 1986; Burmeister et al., 1988). There appeared at the margin of these discussions also some proposals for a loose confederation of some East Central European countries, with references to older federation plans in this region (Dalos, 1991; Hegedüs, 1988). Despite the fact that some leaders of the former civil rights opposition gained political influence and occupied leading political positions in post-communist politics, the realization of these ideas did not seem to be on the foreign policy agenda of the new democracies. The systemic transformations of the Central Eastern European countries were related to each other, but they had much less in common than the predecessor revolutions of 1848–1849. After the breakthrough, there emerged some types of “negative coalitions” among different countries in order to dissolve the Council
for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Treaty Organization, but already at the time of bargaining with the Soviets on the withdrawal of their troops and the new type of economic-political treaties with the Soviet Union, there appeared considerable differences in the attitudes and strategies among such countries as Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Elements of a developing regional cooperation among the three countries emerged as the result of the rather reluctant reactions of the European Community and NATO to their individual applications for membership, and of the dangers produced by the dissolution of the Soviet Empire. Regional cooperation was seen in East Central Europe as directly connected to the prospect of West European integration or as formulated in the slogan “come back to Europe” (Sitzler, 1990). The existing relations among the Central European states are far removed from the hopes of the intellectual supporters of the idea (or utopia) of an integrated Central Europe. The existing cooperation is overshadowed by conflicts and is limited in scope. It is transitory and is highly dependent on Western support and aid (Tökés, 1991).

In the intellectual-political discussions about the future of post-communist democracies the idea, or utopia, of Central Europe has considerable relevance, but hope for the realization of a type of community within federal boundaries has become more and more pessimistic. As stated by the Hungarian sociologist Miszlivetz (1991, p. 982), who analysed the discussions on the future of Central Europe during and after the breakthrough:

... while, Western European integration develops towards the 21st century, the other half of the continent reaffirms the economic and philosophical myths of the 18th and 19th centuries hoping on their help in the “come back”. The proposals for regional integration or confederation are marginalized by the “individual,” country-specific strategies ... The empty space in the place of a spirit of cooperationism fulfilled by ideological restitutes. The disillusion of hopes has awakened the nationalisms from their long dreams.

Miszlivetz, looking at the causes of the defeat of Central European integration, distinguished between outward and inward factors. The outward factor was, for him, the reluctance of the European Community to initiate collective, regional programs of aid, and the exclusion of East Central Europe from the European integration process represented by the EC. On the other hand, the inner political conditions of regional integration seemed also to be missing: “... in the political dynamics, the nationalist-fundamentalist parties won over the liberal-neoconservative Europeanist parties ...” Beyond this, structural reasons, like the weakness of civil society and civic culture, were the main obstacles to the building of new identities beyond national cultures and ethnicity. According to Miszlivetz (1991, p. 983), the missing links are:

... greater measures of cooperation, patterns of non-violent conflict resolution, tolerance towards minorities, and the ability to live together with different people ... A new identity should be found, not rejecting the traditions of the 19th century, but not to be fixed on them as sources of revival ...

Alternatives forms of relations between nation-state and ethnic minorities were proposed by the Hungarian novelist, György Konrád, in his speech accepting the Peace Prize of the German book trade in autumn, 1991. Konrád stressed the importance of their multiple citizenship which could help to build up ties among the new democracies of the region and to reduce minority conflicts. The collective should give up its demand for a total control of the individual, and pluralism
and citizenship should institutionalize the existing multiplicity of identities. "Citizenship" instead of "ethnicity" as a solution for the reconstruction in Central Europe formed the proposal of the Hungarian sociologist Ivan Szelenyi (cited in Miszlivetz, 1991, p. 972). Instead of East European patterns of ethnic-cultural roots of nation-states, the "spirit of constitution" and "the patriotism of the constitution" should be the integrative element of the new democracies, escaping the defunct patterns of 19th century nationalism and supporting the "come back" to Europe.

There is a danger that this re-emergence of nation-states in East Central Europe could give rise to similar problems to those in the interwar period. Seton-Watson (1982) concluded in his analysis of the minority problems in this region, as follows:

The problem can only be solved if it is possible to combine free use of the language of birth, and recognition of the personal nationality of the citizen, with loyalty to a State which stands above the ethnical principle and includes men of different nations.

This "solution based on cultural autonomy and supranational states" was opposed by the same forces that Seton-Watson (1982) described during the Second World War on the basis of the experience with the nation-states in Eastern Europe:

It is doubtful, however, whether the nationalist intellectual class, and its pupils in army, bureaucracy and commerce ... could ever accept this principle. These people could not be satisfied by cultural autonomy. They require nothing less than a National State in which the whole military, bureaucratic and commercial apparatus of State Sovereignty is monopolised by them as rulers of the majority nation within the State. They require this partly because it affords them opportunities of personal enrichment and power which would be denied them under any other system, and partly because their ideological leaders ... [have] been convinced, and have implanted in their own heads the conviction, that no nation can escape physical annihilation that does not possess a Sovereign State of its own, equipped with all the tools of modern Integral Nationalism.

Of course, there are different forms of nationalism in post-communist East Central Europe, determined by factors such as the political cultures, and they are not necessarily in conflict with democratization. Nationalism must not necessarily be ethnic-based, exclusive, and intolerant or even violent in Eastern Europe, despite the fact that this image and experience has dominated its history. The Polish sociologists, Kaminski and Kurczewska (1991, p. 57), criticized the thesis of Michnik on the dichotomy of nationalism and democracy in the social movements of post-communist Eastern Europe:

Whether one type of nationalism prevails over another will depend on many factors, namely on the character of new political elites, on the direction and rate of institutional transformations, especially on the effective institutionalizing of the rule of law, of the competitive party system, and on the ability of the East Central European economies to enter the path of accelerated growth. Therefore, ... obstacles to the emergence of the civil society and to the establishment of stable democratic regimes cannot be reduced to the nationalist factor alone.

According to this argument one could hardly reduce the relevant political cleavages in post-communist democracies to the conflict among liberal democrats and conservative nationalists.
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Criticism of the antidemocratic character of Eastern European nationalism focuses on the idea of a “Federation” of East Central European states to solve the problem of conflicting nationalism. But this conclusion is a rather formal-utopian proposal. To cite Seton-Watson (1982, p. 276) again:

...the word Federation enjoys at present a vague popularity. There is even an inclination to regard it as a cure for all troubles. It should be understood that the creation of a Federation is only a structural measure. Everything depends on the content of the structure.

The recent debates on the East Central European community have not produced any plausible proposals on these structural qualities of a new federation. In this sense, the idea of East Central Europe is a beautiful principle on cooperation or even community, but without the political-social realms, which are present in the resurrecting nationalism or in the challenge of a European community.

National Renaissance and European Integration

The discussion of alternative futures and forms of nation-state are marginal undercurrents compared to the mainstream phenomenon, which is to be characterized as a resurrection of interwar nationalism, with a strong emphasis on the nation-state in Hungary and in Central Europe as a whole. Nevertheless, there is an important difference compared to the interwar nationalism and nation-states; the former are now confronted with the realm of the European Community, and to achieve democratization and modernization they cannot avoid keeping up with the EC. On the one hand, we witness the national renaissance of a past-oriented character, but on the other the future images are connected with the EC, a factor that should moderate the nationalism and nation-state policy in East Central Europe.

Of course, in order to create a new historical and national consciousness and community, some resurrection of the past is unavoidable in the process of post-communist transformation. To demonstrate this, the impact of historical, national, and European consciousness on Hungarian political and intellectual discussion and developments will be considered. The national grievances and “wounds” are important elements of the new political-national consciousness constructed by the populist-nationalist political groupings (Miklós Szabó, 1991a). During the communist rule, important issues of national history were made taboo, for example, Katyn in Poland, 1956 in Hungary, or 1968 in Czechoslovakia. The reconciliation with the past involved a ‘detabooization’ of suppressed subjects which had been banned for decades. The problem formulated by Miklós Szabó (1991b), an analyst of Hungarian national consciousness and political culture, was that the reconciliation with the past should not be prevented by the complexes and contradictions of pre-communist national history.

This attitude of “resurrecting” national history resulted in discussions about a monument honoring the president of the “independent” Slovak state of Tiso, or about a semi-official reburial of Admiral Horthy, leader of interwar Hungary. The glorification of the pre-communist past has been connected with the condemnation of communists as “enemies of the nation.” Meanwhile, legal responsibility for unpunished criminal acts must require the reintroduction of the rule of law, but the mechanisms for new types of political persecution, for identification of scapegoats and for condemnation of “enemies of the nation” may produce patterns
which could easily apply to other groups which the majority describe as “enemies,” such as the liberal opposition or protesting taxi drivers which were criticized in Hungary by the government and its populist supporters.

As argued by Schöpflin (1991a), there is an especially strong preoccupation with the “resurrection” of pre-communist traditions in Hungary, because Hungarian conservatists cannot refer to traditions of anti-communist mobilizations after 1956, and the 1956 revolution itself is too radical and “socialist” to be a source of tradition for them. Criticism by Agh (1991, p. 20), a Hungarian political scientist, of the policy of the Hungarian Christian–Democratic government compared its backward orientation with the idea of its European orientation:

... [with] its quest for historical legitimacy, its forcible preoccupation with the questions of nationality and who is Hungarian, the new government proved that the traditional political class, that of middle-class Christian gentry, and its values had made a comeback ... It seems that they have turned these negative traditions into a system which a considerable part of the press and the public interpreted as a reinstatement of a modernized Christian course. This, of course, is a blatant contradiction of the “back to Europe” slogan and its related party political and foreign policy ambitions.

In interwar Hungary, an important political differentiation emerged within the intellectual–political élite, between the “urbanists” and the “populists” (see the special issue of the journal Századvég, Budapest, 2/1990). Both opposed the realm of the authoritarian–feudal Horthy regime, but the “urbanists” favored Western models of modernization and democracy, and stressed ties of Hungarian and European culture, whereas the “populists” stood for a “Third Way” between East and West, between capitalism and communism, and between individualism and collectivism. Their main concern was to integrate the Hungarian rural population into the élite, and to uphold “Eastern” and “popular” elements of Hungarian culture. To realize this social program, some of them were ready to cooperate with fascist collectivism, to neglect “formal” democracy, and to suppress Jewish and German minorities. The tradition of this conflict survived communist rule, and it is integrated into the cleavages of the new multiparty system of today’s Hungary.

In the Hungarian party system, the interwar division between “urbanists” and “populists” re-emerged again and is connected with the different understanding of Hungarian national consciousness and nation-state. The parties of the 1990–1994 governmental coalition (Hungarian Democratic Forum, Independent Small Holders, Christian Democratic People’s Party) tended to hold national–religious–rural values, while liberal opposition parties (Alliance of the Free Democrats, Alliance of Young Democrats) and socialists (Hungarian Socialist Party) tended to stress the international/cosmopolitan–secular–urban poles in their programs, ideologies, and social bases (Körössényi, 1991b). But this division does not affect their basic economic and foreign policy goals: they are all united in the acceptance of a market economy and the idea of “coming back to Europe” (Körössényi, 1991). The irrelevance of their values to some important elements of their programs is explained by Schöpflin (1991b) with reference to the differences in the levels of socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions in East European politics. Unity among the new political parties on important material issues and conflict at the post- or non-material level result from the lack of a clear socio-economic basis for the new party systems and from their dominance by the intellectuals, who imposed their issues on the somewhat inactive public. In the Hungarian case, Schopflin (1991a, pp. 66–68) argues that the parties of the Hungarian
government coalition included national, religious, and etatist issues in their policy and that the questions on their political agenda concerned problems of Hungarian minorities, Jewish assimilation, representation of “real” Christian and Hungarian values, etc. This agenda setting provoked the liberal opposition to reaction and overreaction, and while the two political camps were preoccupied with trying to understand nationhood and Europeanism, they failed to formulate pragmatic solutions to the economic crisis which resulted in the socialist’s victory at the 1994 elections.

Despite the “resurrection” of pre-communist nationalism, East Central European societies have still to confront the twin challenges of modernization and integration in the form of the European Community. The socio-economic base of the EC fulfils the main goals of the East European transformation: functioning market economies, a pluralist democracy, and civic culture (Hardi, 1991). Therefore, to join the EC is the ultimate goal of all the post-communist democracies, and all relevant political parties support this goal. Political parties and nation-states measure and evaluate themselves and each other in Eastern Europe by the “European” standards set up by the Council of Europe and the EC. In their striving to be more “European” than the others, national prejudices could re-emerge. One of the arguments of E.J. Hobsbawm against the idea of Central Europe is that this would involve a devaluation of the “less European nations and states in the Balkans” (cited by Miszlivetz, 1991, p. 978). As analysed by Miklós Szabó (1991a),the pioneer role of Hungary in system transformations and its European echo was utilized by the Hungarian nationalists against the “latecomer” countries which are “less” ripe for European acceptance. Paradoxically, the European idea has become a type of measurement of national superiority in Eastern Europe.

The EC, as the model of modernity and democracy, makes it an inevitable “reference group” for all political groups in East Central Europe. This means that despite their nationalist orientation, the nationalist parties are also part of the “Europeanist” political consensus. The difference in the levels of modernization and democratization between Eastern and Western Europe has produced a schizophrenia between the 19th and 21st century, that is, between Past and Future, in Eastern European national consciousness. To use the categories of Gellner (1991, pp. 132–133), while Western Europe is constructing “the federal–cantonal Common Home”, in the East reminiscences of the past are still alive, and there is a possibility that “nationalism will be even stronger than it was the last time.” Using Gellner’s argument against his conclusion, the EC could be seen as a “rival principle of association” to nation-state and nationalism, and it is affiliated with the modernization and democratization tendencies of Eastern societies such as a “genuine craving for civil society, for pluralism, for the absence of political and ideological and economic monopoly.” Both external and internal factors push toward Europe, and we may hope that the possible future of integration will be stronger than the fascination with the national past.

Of course, the EC could be a “rival principle of association” to “national renaissance” in Eastern Europe, if there are plausible prospects for the new democracies to reach the level of EC countries in modernization and democratization. The exclusion of Eastern Europe from the Community, or the character and/or the mode of its possible affiliation with the EC, has been the object of discussion of rival strategies within the European Community (Pradetto, 1992). As concluded by Miszlivetz (1991, pp. 979, 982) regarding the state of debate in the East and the West on their new relationship:
Neither the Western integration, nor the recently emancipated Eastern countries have an overreaching framework for a new, common security policy. The political and social science analysis used to be dominated by the paradigm of the Cold War, and the prospective of security and economic policy fitted into it.

The strategy for the integration of the East is not ready yet “but the time is ripe for concrete and common projects.” The result of the conflict between the “civic” and “ethnic” organizational principle in Eastern Europe is highly dependent on the attitude of the EC. According to Mislivetz, 1991):

Central Europe cannot escape the challenge to establish new, unknown forms of effective and democratic cooperation of its countries, [but] the Central European countries are not able to do that on the basis of their own resources and experiences. It is not to be expected that the European orientation itself will be able to establish a republican mind. The idea of homogeneous nation-states with unlimited sovereignty will never function in this region, or only with pogroms, wars and civil wars. In their present conditions the former Western peripheries of the Soviet empire are not able to master that immense challenge which they are confronted with. The hesitation of the West a commonly elaborated and overreaching aid . . . postpones the “close up” or “come back”.

Postponing the fulfilment of hopes in Eastern Europe could be dangerous also for the community of established Western democracies. The victory of the “ethnic” principle over the “civic” one could result in immediate threats to Western Europe in terms of immigration and security problems. Let us hope with Ernest Gellner (1991), that post-communist Eastern Europe will not experience a renaissance of an “ethnic irredentism,” but will witness the emergence of a “federal–cantonal Common Home” beyond the borders of the nation state.

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