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**INTERNATIONAL MASTER AND DOCTORATE  
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# **MASTER'S DEGREE FINAL DISSERTATION**

**The collective identity of Hungarians:  
Addressing, healing the traumas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

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**Abstract:**

This thesis argues that the Hungarian collective identity is severely damaged being reflected in victimhood, low self-esteem, fear, alcoholism, individualism, among others. It explores how the historical memories of the Hungarian people are still relevant today and how they manifest in the Hungarian collective identity and the socio-psychological environment. The focus of this research is interdisciplinary, in the areas of history, sociology and psychology. Such a study is important to understand the relevance of historical memories. The main conclusions drawn from this study are that the chain of historical events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially the Trianon Trauma and communism have caused great traumas to the people of Hungary. The collective identity of Hungarians has been negatively affected that manifest in the present political culture and the negative socio-psychological reality of Hungary. The Dissertation recommends that peaceful means have to be found to readdress historical memories and the conflict so that positive transformation may take place.

**Keywords:**

*collective identity, historical memories, Hungary, Trianon, Communism*

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# 1. General introduction

## 1.1. Research problem

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there have been historical events occurred that brought great injustices and trauma, problems to the people of Hungary in the Carpathian Basin where Hungary is located. The end of the First World War had a terribly wrongful ending for the Hungarians due to the treaty of Trianon in 1920, which was an unjust, dictated peace treaty by mainly Great Britain and France. Consequently, Hungary lost its about two-thirds population and territory with large majority Hungarian areas carved out by the winner neighboring states of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia at that time, but also by the defeated Austria. It was extremely unjust compared to the facts that the Hungarians had a subordinated position within the Austria-Hungary Monarchy, self-determination was not taken into account and the Hungarian delegation did not have a say in the matter. This fueled irredentist politics until the Trianon Trauma was reasserted as a result of the Second World War. Then, from the end of the Second World War, Hungary had been under Soviet occupation that also left its trace on Hungarian collective identity, such as the brutal aftermath of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. After freeing the chains of communism in 1989, it seems like the past issues have not been addressed, reconciled but rather deformed and worsened. The new democratic system and joining the European Union in 2004 have not improved the well-being of the Hungarian people. The collective identity of Hungarian people and people who live in Hungary have been affected negatively and the traumas are still present in the historical memories of the people. The historical memories, the unaddressed issues still manifest in the current political authority, political culture and socio-psychological environment. The historical events have led to a sense of victimhood, a sense of a disrupted nation, negative worldview, feeling of trauma, low self-esteem, large dissatisfaction, complaining, not trusting authorities, not daring to resist authority, alcoholism, high suicide rate, holding on strongly to properties, etc. Some of the underlying issues, problems manifest in the subconscious minds of the people that are reflected in the present government of Orbán. The corruption, unfairness, keeping the institutions and people in control, utilizing fear, serving foreign interests, not caring about people, destroying school system, not taking into account the constitution, having a lack of support for healthcare system, etc. have to be resolved. There is a need to reconcile with historical memories

in a peaceful way, to readdress these issues in a just way, to heal the society and to positively reconstruct the collective identity of the Hungarian people.

## **1.2. Personal motivation**

This research was inspired by many personal experiences, personal convictions, what I have seen and heard, daily interactions, family stories, historical facts and it could not have materialized without my emotional susceptibility.

This topic motivated me, because unaddressed historical memories still shape the current Hungarian reality and these have created, manifested in societal issues such as low self-esteem, negative worldview, problem of alcoholism, high suicide rate and several mental, psychological issues. The sole issue of mental health, besides physical, is of utmost importance and great concern for me as in this regard the reality is tragic in Hungary. There is a need to address, to heal the underlying issues concerning the Hungarian people and to improve their general well-being, thus this dissertation is a good way to start.

Then, the Hungarian case is one of the most unjust historical issues in Europe, contextualizing Trianon and the consequences, following periods and it is not widely known, however, still highly relevant as it adversely shapes Central-, East European human and political relations, such as between the governments of Hungary and some of its neighbors due to the areas of Hungarian minorities.

The strongest force for my motivation that I have chosen this topic arises from the fact that I feel the motivation to contribute to the solution, reconciliation of these difficult Hungarian issues by making people aware of the current Hungarian reality as I feel partly responsible for Hungary thinking of myself as a Hungarian.

I also believe in the principle of responsibility and that each person shall be responsible first and foremost for his or her own space. This can be interpreted that one should create order in his or her room before he or she takes on global challenges to tackle in their career such as climate change. But going deeper, I believe one first and foremost should be responsible for creating inner peace within oneself or at least learn to tame the evil side of oneself, making peace and justice locally in their narrow and broader communities. By this, I am stating one should take the first step first and foremost to contribute to peace in his or her own country if that is possible.

### **1.3. Thesis statement and research questions**

The chain of historical events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially the Treaty of Trianon have caused great traumas to the people of Hungary and negatively affected the collective identity of Hungarians. The unaddressed traumas, issues still manifest in the present political culture and the negative socio-psychological environment of Hungary due to the historical memories. The collective identity of Hungarians require just and peaceful solutions for positive reconstruction.

*Primary research question:*

How can the negative collective identity, the negative socio-psychological environment and the historical traumas of the Hungarians be addressed, reconciled and transformed by peaceful means?

*Secondary questions:*

1. What is collective identity?
2. How have historical events affected the collective identity of Hungarians since the 20<sup>th</sup> century until recently?
3. Why have the historical traumas been left unaddressed?
4. What are the characteristics that describe the present collective identity of Hungarians?

### **1.4. Research aim and objectives**

A positive reconstruction of the present negative state of the collective identity of the Hungarian people through a peaceful reconciliation with their historical memories, all by peaceful means.

1. Identify the main historical events that negatively affected the socio-psychological environment of the Hungarian people.
2. Evaluate the consequences of the unjust, traumatic historical events.

3. Assess critically the present collective identity of Hungarians.
4. Investigate the link between the historical memories of Hungarians and the recent political, socio-psychological culture.
5. Formulate a direction towards peaceful reconciliation and positive transformation.

## **1.5. Methodology**

First of all, ontologically realism will provide the base of this study how historical events unfolded in Hungary during the 20<sup>th</sup> century based on the facts, which are external to the human mind. This realist lens implies an objective view how different historical events happened, for example taking a look at the map of Greater Hungary and acknowledging that by the 20<sup>th</sup> century the different nationalities constituted about half of the population, not viewing it subjectively from a far-right perspective that all the folks were Hungarians, when it is not true. Then, idealism will be used as it defines that reality may be understood through socially constructed meanings. Certain events, such as the Peace Treaty of Trianon or the Hungarian Holocaust are interpreted in different ways by different societal groups and one event of the two may have a deeper meaning to them. In this study it will be proven that the collective identity is constructed by humans through socialization and in other ways and historical traumas may be given more than one meaning. It is useful to combine realism with idealism, because oftentimes in today's world ideas, concepts, emotions define human behavior, while facts and rationality are neglected, creating a distorted worldview, but realism also needs idealism to break the chains, the limits of what is possible, such as heading towards a direction of peace.

Regarding the epistemology of my research, I will apply constructionism, because it examines the development of jointly-constructed understandings of the world that form the basis for shared assumptions about reality, which is crucial for my research as the chain of past historical events construct the Hungarian collective identity to a large extent and historical memories shape the "Hungarian reality", the socio-psychological environment.

Regarding the theoretical framework, I will use the approach of historical inquiry as I will review Hungarian historical events that shaped the characteristics, environment of the society, the ethnic identity in Hungary and the meanings Hungarians give to historical memories. Thus, the attributes and meanings of the Hungarian collective identity are analyzed.

Regarding the methods, It is a case study because it specifically analyzes the history of the Hungarian people and their collective identity, how it has changed over time.



This study will be mainly qualitative research (English and Hungarian books, articles, Internet sources), because most of my research, such as the interpretation of historical events, the feelings, thoughts of Hungarians and what the collective identity and historical memories imply cannot be analyzed by numerical data.

Finally, considering the limitations of the research, firstly due to the fact that I am Hungarian and it is a sensitive topic, I may not be able to be fully impartial like if someone else would write about the topic such as from Spain, for example. Secondly, if I encounter that the English sources are limited, I may need to translate many sources from Hungarian to English and it is sometimes hard to provide the same meaning as the original text. Third, in case if I only include personal and family stories, experiences, there may not be enough subjective experiences shared that would give a clearer, whole picture. Moreover, some literature on the topic may be biased, and thus it could divert my research to some extent.

## **1.6. Literature review**

Stephen Béla Várdy (1997) wrote about the Trianon Syndrome in Hungary that left a deep scar on the Hungarian people within Hungary, the Hungarian people outside the frontiers within the Carpathian Basin and the Hungarian diasporas in the world. He acknowledged the nation was dismembered into five unequal parts, in a very unjust way not taking into account national self-determination. No event in modern times could be compared to this event, while in Hungarian history the author compared it to the Battle of Mohács in 1526, when the Ottoman empire defeated the Hungarians in this crucial battle and it paved the way for Hungary's trisection and became the battleground of two empires. The Trianon syndrome appeared in the interwar period when politicians devoted their time to revisionism. Between 1938 and 1941, Hungary achieved ethnically-linguistically justifiable territorial revisions, however, this came with a high price of being involved in World War II that undid all achievements. Trianon shook the life-foundation of Hungarians for many decades not to be able to objectively assess the situation. It has become a lasting national malady that is felt by the Hungarians since then. During communism, it was not possible to talk about Trianon as it was a taboo. The end of communism resulted in the reappearance of debates and frustration about Trianon. In the 1990s border revision seemed to be transformed into worry about Hungarian minorities in neighboring states who were being subjected to denationalization. Trianon also prevented Hungary from having good relations with their Danubian neighbors. The Hungarian minorities certainly faced difficulties but the post-communist Hungarian governments only

emphasized the importance of human rights of the minorities, not revisions to comply with the EEC and the NATO in order to join them. Hungarian civic organizations, such as the Hungarian World Federation also asserted their positions to claim revision or called for improved human rights.

Orsolya Putz (2019) acknowledges the Treaty of Trianon still plays a great role constructing the national identity and how it is conceptualized and how contemporary citizens of Hungary interpret Trianon. The author thinks of Trianon as a metaphor in the Hungarian collective consciousness. Putz views Trianon and the Peace Treaty as agents, as persons who cause harm, and as means of disintegrating an object. Trianon is also viewed as a substance in the Hungarian mind and soul, moreover perceived as mental and emotional illness. Putz further analyzes the consequences of the conceptualization of Trianon, ranging from territorial and population changes to how it changed the emotional, mental state of the nation. She comes up with interesting interpretations such as how she views the detached Hungarian populations as the child who needs to be looked after, while the post-1920 Hungarian nation as the nurturing mother and probably neighbouring states or actors who played a role in the treaty as agents who cause harm. Putz ends her work with stating the role of Trianon in the construction of Hungarian national identity and in the conclusions states how this conceptual system about Trianon survives and its recent evolution from 1990 to 2015.

Gábor Egry (2020) acknowledges that the effects of Trianon are still lasting today and that there has been divisions about understanding Trianon between right- and left-wing political parties. The current Orbán regime, furthermore, turned the meaning, commemoration of Trianon upside down and manipulated it for political purposes. The author highlights how the Trianon trauma was reframed as a common issue of Central Europe combined with traditional, anti-liberal and revisionist Trianon discourse. It clearly serves the political agenda of the Visegrád Group and Central European Cooperation. Egry examined the memory politics about Trianon and political divisions in Hungary since 2010. As the Fidesz with Orbán gained power in Hungary, some of the first legislative acts, simplified naturalization process for Hungarians and a new memorial day for Trianon, the Day of National Cohesion. After the fall of communism, even the centre- and radical-right called for revisionism, while the liberals and socialists aimed to overcome Trianon by accepting the past and with practical solutions such as cultural autonomy. The “new Hungary” during the Orbán regime was to remedy both the failed regime change and the ills of post-communism, moreover Trianon. Hungarianness, Hungarian nationhood became the cornerstone of state-building and the re-establishment of the Carpathian Basin as a Hungarian space. With the fall of communism, many asserted that Hungarian victimhood became the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century and suffering as the major thread being perceived in a broader Eastern European concept too. The

common Hungarian discourse on Trianon mentions some form of injustice, while Orbán's commemoration goes further to prove that the tragedy of Hungary is the tragedy of Central Europe. The new commemoration is devoid of history, tradition and serves ideological, political purposes.

Ionel N. Sava (2020), a Romanian scholar wrote about Trianon that Hungary shall reconcile with the past and that nostalgia is present in Hungarians that leads to cultural trauma. Moreover, among the 20<sup>th</sup> century painful historical events, Trianon has been the dominant for Hungarians. The author begins by first comparing the German-French reconciliation since the 1940s to the Hungarian-Romanian reconciliation after the fall of communism. Yet he argues that in 2018 Hungary stated there was nothing to be celebrated and in 2020 Hungary commemorated Trianon. He argues historical nostalgia of the interwar period and the Trianon trauma have resurfaced. Sava states neighbouring states could find a convenient solution to this historical problem and that Romania only asks for reconciliation and European integration. The past has not been forgotten as the nostalgia about the event of Trianon is unveiled in East-Central Europe. Sava defines the concepts of nostalgia, tragedy and collective trauma. Trauma theory is especially important as trauma is not an institution, neither an experience but memory of something unexpected happening and suffering could lead to trauma. Sava mentions the latter sufferings of Hungarians after Trianon, such as the Jewish Holocaust, the Soviet occupation and the military intervention in 1956 that make the Trianon Trauma into a *causa prima*. Sava further emphasized that for the Hungarians the multinational *Mittleuropa* was replaced by the 1920s as the years of Hungarian suffering and the grandiose concept of *Visegrád*. Finally, for Hungary there is a European dilemma whether to reconcile with what had happened and focus on integration or postpone integration and focus on the Trianon trauma. Sava concludes by stating whether there indeed exists a Trianon trauma, it should be healed within an integrated Europe.

The first part of my study, which is about the recurring Trianon trauma throughout my Thesis will be based on Stephen Béla Várdy's (1997) work, because he approaches the topic from a perspective of memory and some objectivity, that it left a scar on all Hungarians and was suppressed under communism. While many authors, such as Ionel N. Sava (2020) politicizes the issue, among others pointing to neonationalism and politics of Orbán, I aim to view it from a pragmatic, sociological, psychological view. In this aspect, Orsolya Putz's (2019) book offers another base that Trianon may be embedded in Hungarian collective identity.

It is important to write about the process of Trianon, its antecedents since when changes were occurring that led to this event and as Várdy (1997) wrote the period of irredentism and how it was forbidden to talk about it during communism. Putz's (2019) ideas about Trianon that its a substance in the Hungarian mind and that Hungary may be considered the mother who has to care

about the Hungarians detached from Hungary are important, but this work further aims to speculate about the real effects of Trianon on the exact characteristics of Hungarian collective identity.

As Sava (2020) points out the Trianon Trauma is some kind of *causa prima* that may influence the Hungarian collective identity the greatest and it belittles other events. I acknowledge this as Trianon is not an unfinished event, as Egry (2020) stated too, because there are still many Hungarians living in neighboring states that affect the Hungarian people and the relations between Hungary and other states. However, he only views Trianon as a Hungarian issue from a Romanian perspective, though it is as much a Romanian issue as it is Hungarian. Whereas if one looks at what the successor states provided to the Hungarian minorities, one may find even the basic cultural rights of those Hungarians living there are violated and not taken into account creating tensions between states in the region, while for moving forward towards a more cooperative region the successor states would have to let these peoples practice their rights and not act indifferently towards them.

On the contrary, as Egry (2020) mentioned, the Orbán government politicizes the issue of Trianon, which I consider to be an ill-natured political tool, thus it cannot be stated that recently Hungary is not distorting anything either. Nobody is a Saint. Even if the past is gone, the future is still unwritten, what this Thesis recognizes.

As Sava (2020) put it, for a similar French-German cooperation between Hungary and Romania, both parties would have to make an effort and take into account the needs of the other for a peaceful coexistence. This Thesis will analyze shortly the situation of these Hungarian minorities, but it will not go into details, politicize this issue, however, there may be a recommendation at the end how a more peaceful, cooperative coexistence might be achieved.

Mária Schmidt (2005) wrote about the way until the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, such as the issue of mass rape in 1945 that also led to the Revolution that was brutally repressed. She begins the introduction by stating the importance of the Hungarian Revolution as having a great role in world history and the vulnerability communism suffered as a consequence. Tibor Déry defined in his work that to live together with Bolshevik dictatorship for a longer time period was impossible for a nation. The fall of the communist system ended symbolically by the reburial of Nagy Imre Prime Minister and his fellow martyrs on 16<sup>th</sup> June, 1989. The roots of the free and democratic Hungary after the collapse of the Soviet Union has its roots in the struggle of 1956. As the siege of Budapest in 1945 ended the Second World War in Hungary, the worse catastrophe just occurred the day after making reference to the weaking of women's body, the abortion operation was made free that in reality meant the occurring mass rape of Hungarian women by the victorious Red Army along with taking prisoners of war ranging from civilian men to women and children to the Gulag, with half of

them had not seen again any more from the about 700000 people. The resistance to the Soviets originated in the hopeless battle of fathers and monks who tried to defend their children, the women. But this was not all, as the terror of the violent forces of the organizations created by the Communist Party took away 45000 people between 1945 and 1946. People were also executed. These were some of the antecedents of 1956.

Tibor Valuch (2008) wrote about the societal characteristics and consequences of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, moreover the retaliation after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, which aim was to instal fear in people or make them incapacitated by executions and incarceration. The author begins by stating the antecedents what had led to the Revolution both internally in Hungary and more broadly within the communist bloc. He analyzed also the societal aspects of that time and highlighted there was increasing tensions between most societal classes and the communists within Hungary for years, such as an existential uncertainty, the loss of property, the implementation of violence in everyday life, systematic persecution of certain groups and harming the national traditions, symbols and so on. He further writes about the organizations that were formed to start the uprising, political parties and their directions. Valuch continued with assessing the retaliation and the deaths. 229 people were executed, around 20000 people were incarcerated to shorter or longer periods, and about 200000 Hungarian people went into exile in 1956, according to the Yugoslavian and Austrian authorities, from which more than 11000 people returned until the summer of 1957. However, the communist authorities even after the retaliation aimed to deter, terrorize the people who wanted to take actions and make them leave the country. After all, due to the failure of the Revolution and the period of retaliation, people felt helpless, subjugated and weak that led to keeping distance from politics for some time among the average people.

Mária Schmidt's (2005) and Tibor Valuch's (2008) works point to two major events during communism, the mass rape in 1945 and the retaliation of the 1956 Revolution that give part of my base on communism. This period of terror from 1945 to 1956-57 is the first part of communism that this study will take into account how it could have affected collective identity but the other part is the era of the Kádár regime from 1957 till the end of the 1980s that is probably the more prevalent, which may have a stronger effect on the collective identity, because many people who grew up during this period are still alive today.

Katarina Gombocz (2016) concluded in her thesis that the high suicide rate and depression are embedded in the cultural context of Hungarians living in the US as immigrants in this study. It is concluded that there is a Hungarian Traumatic Cultural Identity linked to a disruption of a sense of belonging and negative worldview. The author introduces the topic with the tragic fact that Hungary was one of the leading countries where the suicide rate was so high, such as 44.9 per 100000 in

1980. This reduced after the period of communism but it is still the highest in the European Union. She identifies depression as a leading cause of suicide which can also be shown in the case of Hungary. High rates of drugs and alcohol use are also identified that leads to depression, while Schultz (1995) argues Hungarians are in an identity crisis between their Asiatic origins and the current European place. Gombocz then links Hungarian depression and suicide to a broader cultural context and historical circumstances. There are also studies mentioned that prove that in certain cases ethnic self-identification of a person may help lessen their depression, anxiety and improve their self-confidence. Some studies noted that among Hungarians, the Hungarian people who live in the US as immigrants have the worst suicide rates, thus four Hungarian females living as immigrants were being interviewed about family stories on depression among Hungarian women. Gombocz argues in her work that family stories are situated within a Hungarian cultural context and participants make use of cultural resources, such as negative 20th-century events to shed light on depression within their families. The reproduction of narratives reinforces the identity through which Hungarians relate to their depression. The author identifies their Traumatic Cultural Identity. Gombocz analyzed the definitions of ethnic identification and what it means to be Hungarian. There are an essentialist and primordial understandings. According to the former, ethnicity is fixed being based on common language, ancestry, territory, while the primordial one suggests a fluid explanation shaped by socio-cultural factors such as discourse or group psychology. Then the author briefly goes through Hungarian history and highlights some important events especially of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Trianon Trauma, the Trauma of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the Trauma of communism and the erasure of the Trauma of the Hungarian Holocaust. Then she talks about illness beliefs and making sense of illness. After discussing the participants experiences, a disruption of a sense of belonging, collective and generational negativity in the Hungarian worldview were brought up the most, while collective traumas acted as triggers for depression.

The issues being mentioned in the work of Gombocz (2016), such as the disruption of a sense of belonging, the negative worldview, depression, the high Hungarian suicide rate and the identity crisis of Hungarians between a European and Asian identity will be considered as symptoms of a negative, traumatic historical development.

Miklós Hadas (2017) wrote about how the characteristics of the Hungarian society developed through the ages and identified negative present characteristics, moreover different types of Hungarian people, the protesters, the withdrawing, the conformists and the passive protesters. The author introduces his text by stating that many of his sociologist colleagues ask about why is there no resistance against the current political elite in Hungary. As there is a scientific book characterizing the German people, Hadas argues nations have certain returning thinking, emotional

and action patterns that are the results of long-term structures created over time. In the beginning of his work, Hadas compares the lives, characteristics of Hungarian people to the Dutch. As opposed to the Dutch people, there is a great chance that the Hungarians feel an inclination not to pay for the ticket on a tram, regardless who he or she is, which can also be said about hiding the taxation duty of their income. This has a lesser chance in the Netherlands as according to societal norms, paying for tickets serve their own interests and safety. This may be linked to the fact that Flanders was one of the main centers of medieval trade, which resulted in free citizens already in the 12-13<sup>th</sup> centuries creating their own structures and throughout the centuries common trust and fair play have developed between the people and with the institutions. By this stereotyping, the author focuses on typical and likely national behavior patterns. While the Western European city went against the aristocracy creating its own economy and making their societal breakthrough, the prevalence of cities and the citizenry in the Hungarian history is very low. Even if there are cities, the citizens are mostly not Hungarians and in the market towns there were rather peasant rights. The Hungarian citizenry only became a prevalent force in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and those were mainly Germans and Jews. Thus, the roots of the Hungarian national habitat primarily originate from the structural situations and behavioral patterns of the aristocracy and the peasantry. There is a very important aspect of societal development in a European context, regarding the geopolitical positioning, as while Western European states were able to sail and colonize lands, Russia expanded to Siberia, Central-Eastern Europe did not have such opportunities and on the Danube river in Hungary was also not possible to sail upwards, thus Hungary, among others was left in the periphery of larger empires. Another important aspect of that region is that the power was usually concentrated within the state, which governed the economy and the society in a top-down manner. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hungary had to go through three regime changes (1919, 1945, 1990) as a member of a failed world order capitulating to enemies and restart with conforming to the will of the winner powers suffering huge losses each time. The regime changes are forced by outside powers, the Entente after World War I, the Soviets after the Second World War and “the West” after the fall of communism. There are no revolutions, rights achieved from inside struggles, so the people who aim to implement changes, strive to do it under the shortest time period, because the new powers, new Lords are coming and only that is achievable, which is attainable in a short time. There is great uncertainty and narrow visions, so if someone reaches a power position, he or she should utilize it to make better prospects for their families for an unpredictable future. As a consequence of the capitulations, the consistency, the development that started in earlier periods were interrupted. After each regime change, an overly bureaucratized, authoritarian state was created under the control of the dominant parties. The elites aim to transform the society from top-

down and not the expertise, but instead the loyalty and reliability are the decisive factors who are the members of that period. A state elite is being created that obliges, calls on the people, are unreliable and punish, change the legal system to their preferences. The state is an enemy and exploitative in each three periods. On top of this, there is a masculine political culture in Hungary even until today. Most of the Hungarian politicians fought both real and symbolic wars against internal and external enemies. In each of the three periods of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a central hatred ideology revolved around enemies, which provided the legitimacy of the system. There was no vision for a positive utopia, but instead a revenge-motivated negativity based on the past, be it either the Horthy regime, the Kádár regime or Orbán regime. After the fall of communism, the common enemies became the Jews, then the migrants but in all periods the gypsies, of course. The Hungarian nation in this sense has become a community of hatred. The construction of an enemy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is new in a sense that there is no outside force or pressure, but the Orbán regime creates its own enemies and generates kind of a war of independence. The target enemies are basically fictions in this rhetoric war, like Brussels. Then the author analyzes collective strategies of Hungarians, common behavioral patterns such as the protesters, the withdrawing, the conformists and the passive protesters. The protesters ultimately always fail in Hungarian history as there are no bottom-up successful revolutions. The withdrawing group is a much more populous group that has four types: migration, emigration, self-destruction, submission. In the third category there are the people who believe in passive resistance, while the fourth group are the conformists.

From Hadas' (2017) work, the four types of Hungarian people, the protesters, the withdrawing, the conformists and the passive protesters will provide an anchor for this Thesis to identify the present distribution of the different types of people. Besides comparing Hungary to Western Europe, a "Middle-European" category will be highlighted further and more will be mentioned about the regime changes and political culture throughout the last hundred years or so.

Noémi Zsuzsanna and others (2017) gave an overview on the phenomenon of collective victim consciousness and that the so-called Hungarian victim identity resulted from the characteristics of Hungarian historical trajectory is discussed in the light of social scientific theories and researches of the last years and decades. The authors state that a collective victim identity exists if the members of a certain group share the beliefs that they were subjected to aggression, violence once or multiple times by other groups. They think these acts were undeserved, unjust and consider them intentional wrongdoings, the group was not able to prevent, not taking the principles of morality into account. Thus they feel vulnerable and the construction of this identity does not only affect their own group but also it influences the relations with other groups. A group can also feel themselves to be victims in case of natural catastrophes, while instead of actual violence,



segregation or discrimination may lead to collective victimization. After the actual happenings, a group may subjectively sense and socially construct the accepted representation of the event. The national memory is functional and selective, the representation of the past occurs according to the present cognitive and mental needs, while the next generation may reconstruct these ideas in similar or less similar ways. Radical traumatic events easily form as a good base for collective memories and these traumas are “chosen” in a sense that the predecessors were not able to process, the wounds are not healed. Thus, these grievances may be inherited through generations and may form a central theme within the collective. These “chosen” traumas, according to Volkan, mean an unconscious decision of a group about events that are deemed to be prevalent and are chosen to be preserved as a part of the group’s history. The historical memories and the collective identity mutually affect one another. The study conducted by Mészáros, Szabó and László (2013) showed that identifying with a nation affects the evaluation of historical events. People who identify in a glorifying way with the nation perceive the traumatic events more negatively and glorious events more positively. Hammack (2009) describes the discourse that was created about the past conflict and is commonly shared in the society through educational, cultural, political and social mechanisms rooted deeply in their identity as “master narratives”. Transmission from generation to generation occurs on the levels of societal-institutional and personal communication. The representation of radical, traumatic events have advantages too as they may embrace heroes and heroic acts that could have positive influence on their group. Moreover, there are functions of remembering these certain traumatic events. There are multiple functions of the collective victim identity of a group, which are explanation, giving sense, creating a shared reality, decreasing stress and anxiety, preparing for future aggression and poor living conditions, moral justification and exemption from the aggressive acts of the group, solidarity and increasing cohesion, mobilization, political propaganda, gaining international support. Then the authors assess the destructive characteristics of such a collective identity, the negative cognitive, mental and behavioral patterns, then the positive aspects of such an identity. Furthermore Zsuzsanna and others mention the ways, different experiences how a group may develop collective victimhood, then examine the collective victimhood in the context of the Hungarians. From many socio-psychological studies, it is described that the Hungarian nation is so unique in the sense that they have no racial, neither language relatives in Europe that is why they have that feeling of being alone, which provides a base for self-piety and operates as a self-fulfilling prophecy. While in the case of Germans ethno-centralism leads to a feeling of superiority and pride, as a consequence of the negativism found in Hungarian identity leads to a sense of abandonment and collective anxiety. According to Pataki (2011), Hungarians feel insulted and let down that Europe is ungrateful for the sacrifices of Hungarians, while at the same

time there is a sense of yearning towards Europe. According to Csepeli, in the collective memory of Hungarians, two traumas, the Treaty of Trianon and the Holocaust have central positions, then the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the aftermath, as in 2012 about 68 percent of Hungarians named Trianon as the worst tragedy of Hungary.

Noémi Zsuzsanna and others (2017) discuss how traumatic events can be inherited and transmitted, the members of the collective influenced by master narratives. It is relevant to note that how political elites and the political culture may shape the events to their worldview can be differentiated from what a certain event meant and means for the people and how it affected them. Also, the events which are not “chosen”, so finished or processed may not be that strong in the collective memory of the people.

György Csepeli (2018) in *Hungarian negativity* wrote about the Central-, East European misery and the Hungarians, space and time, denial of the collective other, feeling of aloneness, denial of one's own body, suicide and alcoholism, distrust towards people and institutions, denial of the community, empty individualism, a deformed collective space and so on. The author based his work on “Mi a magyar?” written by Gyula Szekfű in 1939 for political purposes and in Szekfű's work the characterization of the Hungarian nation stretches back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Széchenyi laid down the cognitive area for Hungarians. Csepeli's work is purely empirical and pragmatic without any agendas. Previous studies on the socio-psychological characteristics of the Hungarian people are revealed in Csepeli's work. First of all, the study of Hunyadi highlights that Hungarians like to glorify themselves, but after the tragic events of the nation they do not like the people of their own group. The Hungarostudy what was taken between 1988 and 2006 assessing the mental and health state of Hungarians found that despite the bloodline, within their family Hungarians are individualists and outside of family they hardly trust anyone. They value safety above all, because inside they are troubled, uneasy. Another study found that the Hungarians have a habit of self-destruction, be it alcohol, drugs or suicide. Csepeli first analyzed whether there are commonalities with other states in the Eastern-Central European region. This region is linked to the Eastern-Central European misery as for centuries these peoples were under imperial subjugation by the Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian empires. As a consequence these peoples could not identify with these powers, were alienated. Although they achieved independence but not by themselves and the safety of life, properties and convincing remained doubted. A European study showed that in contrast to Western Europe, trust, autonomy and risk taking are lacking in Central-Eastern European societies, while the centrality of the state and a sense of seeking safety are characterizing them. Within this Central-Eastern European misery, according to István Széchenyi who wrote the *Hitel* in 1830, the Hungarian proprietor is poorer than as he should be looking at their properties. The

Hungarian proprietor does not bear himself or herself as the circumstances would allow. Széchenyi mentions often the word “no”, which is not solely a negation but the lack multiple characteristics within Hungarians. He stated that the lack of credit or credence is the cause of all moral deterioration. Negativity characterizes Hungarians as an added value to the regional misery. There are more unique characteristics such as can be seen in time and space. As the Great Hungarian Plains after the Ottoman destruction symbolizes, physical desolation equals to mental desolation, in which everything loses its sense and the purpose of life. There is no rush for the Hungarians in the desolation and they have time. Then, the denial of the collective other means a feeling of being aliens and not being understood, the feeling of being alone in this hostile world. This may derive from the fact that Hungarian language stands as an island in on the sea of Indo-European languages, which is distinct from other languages. Thus, the attributes of collective victimhood, such as complaining, touchiness, not being understood, blaming can be seen. Another one is the denial of one’s own body, deriving from the denial of the collective other, which points to the only solution as an early death and the self-destructive practices it is linked to. Hungarians generally die early, which can be seen primarily in the rate of suicide especially among men, and in indirect forms such as alcoholism, smoking and other substances. Moreover, further problems are the issue of obese people, a decreased fertility rate, all that constitute “a dying nation”. Then, there is the mentality based on a negative self-representation, a self-defensive strategy instead of the mentality of credence that suggests the likeliness of success. This negative self-representation implies failure and is the root of distrust and suspicion as the people who are successful are linked to theft or cheating. The denial of the community implies that the power of the regulatory norms of the community are weakened, the values of the community life fade away. The Hungarian negative self-representation’s most harsh embodiment is the National Anthem, in which, for foreigners especially, the aggressive and self-destructive words can be noticed. The key motives of the Hungarian National Anthem are the sins, the defeat, the loss, anxiety, feeling uneasy even when Hungarians win. A study found there is also a link between the attitude of a nation’s national anthem and the suicide rate in that nation, which is very true for Hungary. Empty individualism is a further characteristic that implies ambivalent behavior towards fellow citizens, which is neither competitive, nor cooperative. It assumes one can only count on themselves. Despite acknowledging the existence of other persons, one only care about themselves not taking into account the interests of others. This is like a trap in which everyone aims to succeed, however, at the end nobody benefits. The major goal is survival at all costs and the citizens only want to receive, not give as opposed to Western European societies where they first give so they can receive something. The collective cognitive space becomes distorted and narrow is another issue. It suggests a passivity of

Hungarian people, suggesting from their viewpoint that either they are helped, but mostly harmed by outside forces, but they do not affect others. There is a lack of sovereignty that makes it impossible that the individuals or the community take responsibility for themselves and to be active actors, not passive. The collective defeats always reappear and there is no learning of them, while always the other is responsible for the causes. Last but not least, not taking into account an outside point of view of the collective like anything that does not fit into the self-validating sample and self-criticism, irony and humor are not acceptable. The exclusiveness of the nation's aspects does not make living with other nations together possible.

Csepeli's (2018) work greatly points to the fact that there is a difference between regional and national characteristics. While there is "the Eastern-Central European misery", there are further added Hungarian unique characteristics.

Gombocz's (2016), Hadas' (2017), Zsuzsanna and others' (2017) and Csepeli's (2018) researches highlight the major issues and socio-psychological environment of Hungarians but how these issues are manifested are not that extensively mentioned. I perceive the policies, characteristics of the Orbán regime to be consequences of the unfolding past history of the nation and its socio-psychological consequences.

Overall, in this research I aim to expand on the understanding of the collective identity of Hungarians, ranging from the time of the Middle Ages (though briefly) until the 20<sup>th</sup> century and till the most recent challenges, then link all the historical events and processes to the current state of the Hungarian socio-psychological environment and set up a diagnosis and a positive direction that should be followed.

Moreover, some other gaps to be filled are why the political culture is deformed, why is there a need for positive transformation, why do some of the historical traumas unaddressed or feel to be unaddressed and lastly, would a positive transformation of the Hungarian living space alone create a more peaceful, cooperative Central-East European environment.

Although Trianon and communism provide the base for present Hungarian issues of collective identity, negativity, there are still other events that will be considered such as the multiple defeats of Hungarian independence and freedom fight movements, Red Terror-White Terror, the Holocaust, leaning from the far-left to the far-right and then back again to the far-left, mass rape of the Red Army, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and some of the recent events after 1989.

Although I acknowledge that the subjective historical memories of the Hungarian people may intensify the negative aspects of the Hungarian collective identity, an objective view of the Hungarian history can also substantially explain the current state of the collective identity. In the

paper the focus is on the objective history, but also to some lesser extent the subjective historical memories.

## **2. Collective identity and historical memories**

### **2.1. The meaning of collective identity**

Before diving into the meaning of collective identity, first social identity is to be examined as a base for collective identity. Social identity theory differentiates social identity of a person from personal identity. While personal identity defines the uniqueness, personal characteristics of a person, social identity forms the other part of the self based on his or her belonging to a social group(s). This is created through two processes: cognitively that means the categorization of individuals into groups including the person themselves, having attributions of meaning and characterizing external groups. The other is motivational, seeking to differentiate between one's own and other social groups. This implies a systematic preference for the norms, values and common behaviors of an individual's own group. Social identity stands as a foundation to explain various social effects, such as how humans act, feel or think and patterns of inter-group behavior like discrimination or cooperation. This is the reason how large numbers of people can be mobilized and act in coherent ways as they share a social reality being reflected in their norms, values and understandings (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 355).

As the micro-individual level of identity has been defined, it is time to focus on the macro-level, socio-psychological concept of collective identity. The concept of collective identity describes the identity of the group as a whole similarly to the concept of collective consciousness by Durkheim or class consciousness by Marx. These theories highlighted the notion of we-ness that inspires collective action and that society is more than just the sum of individuals. Collectives are formed and through social interactions individuals acknowledge being part of the collective and accept having shared values and norms. Thus, in essence collective identity means a joint awareness and recognition that members of a group, such as being Hungarians, partake the same social identity. This can be thought of having a "cloud of collective" that the members share. This shared collective may influence the group's social reality being constructed by the members, the degree of solidarity and unity they experience, the degree to which group members become involved, the extent of their mobilization, the expected degree of conformity, the pressure they put on leaders and hold them accountable and the direction the group is taking, among others (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 355-356).

There are multiple ways to define what are collective identities. In other words, it may be thought of as an area of culture with unique elements, such as symbols, meanings and so on. These elements form an understanding about the collective, its attributes, its characterization, its issues, the present state of its environment and future. It is further stated that not all the attributes of the collective should be present at all times. Such collective may have a “thin” or “thick” character depending on the simplicity or complexity of the collective, the small range of shared interests or a rich, deep historical background, a sense of common purpose. Thus any social unit that has a certain boundary and internal communication, the smallest being for example a family or a friends circle up to a civilization or transnational movements can be considered a collective, also state-bounded societies, such as in this case Hungary may be (but with loosely understood state boundaries) (Peters 2002: 10-11.).

Several social entities have collective identities, for example social movements but also the examples of national identity and ethnic-national identity on which the focus will be put in this paper. Thus in the following analysis, the elements of collective identity will be explained through the example of the national collective identity.

“The national-ethnic group is defined as “a named human population occupying a historic territory or homeland and sharing common myths and memories; a mass, public culture; a single economy” and having “common rights and duties for all members”.” (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 356).

In other words, generally, the attributes, characteristics of collective identity present, inherited, shared, circulated by the members of the state-bounded social unit constitute the national identity, which has a ruling, governing political authority. They have a public culture, a certain political order and a social order too (Peters 2002: 12.).

From a constructivist perspective, ethnic identity is the result of continual shared social construction. Nations are modern collectives and the result of imagination and cultural invention that the elites aimed to create by forming national awareness among the people. However, solely this constructivist approach is not enough to understand national identities such as the Hungarian one (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 356-357).

National identity is defined in many ways from different perspectives by researchers. Some emphasize national identity is imagined and constructed, some think of the national culture as the base of the national identity that is obtained by social interactions, some correlate a state and national identity and perceive national identity to be the result of nation-building, some state national identity is primordial and backward looking, while others that it is forward-looking, in a

politicized context the ethnic group is creating their future destiny. Thus it has many aspects and perspectives how to look at it (Inac and Ünal 2013: 229-230.).

Just like the Hungarian national identity, the origins of many national identities come from pre-modern ethnic identities. These are defined by their common name, ancestry myths, historical memories that gives an answer to the group's origin, uniqueness and the territory they inhabit, their common language, elements of their culture and a measurable solidarity. Over hundreds of years the primary social, cultural and symbolic components of identity make up the national consciousness and deeds that are inherited from generation to generation with possible changes over time. Some parts of the identity may be forgotten or changed drastically, however, the significance and meaning the members give them characterize their social identities rooted in the ethnic past. Despite the fast pace of globalization of the last 30 years, nationality still accounts as a relevant and powerful part of identity that gives a base how a collective can have sovereignty. National collective identity is a powerful concept with emotional, perceptual and behavioral aspects (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 356-357).

There are two major foundations how collective identity is constructed. The generic features that characterize each collective and also specific contents that provide unique and particular characteristics. There are six fundamental generic features that are a sense of a common fate, the perception of the uniqueness of the collective and its distinction from other collectives, coordinated activity of the collective's members, commonality of beliefs, attitudes, norms and values, concern for the welfare of the collective and mobilization and sacrifice for its sake and finally continuity and consecutiveness in the dimension of time (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

The sense of a common fate implies a sense of unity and feelings of mutual dependence shared by the members of the collective. It is defined that what connects them, what they share outweighs their differences of the members. This is what connects the individuals to a nation. It is also stated that the fate of each individual of the collective depends on the whole community. Common fate is a cornerstone of national identity, such as through the example of a myth of common origins as a nation may be thought of an extended family that has been grown from one seed. In times of crisis emphasizing the unity of a nation can be useful, moreover some states, such as Germany or Hungary aim to state in their legislation that the diasporas outside their national borders, also constitute their national community (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

Then, the perception of uniqueness and the fact that a collective is different from others can be seen in the case of collective national identities. First there is the positive definition about their national identity and second an outer boundary between the inside and outside of the collective that results in saying "we" and "others" in their social realities. Without this, social entities would be the



same and it is important to mention that the extent to which one nation differentiates itself from others can be very harmful and negative such as in the case of Nazi Germany. It is crucial to distinguish between a positive and negative way of defining national identity, the former as “we-hood”, while the latter one as “us-hood versus them” (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

Coordinated activity of the collective’s members highlights the importance of the different groups’, sectors’ ability to work together, towards national goals. One aspect of that is to set superordinate goals for the common good and another to act according to them and achieve them (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

The commonality of beliefs, attitudes, norms and values do characterize nations too and members are aware of these. The adoption of these is through depersonalization, when the individual’s parts of self-definition includes the beliefs, norms and values that make up the collective prototype (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

Concern for the welfare of the collective, mobilization and acting for its sake mean that members of the collective feel concern and are motivated to take on missions, contribute to the group with their resources, help fellow members in times of crisis and even sacrifice themselves for the community (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

Finally, the last generic feature is the continuity and consecutiveness in time, the past, present and future. Considering an existentialist approach, it is said that members of the national collective construct their present identities as they interact with the past and the future. The past is from where their culture is inherited, an anchor for the existence of that collective, while the future implies the horizon of aspirations and possibilities, for the society to set goals and change some of their ingrained parts of their identity. Between the past and the future, there is the context of the present providing challenges the members of the nation should take into account and focus on mentally. Some parts of the collective identity remain the same for longer period, while others change through dynamic processes. If members of a collective focus on only the past, it may divert their attention from the current social, political conditions and forms a barrier in tackling the challenges of the present. On the contrary, by rejecting the past, the society’s ability to define and value their contemporary existence is damaged, the collective fails to find its place within the broader context. Thus, when a nation forgets its past, it fails to remember its own identity in the present, while if a nation relies solely on its past, it is not able to construct a competent direction for the future (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

Regarding the particular features, contents of collective identity are territory, culture and language, collective memory and additional shared societal beliefs. The second pillar of the collective is the unique features, the contents. The content is like the semantic space the identity

inhabits. Regarding national collective identities, there are three major tributaries they draw from: the first one is being tradition including beliefs, memories, cultural products, symbols and institutions, the second being national ideology that highlights national self-definition, defines the members and goals of the collective, and the third being crucial experiences from past events, lived, experienced, heard, taught by the members of the collective. These major events are significant to the collective as these have an impact on the welfare of the members and on the entire collective, as it will be seen how major events shaped the Hungarian collective consciousness (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

First, territory is one unique feature of the collective. Humans have associated themselves with particular territories for hundreds of years and this peaked in modern times as members of national collectives formed deep connections between particular territories and their identities. It is the place where important historical events have taken place and their identity has been built (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

Secondly, culture and language make up the national identity's content. Through a socio-psychological lense, culture is created as a product of human history, it is not created from out of nothing as transmission, construction and socialization influence the national culture. Culture provides the concrete elements of national identity that can be seen, heard, smelled and felt. Through culture one can learn both about the depth of a collective identity and how it is reflected and expressed. One of the most important elements of culture has always been the language spoken by a collective that distinguished them from other collectives (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

Third, collective memory is what explains a collective's, in this case a nation's origins and evolution over time. This does not mean scholarly history, but rather how the individuals experienced, remember events, processes, persons or in other words the sum of social memory of the group members. This collective memory is passed on from generation to generation through social communication and is key in understanding national identity. Collective memory does not guarantee that the history of the past is objectively view, rather a story, which is functional and relevant to the present and future goals. It can even be a distorted, biased narrative that is used for certain purposes, however, it always has some basis in true events. The beliefs presented in the collective memory help to understand the past, influence the present and serve future visions, aspirations (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369). But more about this will be examined under historical memory.

Last but not least, additional shared societal beliefs besides territory and collective memory are deemed to be important for the society's existence. These are based on collective experiences

and create a perception of reality, furthermore form shared behaviors (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 361-369).

The concept of a Hungarian national or ethnic-national identity or Hungarian collective identity may raise up the following questions: Would minorities, foreigners living in Hungary belong to this collective? What about ethnic Hungarians living in neighboring states that used to be part of Hungary or as part of the Hungarian diaspora in the world? After more than a decade of Hungary's accession to the EU or simply based on a pro-EU political orientation, would not a European identity conflict with the Hungarian collective identity?

First of all, for the first question, presuming these peoples were born or have lived in Hungary for a longer period, they naturally become part of the collective through the use of Hungarian and even through experiencing, adapting, becoming part of the socio-psychological environment, even if Hungarian culture is only secondary to them. Whether these persons became Hungarians by birth, obtained Hungarian nationality through marriage or over a longer period (such as 10 years) have lived in Hungary, even if they have a non-Hungarian primary national, cultural or ethnic identity, to a certain degree they also constitute the Hungarian socio-psychological environment even if they have multiple identities, hybrid identities. The hybrid identity of people is recognized by the study, but it is outside of the focus of this study. If these persons do not feel to be a part of Hungary or do not want to integrate into the culture or are not aware of the historical and cultural past of Hungary and so on, they may not be bound to this collective strongly, thus the influence, the effects, consequences of the past and present are not felt by them that much as they identify mostly with their primary collective other than Hungarian. Still, as long as they are living in Hungary for a longer period, they may sense the state of the socio-psychological environment.

Secondly, Hungarians living in neighboring states, in the "detached territories" or abroad being part of the Hungarian diaspora, especially in the US, who had either preserved their Hungarian identity by learning Hungarian, keeping alive the consciousness of belonging to Hungary or either had lived for a longer time in Hungary before leaving but later took on the identity of his or her new home country, each constitute the Hungarian collective identity too, to a variable degree. One does not have to have a Hungarian nationality to feel, think as a Hungarian but it is true these persons have a different living space than in Hungary, as their secondary home country has different laws, norms, a different environment, thus they may be bound to a variable degree to the Hungarian socio-psychological environment. Despite their possible hybrid identities, they can connect, tune in to the Hungarian environment through preserving their traditions, reading, listening, watching news, stories from Hungary, voting on the elections with a ballot letter or commuting, traveling to Hungary from time to time.

Third, although there are some Hungarians who either exclusively identify as Hungarians or claim exclusively a European identity, these may not conflict with one another. One can have a Hungarian and a European identity too, though the more than 50 years backwardness between the development of Western European European identity and the development of European identity in Hungary in the past 16 years or so with the memories of communism cannot be neglected. Even if a European identity suits better a Hungarian person or he or she has a pro-EU political orientation, but still grew up and have socialized in Hungary, were or are part of the socio-psychological environment, then their Hungarian identity still greatly define their personality and behavior, until in the long-term they are able to change, shift their personalities, identities. Unless such a change occurs, they also make up part of the Hungarian collective identity.

As this work will include some sensitive issues of the past, it is important to mention that this work does not aim to place the Hungarian identity as one that supersedes other national identities, rather it aims to raise awareness about issues, injustices and put the Hungarian people and the Hungarian identity in their rightful, reasonable place. This study is to inspire, empower, put things into places for a cooperative, peaceful future. Although in the Thesis some people of certain origin or a collective are called responsible for certain actions, those statements are based on facts and not on fiction or racism. Their responsibility, either of the Hungarians or other nationalities, for their wrongdoings should be recognized, but this responsibility should not extend to the other members, descendants of that collective.

## **2.2. The relevance of historical memories**

The Chinese people recall the time period from 1849 to 1949 as the century of humiliation. During this period, first China was defeated by the British in the First Opium War followed by more defeats and subjugation by the Japanese, French and English. This ended when the People's Republic of China was formed, however, Chinese people still tend to connect modern events with these earlier times. During the Yugoslavian war, when the NATO was bombing Belgrade, the US hit the embassy of Beijing, ending the lives of three people. This event made the Chinese leaders angry and called it a barbaric act. Even through the US apologized, Chinese people went on the streets to demonstrate against the US. The event reminded some of the Chinese people for the century of humiliation that was carried forward into the future with them as a traumatic historical memory (Roediger and DeSoto 2016).

Each individual has some kind of collective memory in connection with their social groups they have been part of. These may be facts or interpretations as in the case of the embassy bombing. If one understands the memories of a certain country, then their national identity is better understood and the perspectives they own. When Russians and Americans are asked to list some major events of the World War II, their answers differ. The Americans mostly name the attack on Pearl Harbor, D-Day or the bombing of Hiroshima, while the Russians remember first and foremost for the Battle of Stalingrad, the Battle of Kursk, moreover, the Russians have their way of remembering World War II as the Great Patriotic War. Collective memories, however, are not fixed but can change over time as older generations pass away and newer generations grow up. While both younger and older Americans thought of the bombings of Japan in World War II as a major event, older people considered the bombings to be positive, as it ended the war and saved American soldiers from death, but younger generations perceived quite the opposite. They viewed it negatively, because the bombs ended innocent lives and it was not necessary to end the war in a short time. Memories may also fade away completely, certain events become forgotten as time passes by (Roediger and DeSoto 2016).

It is easy to predict that one can use historical memory to the advantage of his or her political party and agenda, as in the politics of public memory. It is argued that collective memory summons the presence of the past. The more intense the context may be, the more defining the memories are. Commemoration of historical events is a tool to stabilize the inconstant memories, but it may also be used to manipulate the masses to comply with a narrative (Hutton 2000: 537-538).

Until the 1940s there was no definition for the mass killings of an ethnic group. Then, the term genocide was coined and it was used for the Holocaust and other events that could be categorized as such, like the mass killings of Armenians during World War I. However, the Turkish government denied it from ever occurring and that they perpetrated such an act. They remember 1915 in a different way, how it actually happened or how they prefer to view the event. Some argue that it never occurred, while others may say it was a retribution due to the deaths of Turkish people. Even if no Turkish person alive was part of it, they are not willing to admit the crime. Even if they committed such an act, they would defend themselves by stating it was not like that described by the Armenians and the Armenians also committed violence against them (Steinhauer 2017).

Many citizens situated in the southern part of the United States have heard, learned about the Civil War within the US and the Confederacy as a story of victimhood. They did not live in those times when the war happened, but they have heard memories from their families, communities, saw Confederate flags at many places and memorials to Confederate soldiers as children. These adults

who grew up under such circumstances have come to associate home with the Confederacy. On the contrary, other Americans perceive the Confederate iconography as evil, evoking dark times of the past when slavery was a part of reality. Although segregation is becoming less and less remembered and these people who negatively view the Confederacy did not grow up at that time, the monuments still remind of the history. It is a fact that slaves were shipped from Africa to the American continent as early as 1619 who did not have rights, were not treated as human beings and often brutally died as a consequence. Still, according to a poll from 2017, 62 percent of US citizens support keeping the Confederate statues in place. This may be due to the sense of victimhood or based on a fear of what might replace these statues. For other people, the statues signify their political fight between red and blue states, or even some of them may be called Fascists. The truth is all these people who accept the presence of these statues today are influenced by culture and there is a myth they cling to. While myth can be thought of as a story about the past of the people, culture is what is passed down to the younger generations. Losses were tremendous during the Civil War and the children, loved ones and relatives of Confederate soldiers erected memories in different places, except for government cemeteries where it was not allowed. As the veterans were aging, they called for reconciliation coming from both parties. Time passed and by 1914 Confederate headstones were considered equal to Union headstones. This was the time when most memorials were erected, when the Supreme Court decided that white and black people could be separated. Southern states revived their favored hierarchy, not allowing black people to have the same rights. Thus, erecting memorials was part of holding on to the system that had been changing (Steinhauer 2017).

Historical memories may be very subjective, may not necessarily be ethical, righteous, but rather distorted and manipulative.

While many people approve of George Santayana's saying that those who cannot remember what had happened in the past may be doomed to repeat it, still, too much remembrance may be counterproductive. Humans have been taught to remember the past and to memorialize collective historical memories due to their moral importance. But this remembrance may not lead to peace and reconciliation in most cases, rather it evokes the evil forces of resentment, revenge and war. Healing the injuries of a community or a nation and the practice of forgiveness are probably more difficult than giving in to frustration and anger (Rieff 2016).

After such a long time in the aftermath of the US Civil War, a less intense battle is still occurring in the form of commemoration, the demonstration of Confederate flags. Historical memories have shaped the world in a negative way too, such as in the case of the Yugoslavian War in the 1990s or in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is crucial not to turn a blind eye to what communities are capable of doing in troubled times through remembrance. On the contrary, to be

fully against memories and the determination of a community to commemorate their deaths may be wrong. It may be said, however, that while forgetting is unjust to the past, remembering may be unjust to the present. When historical memories resurface in the collective's mind and the members feel the pain, the wounds, the bitterness of history, would it be better to forget instead of remembering? If humanity's tendency to resolve issues, injustices through aggressive, violent behaviors is analyzed, then it is suggested that forgetting is the safest path a community may take. To dig deeper in this debate, remembrance can be considered to be an ally of justice, but it is not necessarily a guarantor of peace like forgetting. A good example to this is the *pacto del olvido* between the left and right political groups in Spain that restored peace and democracy after General Franco's dictatorship in the 1970s. Some memories may seem to be too valuable to give up but for a better future even the act of mourning should eventually end. Still, some collectives who perceive they are under existential threat or want to spread, impose their beliefs on their neighbors will most likely not let go of old memories (Rieff 2016). Either forgetting or remembering in itself may not be enough, may not solve the issues of the past if the past is not addressed. Perhaps a combination of remembering and forgetting might be the ultimate solution.

Many historical memories are present even today in the form of narratives. Narrative is being used to construct social reality and to render meaning in the lives of humans. White (1981) said that narrative is an innate human ability. Bruner (1990) stated that narrative is like a system how people organize their experiences, transactions in the social world. Narrative does not only represent, but also constitute it. When humans put their experiences into subjective stories, they construct memories through narratives. Thus, narrative and identity are inseparable entities from one another, they rather complement each other. Narratives being told are less about the actual events happened, but rather focus on the meanings and interpretations of those events. Narratives can be thought of as embodiments of certain points of view, instead of an objective standpoint. Thus, an objective reality is hard to define, so the truest story may be a conventionalized and culturally accepted variable. After all, narrative is a certain version of reality that renders meaning and gives sense, constructs who we are (Guerrero 2011: 89-90).

Societies, communities are formed when a group of people have an adequate, convincing narrative to unite under. Civilization was built by strangers coming together to agree on basic principles, a story, a narrative that they agreed upon. This narrative may play a big role in their lives and it becomes part of their identity as well. This gives meaning to their lives and the sense that they are part of this narrative, which is a social construction connecting people to it (Harari 2015).

As any society, the Hungarian society also has its own history and past, while the present is built from stories that members of the collective, the people tell themselves, what they feel they are

and which connect separated individuals together. The future is built on the way how members of the collective behave, think and what they perceive they need to do today to make their vision a reality.

The historical memories are highly relevant to understand the collective identity of Hungarians. It is the way how one can unpack very complex situations, behaviors of a collective, how outsiders, external viewers can understand, interpret the feelings, acts of the collective and their relations with others. Thus, if one is eager to find directions, solutions how to address, heal and reconcile a collective's distorted, negative behaviors and improve their society, it is crucial to analyze historical events of the collective and how these have affected their collective identity, such as the collective national identity of Hungarians that I will be analyzing in the following Chapters.

### **2.3. The forgotten identity of Hungarians**

Who are the Hungarians? Who were the Hungarians? Early Hungarian history, speculations about the origins of Hungarians and early Hungarian identity are to be explored in this part briefly as before examining the most relevant past 150 years or so it is important to put the current Hungarian collective identity into centuries-long perspective and context.

There are differing views about the origins of Hungarians. There is the traditional approach starting from the pre-Christian era that fits to a great degree the theory of Sumerian-Hungarian relationship by international orientalist researchers since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while there is the Finno-Ugrian theory that is rather the result of foreign regimes in Hungary: Habsburg influence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and communist in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The traditional view suggests the Magyars and the Huns were alike both tracing back to ancient Mesopotamia. Researches about Sumerian-Hungarian ethnolinguistic similarities have proven this. On the contrary, the methodology of the Finno-Ugrian theory is unscientific and the motives of the theory's supporters have been wrongful to weaken Hungarian national identity. This is because their theory suggests a collective inferiority complex ("The Controversy on the Origins and Early History of the Hungarians", n.d.).

The theory of the Hungarians belonging to the Finno-Ugrian group can be falsified by both historical and linguistic reasons, but here only the historical ones will be mentioned. First of all, the theory that among the Ugric peoples from their ancient homeland, which was put in Siberia, the Hungarians who had a hunter-gatherer civilization at around 1000-500 BC reached the level of the conquering, structured Hungarian society within a thousand years could only have been explained by an unnatural phenomena. Then, the Khanty, Mansi and Lapp peoples were anthropologically



different than other Finno-Ugrian peoples and as these three groups spoke a form of ancient Hungarian language, it is not possible that the ancestors of Hungarians were also Finno-Ugrian peoples. The ancient homeland of the Finno-Ugrian people is highly debated as one researcher highlights nine homelands of them. What is more, according to Soviet researchers the direction of the migration movement was reversed on the steppes, as it went from the South to the North and Western Siberia was populated from the South. However, the recently excavated traces of the relatives of Hungarians near the Bjelaja, Ural rivers, then on the side of the Irtis and an earlier excavation link these Hungarian relatives to the Huns, not the Finno-Ugrians. Moreover, genetically the Hungarians contain Baikal and South Chinese elements, which point to the origin of Hungarians to be found in the Far East. Another archeological-genetical study concluded the members of the Árpád-family (who conquered the Carpathian Basin) are of Eurasian origin and that the ancient homeland could have been in a territory, which belonged to the Hun Empire. Most of the Árpáds were Turkish-like, Asian Hungarians, thus they came from the same place as the Huns. Last but not least, the Hungarians are part of the outermost branch of the wide 1000-year-old Asian music culture and the music of the Hun-descendant Turkic folks show a strong connection with Hungarian folk music, but not with Finno-Ugrians (Szili 2019: 3-8.).

However, the recent mainstream narrative still promotes the Finno-Ugrian theory, according to which, Hungarians were “primitive Asiatic intruders” in a more developed, civilized Europe. This official interpretation dismisses the Turanian origins of the Magyars, the Sumerian-Scythian-Hun-Avar-Magyar identity and the early, pre-1000 AD Hungarian achievements. According to the traditional account, which is based on ancient sources, there is the story of Biblical Nimrod who was the son of Kush and Eneth, whose descendants Hunor and Magor led the way from a region near Persia for the Huns and Magyars to Scythia, which was an earlier name of the region ranging from the Carpathians to Central Asia. Around the 5<sup>th</sup> century first the Huns settled down in the Carpathian Basin followed by Árpád’s Magyars in 895-896. It is also mentioned in these medieval sources that Árpád was a descendant of Attila, thereby the Hungarians claimed their inheritance by reconquering the Carpathian Basin. Contemporary Persian, Armenian, Arab, Greek, Russian and Western sources are in accordance with the Caucasian-Caspian origins of the Hungarians and their Scythian-Hun identities. Byzantine sources refer to the Hungarians also as Turks, moreover a previous name Hungarians used themselves, which was “Sabartoi asphaloi” in Greek. This refers to the Sabir people who were situated in the Transcaucasian-Northern Mesopotamian-Western Iranian region. The Hun-Magyar connection is further mentioned in the Hungarian translation of a Turkish source about the history of Hungary based on a Latin text. This text states when the Huns and Magyars arrived in the Carpathian Basin, there were already people speaking the same language as

them. This means Hungarians or their Hun predecessors established themselves in the region already before around 900 AD. It is to be noted that the medieval Hungarian chronicles could be based on earlier real sources that were destroyed and that these highlight real historical facts (“The Controversy on the Origins and Early History of the Hungarians”, n.d.).

The Finno-Ugrian theory is based on János Sajnovics’s book from 1770 when he identified the Hungarian language to the language of the Lapps. This was followed by German linguists, especially by August von Schlözner developing the Finno-Ugrian linguistic school. This school had a dominant effect on Hungarian research due to strong German influence in Hungary and as the Hungarian War of Independence of 1848-49 failed, the Habsburg regime imposed the Finno-Ugrian theory exclusively on the Hungarian academics. This weakening of the Hungarian national identity aimed to advocate foreign domination, Germanization that distorted, falsified information connected to the origin, history and language of the Hungarians. This was embedded in the context of rising German nationalism from the 19<sup>th</sup> century as they ideologically claimed to be the Aryan race and making the Indo-European group to be superior, having cultural pre-eminence. The Finno-Ugrian theory thus was ideologically promoted that suggested the Hungarians were primitive Siberian nomads who wandered to Europe and developed a more advanced culture as they came into contact with Indo-Europeans. However, there is no agreement and significant confusion among scholars about the branches of the Indo-European ethno-linguistic tree and the chronology of events happened. This theory is ultimately based on linguistic speculation and is not backed by archaeological, historical evidence. After all, the theory is arbitrary and unscientific and the presence of Hungarians in the Uralic group is artificial (“The Controversy on the Origins and Early History of the Hungarians”, n.d.).

As British, French and German researchers analyzed the oldest known written records in Mesopotamia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they identified their ancient language had similarities with the Turanian ethno-linguistic group, including Hungarian, Turkic, Mongolian and Finnic. This recognition grew in international orientalist circles until the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, but due to the Habsburg influence in Hungary further research on the link was discouraged, continuing through the period of communism, and this situation still exists until today. However, some Hungarian expatriates after the Second World War collected significant evidence that the Hungarian and Sumerian languages are indeed related. Some result of research on the question indicates there are more than a thousand shared word roots between Sumerian and Hungarian, moreover similar grammar rules. As Kálmán Gosztony, a Sumerian philologist found, from the 53 attributes of Sumerian grammar, 51 of them also characterize the Hungarian language (“The Controversy on the Origins and Early History of the Hungarians”, n.d.).

The Hungarian conquest and settlement in the Carpathian Basin (see Appendix A.1 map) is a debated question as the mainstream narrative is that they were primitive Asiatic barbarians who were forced to settle in that region and the Western European influence had great benefits for them. Though it is true that like other nations, the Hungarians also conducted many raids at that time. This is opposed by the traditionalist view, which suggests Hungarians had a developed material and spiritual culture and a developed society. It is argued the Western political and religious influence were beneficial to Hungary such as the feudal political system and the adoption of Christianity as opposed to the “pagan” Magyars. Others believe the forced integration to the West had detrimental effects and served foreign interests, not the interest of Hungary. It is also claimed before the Hungarians arrived, Slavic, Daco-Roman and Germanic peoples were inhabiting the Carpathian Basin, while according to the opposing view, the region was inhabited by populations related to Hungarians. Due to the already mentioned Habsburg, communist influence and anti-Hungarian propaganda, there exists a distorted image of Hungarians that concurs with the traditional Eurocentric bias. These biases were exposed by Viktor Padányi and historical evidence draws a different picture (“The Controversy on the Origins and Early History of the Hungarians”, n.d.).

First of all, prior to the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin, due to the Hun-Magyar identity and its continuity, the Magyars were already part of the Hun and Avar Empires politically and culturally, being established themselves in the 4th-8th centuries in the region, which means the current Hungarian state is linked back to about 1500 years and a few centuries back before the Magyar Conquest of 895-896. The archaeological and anthropological evidence highlights that the Carpathian Basin was previously populated by significant Avar populations, which was identical to Hungarians, remaining Huns, but not Indo-Europeans. According to Byzantine sources, as the Huns and Avars spoke the same language, the theory of Hun-Avar-Magyar ethno-linguistic identity is almost certain (“The Controversy on the Origins and Early History of the Hungarians”, n.d.).

Secondly, the developed culture of Hungarians can be seen in the Covenant of Blood, which gave the base of their tribal federation under Hungarian leadership. It was like a constitution of the Hungarians created in Etelköz, in the region where they settled before coming to the Carpathian Basin. It may be considered a partly democratic order at that time, as among the rules of the covenant, it was declared that clan leaders have the right to freely elect the ruler and be part of the ruler’s council, the rulers of the tribal federation are chosen from the Magyar tribe, the goods achieved by common effort are to be shared and the ruler that breaks the covenant is to be banished (Dr. Vágó 1976: 31.).

The ancient Hungarians had their own forged writing system, the runic script and their own monotheistic religion, the Magian religion. In this the forces of nature were worshipped without

intolerant, exclusive characteristics. There was more tolerance and freedom present in Hungary than in Christian Europe. Other cultures, religions were tolerated and Hungarian nationality was open to all peoples regardless of ethnic origin. In Hungary, there were not only equal rights provided, a more democratic tribal system than the feudal system at that time, but also more developed medical knowledge, personal hygiene, more improved social behavior and moral standards than in feudal Europe (“The Controversy on the Origins and Early History of the Hungarians”, n.d.).

The historical self-identification of the Hungarians of the distant past was provided by the Hungarian language. Since the ancient traditions, the “aul”, the extended family does not limit itself to a single ethnic group as it accepted, assimilated foreigners too. Hungarianness of a person is considered not to be defined by their nationality, but instead who learned the Hungarian language and could call themselves Hungarians. Thus, a Hungarian person is someone who consider themselves to be Hungarian (Nemeskürty 2003: 129-130.).

Despite the general cultural state of Europe with generally poor living standards, being referred to as the dark ages, gave the Church of Rome space to gain political and cultural influence over many nations, the Hungarian leader, Géza, in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century was influenced by inter-dynastic marriages that promoted foreign interests and Christianity, thereby bringing up his son Vajk (later Stephen) in Christian faith. As István became the new ruler in Hungary and made Hungary a Christian Kingdom in 1000, he also let foreign influence, the political instrument of religion to gain leverage over Hungary and broke up with ancient Hungarian traditions, destroying many ancient cultural elements and creating a Christian feudal regime subjugating the Hungarian peoples for centuries to come (Dr. Vágó 1976: 39-83.).

The precept of the Holy Crown had been a defining law and element in the Hungarian Kingdom throughout the centuries. The Hungarian Holy Crown was sent to Stephen I during his rule in Hungary. The property of the Hungarian Holy Crown is the territory of the whole Carpathian Basin and a contract was made between the sky (the Heavens) and the Earth that made the Carpathian Basin to be Virgin Mary’s country and this legal rule cannot be modified by mortal beings. The Hungarian Holy Crown is the inheritance of Saint Stephen and will be valid until Hungarians live in the Carpathian Basin. The precept of the Holy Crown served as a theory and the legal system of the state to the center of the legal and societal order as it acted as a patient, inclusive, defending and retaining force. The precept of the Holy Crown stated that God defined the purpose of the Hungarians as a nation (“A Szent Korona Tan”, n.d.).

There may have been much difference between the ancient Hungarian way of life and the way of life after Hungary was Christianized. The Christianization of Hungary as a right step towards a better way of life and progress should be questioned. As the Christian way of life led to

the structure of feudalism that constituted the wealthy land owners, noblemen and the significant number of the rest of the society as peasants, in which above the King the Catholic Church stood having the power of manipulation over the people, the ancient Hungarian, pagan, nomadic way of life and the alliance, togetherness of different ethnic peoples, the tribal acceptance and tolerance should have stood as significant virtues in that age.

Hungarian ethnic identity is of steppe origin. The heterogeneity of the Hungarians was even more stronger after settling down in the Carpathian Basin as the Hungarian nation came together by merging several smaller components into a united tribe. Hungarian identity had a double meaning as it consisted of the ethnic Hungarians but also included other groups whom may have also spoken a different language. From the Early Middle Ages until the Turkish threat, the Hungarians had been stereotyped as Asiatic barbaric peoples in Christian Europe as both the Hungarian Kingdom was hostile to Christian Europe and the German-Roman Empire thought of the Carpathian Basin as a German province. This negative stereotype changed to brave and daring warriors when Byzantium needed the Hungarians' help against the Turks and later during the struggle against the Turkish offensives throughout decades when Hungarians were called as the noble defenders of Christianity. The Hungarians who often served as a bastion for Europe against the intruder Scythians such as the Tartar attacks from the East was also mentioned by Machiavelli (Jenei 2020).

It is argued there is a traditional, ancient Hungarian nationalism that was brought to the Carpathian Basin from the steppes, inherited from earlier Hungarians that also prevailed when Hungarians settled down. This kind of early nationalism and how the society was organized was the wisdom of the nomad people as language, ethnicity did not matter and they could mobilize the people towards a common purpose. The Hungarian kings of the Christian Kingdom could have inherited this multi-ethnic tolerance until modern nationalism did not divide and turn the nationalities against each other in the Carpathian Basin from around the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The problem was that due to different reasons Hungary did not follow this unique path and the "old ways", thus the Hungarus consciousness ceased to exist. Ján Balthasar Magin emphasized the predecessors of the Slovaks accepted the Hungarians, then the Slovaks became equal members of *natio hungarica* and the ethno-social issues were tackled within the shared political nation. Mátyás Bél, an early intellectual tried to define this Hungarus consciousness by stating „lingua Slavus, natione Hungarus, eruditione Germanus”, which means he was linguistically Slav, his nationality Hungarian and his literacy as German. The *hungarica natio* can be considered as the Hungarian state community, to which everyone in the state belongs, in this sense Hungarian, Hungarus regardless of their class, position or nationality ranging from the Slovak peasants to the Croatian noblemen (Miskolczy 2012, 163-171.).

As a consequence of the Hungarian defeat at the Battle of Mohács in 1526 against the Turks, the Hungarian Kingdom gradually collapsed with one part being brought under Habsburg influence, the other part ruled by the Turkish Sultan and the region of Transylvania left to be autonomous at a price. These partitions in Hungary had prevailed until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Due to this, the unified Hungarian identity ceased to exist, however, the Hungarian Reformation was a cohesive force that sustained the Hungarian identity as the trends of reformation gave the village people opportunity to read and write in Hungarian. Although the death of the nation at that time was a real threat, it provided a strong sense of Hungarian identity to struggle for freedom. At the end of the Turkish opposition, resentment among Hungarians grew towards the West, against the Germans appeared due to the German violence of the Habsburg armies inflicted upon the Hungarians. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, Hungarian identity split into two when the Kuruc and Labanc identities were being formed. The Kuruc identity rebelled to restore the sovereign Hungarian statehood against the Habsburg Empire that gained significant leverage over Hungary as the Turkish armies were eliminated, even with the aid of the Turks, while the Labanc gave up Hungarian independence and the restoration of the former political functioning and were pro-Habsburg. This led to the Rákóczi War for Independence in 1703-1711 that failed to restore the sovereign Hungarian Kingdom and left the Hungarians with limited autonomy within the framework of the Habsburg Monarchy (Jenei 2020).

The Hungarians failed to defend themselves against the Turks, failed to liberate themselves from the Turks, failed to regain independence from the Habsburgs in the Rákóczi War for Independence and failed once again against the Habsburgs in the Hungarian Revolution and Freedom Fight of 1848-1849 that will be discussed in the next Chapter.

After the Rákóczi War for Independence the Hungarian identity was in danger to disappear under the Habsburg Monarchy, however, Maria Theresa revoke some repressive measures and favored Hungarian identity by creating cultural and economic opportunities for Hungarians. Settlers of other nationalities settled in the Carpathian Basin began to speak Hungarian, but still there was a duality, to Germanize the Hungarians as a result of Habsburg modernization that some Hungarians condemned as attack on Hungarian identity, while others welcomed due to the economic opportunities. The external image about Hungarians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was contemptuous in the German-speaking area. It was thought that Hungarians can only fight, but otherwise they seemed to be unpretentious. The contempt of Hungarians was common at that time as the general opinion was that they have no future and they will be absorbed. Perhaps some of the most negative opinion was expressed by Lipót Alajos Hoffmann around 1790 that Hungarian land creates everything a Hungarian needs and foreign science is not needed, moreover ignorance is a national virtue, by

which people looked down on someone who learned something abroad. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century, negative German opinions coincided with the increasing self-awareness of minorities and the earlier “Hungarus” consciousness started to disintegrate. Especially Slovak and Roman authors mentioned a cruel Asian mentality, the tempered Hungarian man and the language was named “the language of horses” as a copy of the German language. On the contrary, the Polish public opinion strongly favored the Hungarians with a sense of brotherhood as these nations shared similar characteristics for centuries (Jenei 2020).

## 3. The Trianon Trauma

### 3.1. The long 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Austria-Hungary Empire

Due to the warfare and foreign occupation from 1526 until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, large Hungarian populations died or were taken away, while other ethnic groups sought refuge or were moved to deserted areas of Hungary, thus these facts reduced the Hungarian-speaking population living in Hungary. The different nationalities lived in the Carpathian Basin peacefully together until the time when the Habsburgs incited the different nationalities living in Hungary against the Hungarians, though it may have happened due to the national awakenings too, sooner or later. The Imperial Government of Vienna utilized these nationalities as weapons against the Hungarian ambitions towards potential independence. Vienna pursued a divide and rule strategy since the partition of Hungary in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and exploited the fact that foreigners had to be settled in Hungary as the country was depopulated due to the brutal Turkish occupation. Estimates show that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century 400,000 Serbs, 1,200,000 Germans and 1,500,000 Romanians were settled in the territory of the historical Kingdom, decreasing the Hungarian population to less than 40 percent by 1780, compared to about 80 percent before the Turkish invasion. The Habsburg rule supported the development of the non-Hungarian ethnicities' self-consciousness and exploited this opportunity against the Hungarians. For example the fictional Daco-Roman continuity was one theory to mobilize the Romanians through the support of the Catholic Church by the Austrians. This put the Romanian people into a struggle to re-establish their position of "pre-eminence" in the Carpathian Basin. As a result, during the Hungarian uprisings against the Habsburgs in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Romanians demolished entire Hungarian villages and killed the people, increasing the Romanian population mainly in the part of Transylvania. As a consequence of the deterioration of relationships between Hungarian and other ethnicities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ethnic tensions had serious, terrible repercussions by the 20<sup>th</sup> century ("Origins of the Hungarian Question", n.d.).

It is argued the Hungarians needed the aid of the Habsburg Monarchy against the Turks as Hungary was in ruins, but the Habsburgs also needed the help of the Hungarian nobility to defend against the Turks, thus after all they were able to preserve their privileges and the independence of Hungary against the Habsburg ambitions of centralization and absolutism. However, the Hungarian self-determination in the reform era was interpreted as the self-determination of all the peoples of Hungary by liberal thinkers (Bertényi 2017).



This Hungarian reform era, which began especially in the 1820s, meant the fight and aspirations of the Hungarian liberal noblemen towards the civil transformation of Hungary along with national demands for the self-determination (autonomy) of Hungary, national union with Transylvania, to make the Hungarian the language of the state, to create a Hungarian government accountable to the National Assembly and so on, which ultimately led to the 1848-1849 Hungarian Revolution and Freedom Fight (Gergely 1996).

When in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the modern democratic nationalism was gaining popularity, in contrast to Western and Northern Europe where the state, which the people, the nations aimed to take as their own could not be different than the existing framework of the state, such as Spain or France, and there was no obstacle in the way, in Central-Eastern Europe the presence of the Holy Roman Empire and the invading Ottoman Empire crushed the already existing national frameworks, giving way to the final factor, the Habsburg Empire to prevent the development of such nations. The linguistic nationalism became prevalent in Central-Eastern Europe and the borders became fluid between nationalities, which caused a problem as the historical memories of the people, such as the Hungarians, bound them to Greater Hungary, but the bond of the southern nationalities, the Romanians and Serbs to historical Hungary weakened due to fact they were not liberated by the Hungarians, thus the significance of the Hungarian state dropped and they began to gravitate towards their linguistic relatives to the South. The original frameworks of states disappeared and the culture provided the togetherness the nation, not like in Western Europe where the framework of states were not interrupted (Bibó 1990a).

Many politicians at that time did not consider a total separation from the Habsburg Empire due to the fear against the Holy Alliance in Europe, especially considering the Russian tsarism. Still, the period of the Revolutions of 1848 that was a series of political upheavals throughout Europe stood as an opportunity for the Hungarian opposition. Through the so-called “laws of April” Hungary became independent. The relationship with the Habsburg ruler was unsettled though and when power relations shifted in Europe, Vienna aimed to eliminate the Hungarian government that led to a freedom fight. The Hungarians successfully defended their freedom for months against the Habsburgs until the Russian intervention defeated the movement in August 1849 (Bertényi 2017).

Negotiations went successfully between the Hungarians and Vienna until June 1848, after which the Habsburg Monarchy decided to act against Hungary’s transformation. They encouraged and supported the Ban of Croatia, Josip Jelačić, who was known for his anti-Hungarian stance, to take up arms against Hungary in spite of the protest of the Hungarian government. Moreover, the Habsburgs aided a Serbian uprising in June 1848 to establish a Serbian voivodeship. As a response the Hungarian government called on people to arms, but until the end of August Hungarian

delegations tried to negotiate in Vienna about the new laws in Hungary, however, these were rejected. First Jelačić attacked Hungary in September 1848, but was withdrawn to Austria. Then the Austrians attacked from December 1848 until the summer of 1849, when about 200,000 Russian troops arrived to help the Austrians and the Hungarians Revolution and Freedom Fight was defeated finally in August 1849 (Harmat 2015).

There was a brutal retaliation against the Hungarians initiated by Emperor Franz Joseph and Hungary was attached to the centralized monarchy, however, the economic modernization was allowed. Due to the Italian defeat of the Habsburg Empire in 1859, Franz Joseph sought a way to amend the structure of the monarchy by balancing the interests within the Monarchy and giving concessions to the Hungarians but keeping the emperor having the crucial powers. Lajos Kossuth, the most influential leader of the 1848-1849 Hungarian Revolution, at this time in emigration, was hoping for another opportunity to fight for absolute independence and would have given concessions to the nationalities in Hungary as he thought in the next period national independence will be the determining direction, thus such empires as the Monarchy are doomed. A new opportunity, however, did not present itself and negotiations started between the emperor and Ferenc Deák, the most prestigious Hungarian politician who subordinated the ambition of Hungarian independence to the privileged position of Hungary within the Monarchy. They reached a compromise and the framework of dualism was created, but this left other nationalities, who were about 50 percent of the population dissatisfied. There were separate compromises made with the Poles and Croats, within Austria and Hungary, respectively, but due to the failure of the compromise with the Czechs in 1871, the Czech national movement and the nationalities in Hungary remained hostile to the Habsburg Empire (Bertényi 2017).

The Joint Council of Ministers of the Dual Monarchy since 1867 was not allowed to intervene in internal matters of Austria or Hungary, but Gyula Andrassy, Hungarian Prime Minister intervened in the conflict between the Czechs and Austrians, Germans that created a precedent the Czechs would do the same. Kossuth even considered Andrassy to prevent the autonomy of Czechia (Somogyi 2010: 537-547.).

The Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1867 did not recognize the political autonomy of the Czech territories, thus they announced passive resistance in 1867. Emperor Franz Joseph reacted and aimed to negotiate with them in 1871. Gyula Andrassy brought up two main arguments for the Czech aspirations. One was that due to the Czech demands, the non-Hungarian nationalities in Hungary would come up with separatist movements and that in this case he would need to step down. The finance minister stated in the case of a compromise with Prague, the Austro-Hungarian compromise would have to be renewed, then the Emperor ended the discussions and refused the

Czech aspirations (György 2016: 115-124.). Although Andrásy did stand up against the Czech aspirations, he was not the only factor that led to the refusal of the idea by the Emperor of the Dual Monarchy.

The Austro-Hungarian compromise brought great political stability and peace to the whole empire accompanied by unmatched economic and cultural development. Despite these facts, the compromise was neither popular in its own age, nor considered to be a good decision by many Hungarians today (Bertényi 2017).

It is important to note that Lajos Kossuth protested against the compromise with Austria in his famous message called Cassandra-letter written to Ferenc Deák. Although the internal and external circumstances at that time did not present any other alternatives to gain independence, Kossuth encouraged the nation to wait and refuse the deal of the Habsburgs that would signal Hungary is not willing to maintain the empire. The stability only persisted for one generation, while the wider society, the peasants and the lower middle class opposed the compromise. The compromise prolonged the longevity of the empire though, but it buried historical Hungary with itself (Gergely, n.d.).

This is because the compromise between Austria and Hungary politically led to a dead end, the self-deception and the deception of the other and the common legal constitution had always been interpreted for the advantage of their own nations of the parties. Austria sought the compromise with Hungary, because it believed their empire could not be preserved without the Hungarians as they lost some important battles, while Hungary, or at least the movement of Deák and the supporters of compromise, agreed upon the compromise as its capability to maintain the Hungarian state weakened and believed it will be stronger within the Dual Monarchy. It was a conservative compromise for about 50 years, because it meant the supporters of independence, societal revolution and development, or the self-determination of nationalities were not allowed to gain majority. As the Hungarian opposition questioned the compromise, some election frauds occurred to prevent them from gaining power that distorted democracy, then the voting rights of nationalities was also curtailed (Bibó 1990b).

The Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1867 created Austria-Hungary (see Appendix A.2 map) or in its other name the Dual Monarchy that brought together to a closer cooperation the Kingdom of Hungary and Austria and its provinces in a personal union lasted from 1867 to 1918. The Hungarian party was able to achieve not to implement a unified imperial legislation in Hungary, however, there were shared matters, the foreign affairs, military affairs and the finances of these that were kept in imperial hands in Vienna. Although the monarch of the empire kept the

executive power to a greater degree in their hands, there was no imperial parliament, but separated legislative powers for the Habsburgs and the Hungarians (Szabó 2001).

Then in 1868 Croatia was given autonomy through the Croatian-Hungarian compromise. Croatia achieved full autonomy with their own legislation and government, but still they remained part of the Hungarian Kingdom. In the same year the new nationality law was accepted, which provided cultural autonomy to the different nationalities in Hungary cultural autonomy. This allowed them to use their own languages in the school system, in public administration and to create their own associations. In the areas where non-Hungarian nationalities lived, they were not even obliged to use the Hungarian language. They could also write their petitions in their own languages, but the law did not recognize their national independence, as they were part of the “unified Hungarian political nation” (Keserú 2006).

The crisis of dualism had begun from the 1890s partly due to the loss of political leaders who greatly benefited the Dual Monarchy through their personalities and politics and other factors. The characteristics of this crisis within the Hungarian part and partly in the whole Monarchy were that the conflicts, differing interests were considered to be a problem of dualism. The institutions were not able to resolve smaller conflicts, which accumulated over time and led the whole dualism into crisis (Szabó 2001).

The modernization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century greatly benefited the national societies, for example the Slovaks, Serbs and Romanians living in Hungary but until the 1890s they were rather passive in the parliamentary elections as the Hungarian governments restricted their activities. By the turn of the century they became more active to take part in politics and in 1893 the Romanian, Slovak and Serb leaders already held a joint conference in Vienna to state that non-Hungarian nationalities constitute the majority of the population in Hungary and that they reject the Hungarian national perspectives. They demanded the reforms of the state structure by providing more self-determination for different nationalities based on the languages spoken in the given areas. These co-operations did not lead to significant results but provided insight about the internal situation (Szabó 2001).

There was a wide celebration on January 1<sup>st</sup> of 1896 to commemorate the millennium of the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin that brought great attention to Budapest for months. The celebration, attractions had to prove that the Hungarians had found themselves and the nation is united, however, nationalities other than Hungarians often did not show up and took part in these celebrations, moreover some of their organizations even protested against the events (Szabó 2001).

The Hungarian national consciousness regarded Austria and the non-Hungarian intellectuals in Hungary as opponents in the era of dualism. They feared that all the non-Hungarian nationalities

could be politicizing creating a disadvantaged position for them, and this fear deepened when the self-consciousness of these nationalities had increased. The opposition against the Austrians were another factor, which could not gain ground though, as for example the Magyarization of the Hungarian army was prohibited. However, there were some measures taken against the different nationalities such as lawsuits against certain political activities, but the most significant was probably the school-legislation pack by Apponyi Albert, Minister of Culture, that made the intervention of the state possible to state and non-state primary schools by increasing financial support and made the Hungarian language a compulsory subject from the first grade (Szabó 2001).

It is necessary to analyze the foreign affairs of Austria-Hungary and the changes occurring in the region to better understand the context, circumstances of Hungary prior to the First World War. When Agenor Goluchowski became the foreign minister of the Monarchy in the 1890s, he predicted the power of the Monarchy less than his predecessors and aimed to maintain the status quo in the Balkans as at the turn of the century nations on the Balkans posed problems for the Monarchy. From 1906 the Monarchy pursued a more active foreign policy and annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina with German support in spite of the Russian and Serbian resistance. However, this ended the compromising politics with Russia and turned most of the Balkan states against Austria-Hungary. As the First Balkan War and the Second Balkan War occurred, the Monarchy aimed to abstain from the matters to decrease tensions, however, it still put conditions on Serbia for example to prevent it from getting a sea port. By the beginning of 1914 it was visible that the Balkan states, except for Bulgaria were the enemies of the Monarchy and some of them pursued expansionist policies. This meant that Romania and Serbia aimed to annex the territories where Romanian and Serbian populations lived in Hungary (Szabó 2001).

István Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister from 1903 to 1905 and 1913 to 1917, recognized the power of the increasing separatist nationalities that were opposing the Monarchy prior to the First World War and aimed to make concessions for them instead of relying on a strong hand. He negotiated with the Croatians to consolidate their governance and tried to reach a common ground with the leaders of the Romanian National Party. The main focus was placed on the Romanian issue as he found it easier to come to terms with the Romanians instead of establishing a long-term alliance with the Serbs. There were a number of negotiations, however, he could not guarantee the demands of the Romanian leaders and by the time Romania entered the First World War, negotiations had stopped (Pölöskei 1998: 454-455.).

As a result of the Turkish invasion of Hungary, the Hungarians had gradually become subordinated to the Habsburg rule and could not split from them even by 1848-1849 Hungarian Revolution and Freedom Fight. After the Turkish invasion and the defeated attempts to gain full

sovereignty the compromise may have reflected a weaker nation in the promise of working together with the Habsburgs. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was indeed consisting of several different nationalities making up a multinational state with a large territory that was fragile due to the differing interests within the bloc and the new emerging modern thinking in nation-states. Austria-Hungary represented backwardness, maintaining the status quo and preventing societal development, thus it acted as a time bomb until something happened that shook up the empire. The Hungarian leaders did not recognize the aspirations of the different nationalities and did not make significant concessions for them, but instead aimed to gradually assimilate them. However, by the 1900s it became clear that sooner or later a war on the Balkans may occur that has most likely turned the tide on all the promises of the Dual Monarchy.

### **3.2. The First World War and the chaotic road to Trianon**

When the Crown prince, Archduke Franz Ferdinand went on a two-day visit to Sarajevo to witness a military exercise he was assassinated by a Serb nationalist group, the Black Hand on June 28, 1914, the case triggered an existential crisis of Austria-Hungary. As a response to the event, the Austrian leadership chose to wage war against Serbia after calculations that the time was right as Serbia may get stronger over time and the alliance with the Germans was prepared for a larger war if the conflict spreads in Europe (Szabó 2001).

Tisza found that date to be unfavorable to start a war as he argued that the Dual Monarchy had already lost Romania and the only state they could count on on the Balkans was Bulgaria, which was exhausted. Then, Tisza stated that the situation on the Balkans is very hostile and it would be easy to find a reason to punish Serbia at a different time, but not long after he still agreed on the war (Pölöskei 1998: 455-456.).

The Great War spread rapidly on the European continent and it was soon to be seen that the opponents had immersed themselves in a long-term conflict, which would not solve itself overnight. Due to the defeats of 1916, the thought of ending the war and making peace appeared both in Vienna and Budapest as there were constantly new demands on the front line, moreover due to the high number of Romanian and Slav soldiers within the army of the Monarchy that began to demoralize the army, while the nationalities expressed the aspirations to join their new nation-states. The worsening economic situation, the disruption of the illusion of a rapid, successful war, the defeats and the great human losses contributed to the widespread dissatisfaction at home and in the political parties. By 1918 Mihály Károlyi had become the leader of the opposition as with his

leadership a National Council was formed from three opposition parties, among which the Social Democratic Party had become the most popular and on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1918 their democratic revolution triumphed (Pölöskei 1998: 456-467.).

The Great War had taken its toll on the Hungarian society like probably in other states as well. Within the joint army of the Dual Monarchy 4 million Hungarian soldiers served during the war, of whom more than 600,000 soldiers fell victims to the war, while the number of casualties and prisoners of war reached 1,5 million. By the fall of 1918 chaos had spread within the Monarchy and in Hungary as the internal situation was so terrible and the people were in misery, were dissatisfied what the returning soldiers had to face, who were disregarded, thus making a collapse and revolution inevitable (Kollega and others).

Then, in 1916 the Allied powers promised Transylvania, Partium, Máramaros and Banat, the eastern parts of Hungary to Romania, if Romania had joined on their side in the war which Romania did. Then, the French resolution, along with British and American ones, in 1918 recognized Czechoslovakia as their allies and promised them the Felvidék (Upper Hungary), the northern part of Hungary and thus soon all the plans for Hungary's dismemberment were created (Dr. Dobó 2019: 82-83.).

After the Dual Monarchy signed a ceasefire with the winning powers in Padova on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1918, the French-guided military occupation of Hungary began. The neighboring states of Hungary began to occupy the promised territories with French support, and the weak resistance in some areas, the incapacities of the Károlyi-government were favorable to them. First the southern demarcation lines were laid out, the new Serbian-Hungarian border, then the northern ones, the so-called first Vix-list, the new Hungarian-Czechoslovakian borders, moreover the eastern demarcation lane, the second Vix-list about the new borders between Romania and Hungary (Dr. Dobó 2019: 91-100.).

At this crucial time when the expansionist states prepared to occupy large territories of Hungary, also areas with majority Hungarians, the Minister of Defence, Linder Béla is often mentioned stating he did not want to see any soldiers that is considered to be a high treason, however, he could not have an outlook on the state and politics of the army in the period of a bit more than a week but his secretaries called to duty one of the younger generations. The recruitment to a new army failed due to a lack of leverage, such as lands for the soldiers, while as the returning army divisions from the Great War were often mixed nationalities, they did not stand for the defense of Hungary any more. The disorganization was high and it was highly unlikely the Hungarian army could not stand a self-defending war on multiple frontiers, the Czechs from the North, the

Romanians from the East and the Serbs from the South. Even if they were weak, tired armies, the Hungarians were far outnumbered (Ablonczy 2020).

As the Károlyi-government failed, the Hungarian Soviet Republic was established in Hungary on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1919, which was a communist rump state that ruled Hungary for 133 days, yet this event in Hungarian history is considered by some a “Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy”. This dictatorship of the proletariat had a Revolutionary Council that governed in Hungary and had many members of Jewish origin, who did not have a Jewish identity but were thought to be atheists and internationalists, by which this period was blamed as a “Jewish dictatorship” by the far right at that time. In contrast to this conspiracy, the Jewish people were emancipated in Hungary and the Jewish religion was accepted in 1895 by the state. However, many Jews felt discriminated and this internationalist movement provided them a way to leave behind their drawbacks of having a Jewish identity. A novel, *The descendants of Fischmann S.* by András Komor that was written at that time reflects the hardship of a Jewish boy not being able to fully assimilate into the society and this guided him to the radical communist ideology that stood as a solution instead of assimilation. Even Béla Kun, the *de facto* leader of this government stated that in spite of his dad being a Jew, he could become a socialist, communist. By the fall of 1919, most political parties in Hungary held the Jews responsible for the national catastrophe. Soon after this dictatorship, radical papers were publicized arguing that as in August 1919 the Jewish leaders with stolen treasures emigrated from Hungary, the Hungarian nation has to deal with “the remaining parasites of the nation” who have to be banned from Hungarian politics as they created “a national catastrophe”. This paper also drew a dark picture about this dictatorship by saying:

“Those, who after the defeat of the Hungarian Bolshevik dictatorship visited the morgue of Budapest, could believe that the Tartar invasion was a tourist trip compared to the terror of the Jewish Bolshevik government practiced on the Hungarians” (Csunderlik 2020)

In the operation of the proletarian dictatorship, more than 60 percent of the Revolutionary Council were of Jewish origin based on the above-mentioned historical-sociological reasons. According to Béla Szemere and Károly Lechner, the entire Hungarian political elite from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century can be considered “people with mental disabilities” as the rivalizing Hungarian politicians allied themselves with anti-Hungarian forces due to their selfish ambitions and left these to grow upon Hungary. The author in his work considered the Hungarian Soviet Republic to embody the racial ruling ambitions of the Jews, who disguised themselves as communists, to gain hegemony in Hungary (Csunderlik 2020).



There were about twenty armed groups formed in Budapest and in the rural areas to defend the communist regime and they were often called the “Lenin-boys”. Their aims were to suppress any counter-revolutionary movement against the regime, kidnap people, inspect houses, arrest, execute, torture and rape people. The number of known victims who died in Hungary was about 600. The regime was opposed by the majority of the population, while due to the nationalization of the land of medium landowners and above, moreover some of the peasantry, many people became the enemies of the state. Thus the regime knew that they could maintain their power through terror and oppression what was called after the “Red Terror” (Anka 2019).

The rule of the Hungarian Soviet Republic had serious consequences. It resulted in an increasing wave of antisemitism, which was already present during the years of the First World War, by the fall of 1919, then the leftist thinking within the Interwar period was discredited and it was correlated with the Jews. The long-term consequences have been till today the intense opposition between the urban and rural areas, the contrast between modernization and traditionalism, moreover from 1947 until the 1980s overshadowing the conservative thinkers and people who proposed alternatives. This period had serious repercussions that had a negative impact on society overall, and the lesson would be not to perceive events to be black and white (Ujváry 2019).

The new government of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, which was dominated by radical communists, was formed in March 1919 with many of the leaders being criminals before, with the most prevalent figure being Béla Kun. The rule of the radical communists was not beneficial in many aspects to the Hungarian state (Dr. Dobó 2019: 100-106.).

In the meanwhile the Romanian forces already gained hold of the Eastern part of Hungary until the Tisza river, while the Czechs occupied large territories in Northern Hungary. The proletarian dictatorship called the Hungarians into arms and succeeded against the Czechs, however, Clemenceau sent an ultimatum to Béla Kun to withdraw from Felvidék, in exchange he promised that the Romanians would withdraw behind the set demarcation lines. The Hungarian army withdrew, but the Romanians did not that led to desperate attack of the Hungarians against the Romanians, which failed. The Romanians occupied Budapest and major areas of Hungary, while the Hungarian Soviet Republic stepped down on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 and the Romanians remained there until November. The occupying Romanians plundered the country as they had taken away values worth more than half a billion dollars, which was protested by the French for the fact that the Hungarians need to pay reparations for the First World War. The Allied powers then sent diplomats to make the Romanians leave. The Romanian occupation did not alter the conditions of Trianon, even though they aimed to keep the region of Tiszántúl, this did not happen after all. As the Romanians began their withdrawal from Hungary, Miklós Horthy gained power on November 16<sup>th</sup>,

1919 and the Peace Conference requested the Hungarian government to send their delegation to Paris on 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 1919 (Dr. Dobó 2019: 100-106.).

Even as some Hungarian territories were occupied by Hungary's neighbors, Hungarians were chased away from their homes and 200,000 Hungarians from Transylvania, 120,000 Hungarians from Felvidék and 80,000 Hungarians from Délvidék fled to Hungary (Halassy 2012).

The First World War or at least the local conflict with either Serbia or Romania seemed to be occurring sooner or later and the conflicts of the Dual Monarchy came to the surface. The will of the non-Hungarian nationalities of the historical Kingdom was prevailing but it may have buried with it the future chance for cooperation and peace in the Carpathian Basin, the relatively healthy, peaceful co-existence of the nations, nationalities. The Great War and the events in Hungary between 1918-1919 caused great turmoil in Hungary and after when the war was over in 1918, the Hungarians had to face the invasion of its neighbors, the realization that the nationalities were aiming to separate from Hungary, a communist rule and its Red Terror, the issue of the returning soldiers from the Great War and the Hungarian refugees from the occupied territories by foreign troops, among other internal issues.

### **3.3. The Treaty of Trianon**

The leader of the Hungarian delegation to the Peace Conference in Paris was Count Albert Apponyi who held an important speech on 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1920 in front of some of the most important leaders of the Allied powers, such as Clemenceau and Lloyd George. He pointed out that among the Peace Treaties of the defeated powers, the conditions on Hungary are the harshest with such large territorial changes, not taking into account the self-determination of nationalities, condemning the accusations against Hungary to have such a great role in creating the war within the Dual Monarchy. He stated that among the 11 million people who were to be detached from Hungary, 35 percent of them would be Hungarians as it was presented in the famous Red Map of Pál Teleki (see Appendix A.3 map and another map about Trianon see Appendix A.4 map), which is unjust, moreover the new borders would create more heterogeneous states than it was during the period of the Dual Monarchy. The most important element of his speech was that according to Woodrow Wilson's liberal ideas, the populations of a state cannot be placed without their agreement under foreign rule and based on this, the Hungarian delegation asked for plebiscites in the territories the Allied powers and their allies wanted to detach from Hungary and that the Hungarians would subject themselves to the results whatever they would be. However, he focused too much on

preserving the whole territory of Greater Hungary, stating Hungary acted as a natural bastion against foreign invaders from the East, pressed the unique economic integrity of the Hungarian state and emphasized the Hungarian state-forming capacity and the cultural development of the Hungarian state, in contrast to the new successor states, but could have put more emphasis on the Hungarians who were to be attached to the new successor states. He further stated that if violence and materialism would be the maintaining forces of the peace in Europe, then Europe's future will be sad. His speech achieved a good impression on some of the important leaders, however, unfortunately for the modification of the earlier permanently defined borders it did not have any effect (Zeidler 2009).

Out of compulsion, Hungary signed the Treaty of Trianon in the Grand Trianon Palace on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920 and the Hungarians mourned that day, the Hungarians dressed in black, while the churches rang the bell for two hours (Dr. Dobó 2019: 178-181.).

The most serious Hungarian trauma and the biggest Hungarian issue until today about the neighboring Hungarian minorities was created on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920 by the Treaty of Trianon. The victorious major powers after the First World War, France, Great Britain and their allies created multiple minority issues through their decisions. The Western powers did not implement the minority rights protection clauses at the Peace Treaties, thus Hungary lost 72 percent of its territory, 64 percent of population with one-third of all ethnic Hungarians becoming detached from Hungary. The conditions of Trianon imposed upon Hungarians were more cruel than the terms on any other defeated nation, because the Hungarian Kingdom was indeed a multinational state, but the loss of about a third of all Hungarians at that time in the Carpathian Basin made it significantly worse ("Origins of the Hungarian Question", n.d.).

By 1918 the non-Hungarian nationalities expressed their aim to separate from Hungary and this could not be prevented at this time by the Hungarian government, but the principle of self-determination was applied in a way that it was detrimental to the Hungarian population. For example, the Czechs aimed to acquire even majority Hungarian and Ruthenian areas, to push the borders of Slovakia to the South as much as possible to satisfy their economic and strategic interests. Finally in this area of Felvidék, which was detached from Hungary, 1,9 million Slovaks, 460,000 Ruthenians and about 750,000 Hungarians lived in 1921. According to data from 1921, 470,000 Hungarians were attached to Serbia (30 percent of these territories were Hungarians in 1910), while the on the acquired territories of Romania, 32 percent of the population (1910) were Hungarians with majority Hungarian towns and the Szekler enclave. The Hungarian railway lines in such territories were also strategically important to be taken from Hungary. The self-determination of the nationalities occurred in a one-sided, inconsistent way on the detriment to the Hungarian

people, creating new injustice and tense, non-cooperative relations in “Middle-Europe” (Zahorán 2020: 193-209.).

Within Austria-Hungary the foreign affairs and military matters were defined, decided by the Austrians. Although in 1914 the Hungarian government opposed to take aggressive measures against Serbia, the Austrians could force Hungary to accept the Habsburg policies by overruling the Hungarian objections. As the Crown Council decided to go to war with Serbia, Hungary could only comply with its obligations as an ally, but the fact is that the accusation of Hungary to be responsible for this war is unjustified, because Hungary had no territorial ambitions, while other powers such as the Habsburgs, France, Romania or Serbia pursued expansionist policies (“Origins of the Hungarian Question”, n.d.).

It is argued the Treaty of Trianon has no legal or moral validity. First of all, Hungarians could not negotiate the terms of the treaty but it was imposed upon the Hungarians, just like on the other defeated nations. Trianon endorsed and legalized the occupation of Hungarian territories by Hungary’s neighbors, the conquest of these states made after the end of the First World War, violating the armistice agreements. The post-war borders in the region were determined by the claims and information of the parties that aimed to dismember Hungary. The objections of Hungary and the rightful demand for plebiscites were rejected by the Peace Conference. Thus, the new frontiers were drawn discriminatorily against Hungary, favoring the Associated powers in all ethnic, strategic, economic and other aspects (“Origins of the Hungarian Question”, n.d.).

When the Hungarians were invited to the Peace Conference in the end of 1919, Albert Apponyi already considered the possibility of not signing the treaty and mentioned it later too that in the case if no concessions will be given to Hungary about its borders, the delegation should refuse. In March 1920 the decision was final not to modify the conditions imposed upon Hungary and the refusal was discussed. A military occupation from the Associated powers was not probably but rather an economic blockade that could have led to the collapse and misery of Hungary, and considering the fate of the Hungarian minorities in the new successor states, finally the Hungarian leaders chose to sign even if no concessions would have been given, arguing “Hungary does not have an Anatolian desert like Turkey” (Ablonczy 2020).

Finally Hungary signed with the possibility of future revision in mind and that the successor states were obliged to protect national minorities, though later these were not guaranteed. The Allied powers were supposed to serve justice based on President Woodrow Wilson’s 14 Points to provide self-determination for Central-East European nationalities. The principle asserted that each territorial settlement must be made for the benefit of the given population and on the basis of free acceptance of those people, however, Trianon completely contradicted these assertions. As a

consequence, about 3.5 million Hungarians were forced to live under the rule of successor states. There were no plebiscites except for the town of Sopron that favored belonging to Hungary, the Treaty did not take into account self-determination (“Origins of the Hungarian Question”, n.d.).

The Allied powers claimed that through the partitioning of Hungary the nationality problems would be solved as Hungary was not unable to do so. If the Treaty of Trianon were to achieve any peaceful solutions in Central-East Europe, it would not attach minority issues to successor states as there were new multinational states being created from the old ones with large Hungarian minorities. Lloyd George pointed out at that time that there won't be peace if the new states have “a large Magyar irredenta within its borders” (“Origins of the Hungarian Question”, n.d.).

"For a thousand years we did not suffer half at the hands of the Hungarians that we have had to suffer in a few years at the hands of the Czechs." - said Father Hlinka, the leader of the Slovak Catholic Party (“Origins of the Hungarian Question”, n.d.).

"... If we speak without bias, we have to say that the Yugo-Slavs of Austria and Hungary had before the war more political freedom than they had in Yugo-Slavia even before the dictatorship..." - said Svetozar Pribićević, former Yugoslavian Interior Minister (“Origins of the Hungarian Question”, n.d.).

"... More Transylvanian-Rumanians were appointed to the Hungarian High Court in Budapest than are now appointed in Bucarest. In Hungary there were eighthigh financial officials who were Rumanians from Transylvania; to-day in Rumania there are but two." - said Mr. Vaida Voevod, former Romanian Prime Minister (“Origins of the Hungarian Question”, n.d.).

These statements highlight the significant drawbacks considering not only minority rights, but also the political and economic consequences, the detrimental nature of the Treaty on economic development and political stability in the region that paved the way for the Second World War (“Origins of the Hungarian Question”, n.d.).

Even before the First World War there is evidence that states aimed to exploit the opportunity of partitioning Hungary and annex territories through the strategy of supporting separatist movements of the Hungarian ethnic minorities. The Czechs, Serbs and Romanians had such expansionist aims that were promoted, propagated in the West also by influential persons creating anti-Hungarian propaganda. Arbitrary and biased arguments were created to justify the maximum territorial objectives of the Slavs and Romanians that contributed to the fermentation within the Monarchy and the new order in East-Central Europe. Eventually this propaganda resulted

in the Treaty of Trianon that decided over the Hungarians' fate in a biased context not relying on facts, where Hungary's image became deformed. The biased political atmosphere of the Paris Peace Conference about Hungary and the malevolence are reflected in the words of the British Diplomat Harold Nicolson:

"I confess that I regarded, and still regard, that Turanian tribe with acute distaste. Like their cousins the Turks, they had destroyed much and created nothing." ("Origins of the Hungarian Question", n.d.).

The anti-Hungarian propaganda was a great tool to justify the anti-Hungarian policies dictated, but these misconceptions were definitely not new as since the 19<sup>th</sup> century Germans, Czechs, Slovaks and Romanians had played a part in this. The distorted views about Hungarians in the West became generally acceptable. The most prevalent image about Hungarians is that they are aliens in Europe, Asiatic barbarian intruders who harmed the European people and that they are culturally inferior to Indo-European peoples. The Romanians also made up their anti-Hungarian theories, such as that the Hungarians are "despoilers of ancient Romanian soil of many millennia" and "Hungarians have no right to be in Europe". Moreover, there is an example of a French school textbook from 1971 made in Paris, which shows the ethnographic map of Austria-Hungary, however, on the Transylvanian Hungarians it is noted: "Les Hongrois forment un bloc compact (l'enclave des paysans de Transylvanie ne compte guère)." Or in English that the presence of Hungarians in that region is recognized, but the Hungarian minority is disregarded of having any importance. The propagation and teaching of anti-Hungarian information threatens the existence of Hungarian minorities and may justify Slovakia, Romania and Serbia to implement discriminatory policies ("Origins of the Hungarian Question", n.d.).

It has been claimed by some that the Hungarians have treated the ethnic minorities as a tyrant would since the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a justification against them. It is argued the Hungarian statehood had been influenced by nomadic tribal life that provided autonomy and self-government, lacking discrimination against foreign ethnic or language groups. The most convincing evidence to that is that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, religious freedom was permitted in Transylvania for the first time in Europe. It is stated the Hungarians not only tolerated other nationalities, but also empowered their development before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and as a consequence, they reached a higher cultural articulation than their kin in Serbia, Wallachia and Moldavia, for example. The Hungarian policies towards the minorities were not as strict and harsh as it had been propagated. The evidence points out that Magyarization occurred as a natural and moderate integration, assimilation into the society in Hungary. Then, the Magyarization policies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were aimed to preserve an

endangered nation as the survival of Hungarians became doubted due to the increasing number of surrounding other ethnic groups, threatening the integrity of the state. Thus, these were measures similar to the French or American policies, in order to re-establish ethnic homogeneity and political sovereignty, which were disappearing due to centuries of foreign influence and colonization (“Origins of the Hungarian Question”, n.d.).

The First World War interfered in the Hungarian population growth in the short term, but despite the occupations, all the human losses, the decreasing birthrates and the appearance of the Spanish flue, the long-term Hungarian tendency of population growth was not interrupted. Despite the common beliefs and the depressing years after 1920, Trianon did not interrupt the growing tendency in Hungary as the Hungarian economy was able to successfully adapt to the situation. Gábor Koloh pointed to the fact that though Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory, and half of its entire population with 3,2 million Hungarians detached from Hungary, the population of “truncated” Hungary had grown from 7,6 million in 1910 to 9,3 million in 1941 (Vajna 2019).

Then Béla Tomka analyzed the decline of Hungary’s economic potential due to the Treaty of Trianon, as Hungary lost 84 percent of its forests, 90 percent of its iron ore, 100 percent of copper and salt mining (Vajna 2019).

The collapse of the economic integrity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire led to an economic disorganization that became more intense due to the war and the Revolutions. However, the economic performance of Hungary after Trianon had not been relatively weaker in an international context compared to the period during Dualism, though in this earlier period understandably the hardships of Trianon were not present. There is a need to not only take into account the economic provisions of the treaty but to assess the real economic performance of Hungary by the rate of the GDP in an international context. While the period of the Dual Monarchy is considered to be a prosperous, peaceful time when Hungary is able to catch up with Western European states, the Horthy-regime of the 1920s is characterized by inflation, economic crisis, being subjected to the German sphere of influence, thus telling about a period of economic decline. Comparing the period of the Dual Monarchy and the Interwar period, the growth of the GDP per capita was between 1890 and 1913 1,6 percent on average, while between 1913 and 1939 1,6 percent on average but there are distortions. At the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the GDP per capita in Hungary, being based on the territory after Trianon, made up more than half of the level of the Western-European average. Although the aftermath of the First World War burdened Hungary worse than Western Europe, by 1929 the Hungarian GDP per capita reached 57,1 percent of the Western-European average. Then by 1939 it reached 58,3 percent of the Western European average, which was the relatively developed level of pre-war Hungary. Although Hungary lost a tremendous amount of its natural resources, the

economic development after the Great War were rather dependent on technological advancement, structural changes and human capital, and thus Trianon did not seriously impact the Hungarian economy in the long-term (Tomka 2018).

One has to admit the fact that Greater Hungary within the Carpathian Basin was once populated by Hungarian majority a long time ago but this has not been the case in the past centuries. Although 3 million Hungarians were stuck under foreign rule due to Trianon, Hungarians have to admit that 8,5 million non-Hungarians could become part of their new homeland. It is also true that these nationalities helped to build and defend Hungary, this is why Trianon is not only a Hungarian case (Halassy 2012).

There are often false reasons mentioned in history books about the causes of Trianon. These are the role of the Hungarians in the First World War, the operation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and the oppression of the non-Hungarian nationalities in Hungary (Halassy 2012).

The real forces that led to Trianon are the following: Throughout the ages, unfavorable ethnic changes occurred for the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, Hungary was lost when the Hungarians were defeated against the Turks in the crucial battle of Mohács in 1526 that paved the way for a multinational state, the nationalities bound with Hungarians were mingled with elements from the Balkans, who then wanted to secede from Hungary from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was in France's interest in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to smash the Dual Monarchy and Hungary within it, after the First World War Hungary was left without strong, moral leaders (Halassy 2012).

Ficeri (2019) identified four major failures or flaws that set up the conditions in the Hungarian Kingdom that led to the event of Trianon due to the omissions, mistakes of the Hungarians or rather the Hungarian leaders and elites. First of all, though the Hungarian political elites had successfully founded a Christian Kingdom, they failed to populate their new, large territories with the dominant ethnic group, except for Transylvania, even though in Hungary until 1526 it is argued that 60-80 percent of the population were Hungarians. Other kingdoms could partly populate such areas or could assimilate the non-dominant groups. The peripheral, mountainous regions were left out probably intentionally, thus these areas became the homeland of the non-dominant groups within the Kingdom. Secondly, the Hungarians were not capable to preserve the territorial integrity of their land in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, failed to maintain a competitive continental power strong enough against the Ottoman Empire, and then were subjugated by the neighboring Austrians, later the Habsburg Monarchy, which undermined the exclusive position of the Hungarian elites in the different areas of the partitioned Kingdom. The century of decline, the 150-years Ottoman presence in the Carpathian Basin and the partitioning of Hungary started significantly the process of awakening of the nationalities within Hungary. Thirdly,



the Hungarian elites failed to assimilate the non-dominant ethnic groups in Hungary. The semi-colonial status of Hungary within the Habsburg Monarchy made it possible for the different nationalities to become modern nations and the attempts of the Hungarian elites to re-establish the former status quo either in 1848 or in 1867 were counter-productive. The Hungarians did not recognize their process of becoming a nation and did not provide them sufficient autonomy. If administrative boundaries based on the ethnic internal borders were drawn before the First World War, separating righteously the different nationalities within Hungary, then the Great powers may have also respected those boundaries at a Peace Treaty instead of the excessive demands of the successor states. Finally, the fourth failure was the omission to make a compromise with the elites of the non-dominant groups. The Hungarian elites had always favored a culturally homogeneous state and thus nationalize (“Hungarianization”) the identity of the people living in the Kingdom, but did not aim to make compromises with their elites, only as a consequence of defeats like in 1849 or 1918. This attitude could not make peace with the elites of the different nationalities and their opposition led them to pursue their own territorial interests. The discriminatory politics of Hungary towards the other ethnic groups made the state vulnerable that most of the Hungarian elites could not recognize (Ficzer 2019: 763-776.).

The fact that these nationalities in the territory of the Hungarian state were becoming more conscious of who they are when the Hungarian state was weakening due to above-mentioned circumstances was a natural phenomenon. It is not clear the Hungarian leadership bore the full responsibility for the eruption of the war and the expansionist policies, though as the Hungarian state did not have full sovereignty, and ultimately the Emperor could have made the decision to attack Serbia. But even if one attacks Serbia, the Dual Monarchy, why would they be responsible for the eruption of the war between Germans and the French?

Regarding the fact that these non-Hungarian nationalities living in the territory of historical Hungary, especially the Romanians, Slovaks and Serbs, could unite with their kin who were speaking the same language and had about the same culture due to the Treaty of Trianon was righteous and fair. As mentioned above, the Hungarians did not provide them with sufficient autonomy as they would have liked and for example in 1871 the Czechs could not gain more autonomy within the Dual Monarchy partially due to the resistance of the Hungarian leaders. It is to be acknowledged the Hungarians did commit some wrongdoings against these nationalities, however, perhaps not major ones, I mean not major hateful, malevolent acts.

However, the new borders by the Treaty of Trianon were not just as majority Hungarian areas were occupied by the Czechoslovak, Romanian and Serbian forces and seceded from Hungary by the Trianon. Some of the territories where the 3.5 million Hungarians lived should have

remained in the territory of Hungary, and in the case of Szeklerland a compromise would had to be found. The above-mentioned nationalities aggressively and unjustly had taken more territories than they should have, used propaganda they should not have used, which highlights the omission of the major Allied powers, especially France, Great Britain and Italy as they were expected to be the most knowledgeable about these areas and act in the correct way accordingly. Despite this fact, they allowed the above-mentioned nationalities to take it to the extreme carelessly, considering the most possible economic, strategic opportunities they could exploit leaving a large visible scar on the Hungarian nation. Such a behavior, the above-mentioned quotes and not considering the other one is to be condemned. Last but not least, at least the Allied powers should have given the Hungarians and the other defeated nations a chance to represent themselves from the beginning and negotiate the terms fairly.

### **3.4. Hungarian irredentism and the Second World War**

The new or enlarged successor states after Trianon had no better, just ethnic compositions than Hungary before 1918 as the Czechs and Slovaks cannot be counted as one nation, and they had 34.7 percent minorities, while Romania 25 percent and Yugoslavia had no dominant nationality at all (Vardy 1983: 21-27.).

The name of Admiral Horthy became almost synonymous of Hungary's interwar period as he was a conservative nationalist regent of Hungary between 1920 and 1944 (Vardy 1983: 21-27.).

In interwar Hungary younger generations were educated and taught to believe that the map of Greater Hungary is the rightful one, and the borders of Trianon are just like a nightmare that will disappear. An attitude of self-deception was also present in the emerging Turanian movement, supported by many in interwar Hungary, which was kind of an escapism, hostile reaction towards the treacherous West that left behind, betrayed Hungary. The members of this movement were convinced of the important role Hungary played in Christianity, and for that they only received a lack of gratitude and appreciation from the West when Hungary was dismembered. These Hungarians aimed to outreach to the East, while turning their back to the West, and even to replace Christianity with Magyar culture and religion. It was a form of "new paganism" that reflected the psychological dislocation and emotional misery some of the Hungarians were experiencing, and the force of despair that pushed Hungarians to be more susceptible to radicalization when rational thinking had left (Vardy 1983: 38-40.).

The Turanian movement was, however, not new in the interwar period as it has its roots in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century but by the 19<sup>th</sup> century it became more popular and in 1910 the Hungarian Turanian Association was founded. During the period of the Monarchy it aimed to establish closer links with different Asian relatives such as the Turks, cultural diplomacy and even these new relations would have provided economic opportunities too (Mikos 2017).

Hungary's main issue during the interwar period was that Hungarians could not come to terms with the new reality and Hungarians could not free themselves from the "Trianon Syndrome". The Hungarian reaction to Trianon was very emotional and often wrong. Then the political leaders of Hungary sought to undo the injustices of Trianon at the makers of the treaty but also looked for military alliances. The anti-Trianon propaganda, however, was focusing too much on the historical arguments, which were not carrying too much weight at that time any more, aiming to regain the whole historical Hungary, instead of focusing on self-determination and the detached Hungarian majority areas. The "No! No! Never!" and the "Let's take everything back!" attitudes were a bit strong and Hungarians could have been more open to a compromise based on ethnic and linguistic self-determination (Vardy 1983: 38-40.).

After the Hungarian Soviet Republic ended, a new wave of terror spread against communists, Jews and people who supported this communist regime, which was called the "White Terror". Some wings of the Hungarian military and radical right-wing groups, who were nationalists, partly anti-Semitic, implemented the terror and violence against the communists to make justice and act for revenge that lasted from 1919 to 1921. Although Miklós Horthy, who gained power in November 1919, did not order an organized violence against the communist elements, he did not stop them either. As Horthy became the Governor of Hungary and aimed to consolidate the Hungarian situation, he repelled the right-wing violence and normalized the relations with the Jews, while the official Jewish leaders supported him too. The victims of the White Terror were often the Jews and overall the victims of this period may be a few to several hundreds ("Fehérterror Budapesten 1919-1922", n.d.).

The foreign policy direction of István Bethlen, Hungarian Prime Minister at that time, helped Hungary to come out of its diplomatic isolation by the end of the 1920s as the difference could be felt between the winners and losers of the First World War. In 1922 Hungary joined the League of Nations, which opened doors for them and over time Hungary gained the support for revision of the Trianon borders by Mussolini from Italy and others. The Hungarian public demanded a full revision of the former Greater Hungary, however the ethnic revision was the primary goal and was accepted by the left and right political parties (Cservenka 2020).

Although in the interwar period, the revisionist propaganda was based on the suffering of the detached Hungarian communities, the experiences of the minority Hungarians showed a strangeness, rejection from the part of the Hungarians from Hungary. The local political parties in the neighboring Hungarian communities were dependent on the financial support of Budapest, but these communities such as in Transylvania created their own theories and identity, often different than the mentality was from Budapest. In a paradoxical way, Hungarians and minority Hungarians felt close to each other when they were physically distant from each other, while they met physically, they felt the distance created between themselves (Egry 2017: 88-108.).

The revision of Trianon after many years could take place between 1938 and 1941 (see Appendix A.5 map). First of all, the First Vienna Award in November 1938 granted Hungary the southern strip of the historical Felvidék that was made by German and Italian judges. This decision was valid according to international law and this was a majority Hungarian area, while the Slovakian part remained making this an absolutely just correction (Halassy 2012).

Secondly, Kárpátalja was occupied by the Hungarian military in March 1939 but there were no victims. This was rightful in the sense that this area was historically part of Hungary and the Slovaks did not improve this area, however in this region only 15 percent of the population were Hungarians (Halassy 2012).

The Second Vienna Award in August 1940 granted Northern-Transylvania to Hungary. It was decided by German and Italian judges again, while also the Romanians took part thus it was legitimate. The ethnicity of the population was mixed as considering the data from 1941, by this decision not only 1,3 million Hungarians (54 percent), but also 1,1 million Romanians were attached to Hungary, while in Southern-Transylvania among 1,9 million Romanians, little more than half a million Hungarians remained (Halassy 2012; Tarján, (n.d.), a).

In 1939 when Nazi Germany began its offensive against Poland starting officially the Second World War, Pál Teleki became the Prime Minister of Hungary until 1941. During his rule Hungary achieved two of its revisionist ambitions, to take back Kárpátalja in 1939 and the Second Vienna Award that gave back Northern Transylvania to Hungary in 1940. Teleki aimed to preserve Hungary's neutrality as the hostilities of Second World War began to spread, thus aimed to balance Hungary's foreign policy between Germany and the Anglo-Saxon powers. He did not allow Germany to use Hungary's railways against Poland and opened the frontier for the Polish refugees, though in 1940 Hungary joined the Tripartite Pact of the Axis powers to aid each other in case of an attack. Teleki's plan to ally Hungary with Yugoslavia supposed to counterbalance this, however an anti-Nazi coup d'état succeeded in Yugoslavia. Hitler aimed to eliminate this new government and wanted to reach a closer cooperation with Hungary, thus persuading Hungarian military leaders in

exchange to gain Délvidék. Great Britain warned to declare war against Hungary in case they attacked Yugoslavia, thus Teleki felt the pressure and ultimately committed suicide in 1941 (Tarján, (n.d.), b).

Hungary began supporting the German expansionism from 1941 and first Hungarian soldiers fought against Yugoslavia alongside the Germans for gaining hold on the territory of Délvidék, which was detached from Hungary by Trianon (Harmat 2019).

Finally the region of Délvidék was taken by Hungarian military effort in April 1941, but the parts of Délvidék were ethnically heterogeneous, from which some did not even host Hungarian populations, thus it cannot be considered to be fully justified (Halassy 2012).

Then the war was declared between Hungary and the Soviet Union as a consequence of the alleged bombing of Kassa by the Soviets, or secretly by the Germans. As Hungarian soldiers were sent to the front line against the Soviet Union, Miklós Kállay became the new Prime Minister who was against this strong German orientation and pursued a “shuttlecock policy” which meant that he pretended to stay loyal to Hitler, while trying to seek connections with the Allied powers, the UK and the US, ultimately the Soviets, but the Nazis knew about this and ordered to occupy Hungary in 1944 (Harmat 2019).

It is undeniable the Hungarian leadership reflected the mentality of “let’s take everything back” and they were concerned more about the gained territories, not the ethnic circumstances there. Thus, by the end of this series of revisions out of the new 4,5 million citizens of Hungary, only about 2,3 million people were Hungarians, so only half of the population. Although the new borders dictated by Trianon were highly unjust considering the Hungarians, these new revisionist borders were partly unjust too. During this period of 1938-1941, there were some atrocities both against the new foreigners in Hungary and the outside remaining Hungarians. In 1941 some Hungarian militias killed 2000 Serbians, while in 1944 the Serbians killed more than 40,000 Hungarians (Halassy 2012).

The Hungarian revisionism after 1920 was fully legitimate as even Europe, the English and the Italians recognized their mistake and the need for revision of Trianon. Many consider the Hungarian leadership to be Fascists for pursuing revisionist politics, however in reality Hungary only became Nazi by the takeover of Szálasi with German support in 1944, while some neighboring states stepped on the path of Fascism earlier without German compulsion. Between 1920 and 1944 Hungary was not less democratic than some other states, rightfully claimed the revision of Trianon but the leadership was not Fascist due to this. However, policies against the Jews appeared in Hungary too, partially due to the German influence that resulted in discrimination, ghettos and

internment camps, and when the Nazis took over the deportation of the Jews also began (Halassy 2012).

The Hungarian government was pressured to enter the Second World War on the side of Hitler's Germany and was defeated. In 1942 there were already plans of the Soviets to restore Hungary's borders as it was in the Treaty of Trianon and negotiations were impossible. The Western powers also stood by the Soviets to restore the borders and make the former territorial gains of Hungary to be void. Thus the 1947 Paris Peace Treaties reasserted the unjust Trianon borders upon Hungary (Halassy 2012).

The German orientation and after joining the Second World War on the Axis' side may be explained by the creation of successful diplomatic relations, having revisionism in common with the Germans and Hitler offering territories to Hungary and the geopolitical proximity of Germany that can be considered a threat too, expecting German occupation if Hungary and Germany would not have been allied, that ultimately also dictated that Hungary could not succeed to remain neutral in the Second World War or side against Hitler openly.

In the Second World War about 350,000 Hungarian soldiers died, while the number of the civilian casualties without the Jewish ones, exceeded 80,000-100,000 Hungarians. About 600,000 Hungarians were taken away as prisoners by the Soviets, of whom 150,000-200,000 people died in the Soviet Union. From 1944 about 500,000 Jews were deported to concentration camps, and most of them had died in the camps. Then due to further atrocities and violence 80,000-100,000 Jews lost their lives and a significant proportion of gypsies were also killed or taken away.

Between 1944 and 1947 about 200,000 Hungarians left the country and permanently settled in Western countries ("Magyarország embervesztesége", (n.d.).

Due to the Second World War significant changes occurred in the Carpathian Basin. The Jews were either killed or deported, the Germans were expelled partially from Romania and Hungary, while completely from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The lands of the Hungarians were seized. 200,000 Hungarians were removed both from Romania and Czechoslovakia, while 50,000 Hungarians fled Yugoslavia after about 40,000 Hungarians were killed by Serbs. Czechoslovakia wanted a total population exchange with Hungary, but this was not possible due to the low proportion of Slovaks living in Hungary, thus in the exchange only 60-70 thousand people were moved. The Paris Peace Treaties was even more unjust than Trianon as Hungary's neighbors implemented harsh means against Hungarians. In this sense, Czechoslovakia led the way with the "Beneš decrees" that named the Hungarians collectively guilty, while they used terror against Hungarians to call themselves Slovaks. Some part of the 700,000 Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia were taken to forced labor, while in Serbia concentration camps were created for

Germans and Hungarians. The administrative boundaries of the successor states were modified in a way that the Hungarians could not be the majority and achieve a degree of autonomy (Halassy 2012).

Unfortunately the interwar period began with the White Terror and ended with the discrimination and deportation, killing of the Hungarian Jews. As it is stated above, the German orientation of Hungary and the promise of its aid in Hungarian irredentism (but also the efforts of the Italians, especially) may have been inevitable looking at the circumstances what it could provide to the mind and heart of the Hungarians but the choice also led the Hungarians on a dark path, to take part in the extermination of the Jews even if as it is stated above, there were considerable attempts of the Hungarian leaders to try to escape from under the shadow of Nazi Germany. It is another terrible factor that after the Second World War, besides the treatment of the Germans, Hungarians in the neighboring states were discriminated, killed, sometimes treated as slaves, considering less than humans in their homelands.

It might be strange to state, but the Hungarian reaction to Trianon may have been both normal and abnormal in the interwar period. The movement for the full revision of Trianon and many Hungarians turning their back on Western powers due to the unjust treatment through the Turanian movement and looking towards the East (from where they have come from a long time ago) were the partially justifiable coping mechanisms of the Hungarians, the easiest, the least they could do in the short term to somehow try to get a hold on what had happened to them. This is why it was normal in this sense, but on the contrary it was also abnormal in the sense that at least in the longer term they may have lessened their emotional feelings and should have better processed what had happened to them, moreover should have become more rational over time about the issue and focused on the right solution (which is another question).

### **3.5. The effects of the Trianon Trauma on collective identity**

The event of Trianon should not be viewed as one single event, when “smaller” Hungary was created but rather as a process, because it was preceded by the events of the First World War, the occupation of Budapest by the Romanians, the Red Terror, the White Terror, the political turmoil at that time, the attitude of the Allied powers and the new successor states, moreover the state of the Hungarian governments and then the difficulties the Hungarian minorities faced, the Turanian movement and the irredentism in the interwar period. The complex event of Trianon has definitely

left a mark on the Hungarian collective identity and the effects, consequences of Trianon are analyzed below.

Borders are indeed relevant and necessary for humans as it had to be seen during the pandemic. Although the human spirit is limitless and cannot stand borders, the human body needs delimitation, boundaries not to feel uncertain and lose their balance. Home is a spiritual thing, which is limitless, but it still has a middle, where that landscape, that region, that language in which the spirit was born and is reproduced (Tózsér 2020).

Árpád Tózsér argued Trianon was not perceived by the Hungarian people as the many individual tragedies or the great national tragedy of the First World War. There were two years between the events and everything seemed to be uncertain, with many things happening thus making the ordinary villagers unconcerned towards high politics. Many people felt that the demarcation lines of 1918-1920 are not meant to be taken seriously and that it was just a temporary period. He mentioned that in his village, which was attached to the then Czechoslovakia with 2 km distance from the Hungarian border, a few Czech soldiers appeared in the first few years after Trianon who were supposed to defend the border, which was impossible. The villagers did not take seriously the new border and could cross it with ease illegally, then running their errands in Salgótarján. The smuggling was popular and the loose border remained until 1935, when more Czechs were patrolling the border (Tózsér 2020).

Then, there is the perception that during the First World War when the Hungarians were called to the barracks they found themselves not to be understanding the different nationalities, while the Slovaks, Croats and Romanians understood each other's language to some degree. This highlights the uniqueness of the Hungarian language in Central-East Europe too. Thus, in post-Trianon Hungary, the people in the barracks could easily understand each other. Another positive aspect of the Hungarian minorities that instead of being monolingual, they have become over time multilingual being able to interact in their mother tongue and the language of their new state (Tózsér 2020).

According to Gáspár Miklós Tamás, the collective subconsciousness of today's Hungary is of an empire of 35 million people. The Hungarian imagination deriving from it has mountains and seaside. Today's Hungarian modernity is solely characterized by the classical liberalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the subconscious level. Hungarians are largely ambivalent towards their traditions as behind the visible and audible country, there is the invisible, rejected country and the shadow of the nation in the background. Hungarians are the citizens of both of these, however, the post-Trianon Hungarians do not have traditions, while the pre-Trianon Hungarians do not have a reality. This political schizophrenia is serious, but this is not all, as this schizophrenia of the Hungarian



minorities is divided into three: pre-Trianon, post-Trianon and minority consciousness. Moreover, he states that even if an individual is more susceptible, they also suffer from the schizophrenia of the majority Hungarians in Hungary (Tözsér 2020).

During the Great War and even as the Dual Monarchy was collapsing, there was a strong belief and trust that the territorial integrity of Hungary would remain intact, still what happened after went completely against this expectation and created the Trianon Trauma. Due to the Treaty Hungary had become sovereign as the opposition of the Compromise of 1867 longed for, however this came with the price of lessening the territory, population, economy and its society of Hungary. However, the economic and societal changes are not supposed to be assessed quantitatively, but rather qualitatively. Trianon may have had positive aspects too, as smaller Hungary could become a real nation-state due to its ethnic homogeneity and a more unified, integrated society in many aspects such as the distribution of income, culture and lifestyle (Gyáni 2019).

The peripheral regions that were lost were ethnically and religiously mixed but also less developed than the central regions of Hungary, considering economic development of the area and the educational, social development of the inhabitants. Although important industrial and urban centers in the Partium and Délvidék, moreover important areas of Erdély and Felvidék were detached, the least developed regions and their societies were left outside smaller Hungary. Some of these were also the focal points of transatlantic emigration. As a positive reassessment, one can state that at least the Hungarian governments were spared from making a lot of effort to increase the development of these regions to the level of the central regions. Despite this, it is also important to highlight that the Budapest-centered urban and civilian world shrank as Kolozsvár, Kassa and Temesvár were detached delinking the modern civilian middle class and the industrial proletariat from Hungary outside of Budapest (Gyáni 2019).

Due to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, a nation-state similar to the French one was being created and this state showed continuity through time as Hungarians traced back the origins of this state to Saint Stephen I, which was a natural and ideal phenomenon in Europe at that time. However, in contrast to Western Europe, due to the heterogeneity of nationalities and religions, moreover due to the age of empires that disrupted the development of nations in Eastern Europe, the preservation of the Hungarian state was at stake. Then the fact that the nationalities within Hungary already wanted greater autonomy in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century worsened the situation. Even if nationalities in Hungary were becoming Hungarians and loyal to the state, these nationalities did not get enough, even minor autonomy as they would have wanted such as in other areas of Austria-Hungary. Then the Allied Powers of World War I in the 1910s already decided to provide sovereignty to the nationalities in Central-East Europe, but many historians argue the

collapse of the Monarchy and with it the Hungarian Kingdom would not occur inevitably due to the political and societal structure of the Monarchy, but may have happened at a later time, without the Great War (Gyáni 2019).

It can be argued that the national identity is the continuity of the strictly territorial entity of the nation-state. Thus, Trianon for the Hungarians shattered a solid modern national self-identity, historical self-image and an empirical world. Trianon symbolizes deep and indelible traces in the psyche, chaining the societal consciousness to itself and enslaves the memory culture. The truth of those who state, however, that Trianon is only an artificially incited mental state being instrumentalized politically is questionable. The sense of irredentism from the period of the Horthy-regime is known even today, in the form of a top-down practice, but this alone does not stand as an explanation to the virulence of the Trianon cult. The existence of the Hungarian minorities of the Carpathian Basin and their fate in the last hundred years remind the Hungarians for Trianon. But in itself this is not all, as first the then historical empirical space ceased to exist in a moment as this entirely unexpected future caused a mental shock, which confronted the people of their era with an absurd, inexplicable, unacceptable reality. The new reality bred disappointment, bitterness and nostalgic memories when thinking about the past. This remained and serves to maintain the experiences, consciousness about Trianon. The sum of the past within this picture cannot be rationally analyzed, as historians would (Gyáni 2019).

It is undeniable the Treaty of Trianon had some minor positive effects on the Hungarians, like as it is mentioned above that in the Hungarian army after Trianon all the soldiers could speak Hungarian between themselves and that the Hungarian state could be relieved from developing, improving some of the detached territories, which were less developed areas. Whether the fact that Hungary became Budapest-centered is positive or negative is arguable. The capital attracts Hungarians to live in Budapest disproportionately decreasing the population and the competence of the countryside, while creating problems and making Budapest a crowded city, where if it is not handled right, will be hard to live for the citizens under worsening circumstances. The fact that in the first years after Trianon and in 1918-1919 when the demarcation lines were drawn the Hungarians in the detached territories did not take seriously these new borders may be true, however in the long run they may also realized the disruption of the nation and some negative feelings, then perhaps some negative treatment too.

The statement that Hungarians in a subconscious level are perceiving to be the citizens of an empire is wrong, it can only be quite the opposite. Although Trianon set Hungary free from the other nationalities, made it an independent nation-state as it earlier aimed to be so much since the Turkish invasion when its territorial integrity was lost and then controlled, manipulated by the

Habsburgs, so from about 1526 to 1867, and then since its territory was compromised by the establishment of the Dual Monarchy until 1918. But as a consequence of Trianon Hungary became small and it led Hungarians to the realization that they are not an empire any more. If a nation was relatively small and was subjugated, part of an empire, which is not their own empire and then this nation gains independence, then they would most likely be proud and confident in their new position. However, if a nation had its own empire, in this case the Hungarian Kingdom, then if they lose more than half of its original territory and become small, they will not be proud and self-confident about it, at least for a while. It is different.

The Hungarian subconscious identity indeed realized the dichotomy of pre-Trianon and post-Trianon Hungarian reality. The pre-Trianon Hungarian identity may have been fading away, the old familiar way, the traditions, while the post-Trianon Hungarian identity may have meant the disrupted, rejected unity of the state, a sad reality that manifested in the Hungarian communities left outside Hungary's borders that could have fueled traumatic feelings of those who were susceptible to the changes. One cannot deny either that there may have been people who remained unaffected by the big changes. The event of Trianon may be compared to an amputation of the limbs of the body of a human being, in which the body means the center of the nation, "smaller" Hungary and the limbs the detached Hungarian populations, who would scream, feel the terrible pain and then could not move, could not take action, become helpless and immovable.

Since the Treaty of Trianon the language of the Hungarian nation has also been defeated as no new words were created, found for new inventions that appeared in the meanwhile, such as the radio or the television. Before 1918 cinematography was easily named as "mozi" and electricity was easily named as "villany", to mention some examples (Nemeskürty 2003: 134.).

After Trianon, the Hungarians' lands were taken away, the Hungarian institutions were closed and even the use of Hungarian language was constrained. The successor states implemented several statistical tactics to decrease the proportion of Hungarians in their new states (Halassy 2012).

Concerning the self-identity of Hungarians detached from Hungary as a consequence of Trianon, one example may be the fate of Hungarians living in Délvidék, which became part of Serbia. After the wealthier, more intellectual Hungarians were exploited and expelled, the Serbs had propagated over decades that they constitute the natives of the land since ancient times and the Hungarians are only newcomers. This have been propagated ever since until today in schools that lessens the self-consciousness of being Hungarians and make them half-hearted. One who feels to be a newcomer in a region may be more likely to migrate as they would rather go than to feel exploited and despised. This is the Serbian strategy in education against the minorities and this

creates a withdrawing, fugitive Hungarian self-identity in these Hungarian people. „Pognutu glavu sablja ne seče” – this Serbian proverb asserts that he or she who surrenders will be accepted. Those who state that they are not Hungarians (or different nationalities than Serb), but Yugoslavians (earlier) or Serbs, especially in villages, will be approved by the Serbs, however, those will not be who stick to their communities (Mirnics 2002: 260.).

In the first few decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the discussions, communication between the majority Hungarians in Hungary and the Hungarian minorities seem to be frozen. In earlier decades, such as during communism, Hungarian minorities did not feel the divisions in Hungary, though in the latter decades these oppositions are spilling over into the lives of the Hungarian minorities creating divisions and having less discussions (Tózsér 2020).

Even though Hungary is a member of the European Union, the situation of the Hungarian minorities outside Hungary's borders has not improved since then. For example Slovakia, in spite of being an EU member, constrained, discriminated the use of Hungarian language, such as in the case of a television channel in Hungarian language in Slovakia, but the European Court of Human Rights after thinking about it for six years rejected the lawsuit referring to formal issues, while such rejections would have to be stated within maximum one year. A small Hungarian television channel was broadcasted, in which a few sentences were told in Hungarian without any subtitles that violated the Slovak laws, and was punished as only the channels of the public media are allowed to broadcast in Hungarian. But this is not an isolated issue as there were many examples to constrain the use of Hungarian language such as that Hungarian nurses were not allowed to talk to Hungarian patients in Hungarian at the hospital (Magyari 2021).

The legal protection of the native populations within the area of the European Union is not guaranteed, thus the successor states may arbitrarily regulate the lives of Hungarians. The minority protection clause signed by Romania in 1921 was supposed to provide local governments the rights to determine religious and educational direction of the given minorities, yet the Szeklers are still fighting for their autonomy. In Slovakia the Hungarians are like secondary citizens and their dual citizenship is prohibited, yet Slovakia is a member of the European Union. In Ukraine, dual citizenship is not allowed either, while they also constrain education of the Hungarians in their mother tongue. From the 3,3 million Hungarians who were detached from Hungary in 1920, there are still 2,3 million Hungarians bordering Hungary (Dr. Dobó 2019: 178-181.).

Through the peace “treaties” (which were in fact dictated), the Great powers achieved to incite the nations against one other and the new positions in Central-East Europe have caused further problems instead of creating long-term just conditions for all nations that could have consolidated better the situation of this region. If the Peace Treaty had been otherwise, probably

more peaceful relations could have been created between Hungary and some of its neighbors settling old wounds, such as with Slovenia or Croatia. It is not surprising that some relations between states tend to be tense, as there may be unresolved issues. Despite the wrongdoings and what had happened in the past, the responsibility to address these and come to a common ground are shared between Hungary and its neighbors with Hungarian minorities, mainly Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia (Dr. Dobó 2019: 178-181.).

The wheel of history cannot be reversed and in order to change the current situation it is not likely the Hungarians will have allies. In the past world orders there were always forces indirectly on the side of Hungarians that were against Austrian or Soviet rule. There is no international interest in the revision of Trianon, Hungary and the Hungarians are only an insignificant factor in world politics. The inertia of the Hungarians may make them feel either sad or apathetic if someone is looking to better the situation. While the attitude of “let’s take everything back” is highly irrational and a saying of the far-right, the attitude of “the Hungarians will ultimately be assimilated” should not be the solution either (Halassy 2012).

The best would be to forget about Trianon, but it seems to be impossible. There is a need to work together, collaborate with the different nationalities of the successor states, to reach a common ground, to think in a Europe, but even the level of Middle-Europe has not been overcome that need to be addressed (Tózsér 2020).

Ondrej Ficeri, a Slovak academic states that by 2018 the master narratives about the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Dual Monarchy did not change much in the East-Central European nations. While the Czechs, Romanians and Slovaks grandiosely celebrated this period, the Hungarians and Austrians dove into some nostalgia. Due to the state of the cultural memories in these countries, it is easy to see that the “winners versus losers” mentalities remained the same a hundred years ago and can still be instrumentalized. Ficeri through his work, ultimately calls on both the winners and losers to take responsibility for Trianon, for what had happened a hundred years ago (Ficeri 2019: 763-776.).

It is acknowledged that Hungary’s neighbors lack the empathy towards Hungarians and fail to approach the situation from the other’s point of view. First of all, there is the example of the LARICS, which is an anti-Hungarian, anti-Russian far right organization connected to the Romanian Academy, showed in their Romanian public opinion poll that more than half of Romanians fear that the Hungarians may take over Transylvania, in reality surveys highlight that the anti-Hungarianness has been reduced to a linguistic question in the sense that the Romanian language should be exclusively used in Romania. Studies highlight that discrimination against Hungarians, as neighbors, co-workers or family members in Romania is even more acceptable. The

use of the Hungarian language in Romania disturbs the Romanians and there is a high percentage of refusal of the already existing linguistic minority rights (Bálint-Pataki 2021).

One of the latest cases has been against the Hungarian minority in Beregszász, within Ukraine, where posters were put on the walls, which called for the Hungarians to leave the Ukrainian soil and slogans like: “Onto the tip of the knife with the Hungarians! Long live the nation! Death to the enemies!” It was also stated if the Hungarian Foreign Minister goes to Ukraine, they will be prepared (Körömi 2021).

Even the Slovak historians and the majority of the Slovak nation reproduce the “majority Trianon-syndrome”, meaning the ethnocentrism that in Slovakia only Slovaks live, while in Romania there are only Romanians. This can be seen especially in their political culture and that both the Romanian and Slovakian elites and the public hesitate to recognize Kosovo’s independence, because they fear the Hungarians living in Southern Slovakia and the Hungarians in Transylvania would request an autonomy, and then separate from them. The Slovaks also share the view that Catalonia should give up its separatist movement as it goes against the Spanish law. On the contrary, it is emphasized that the Hungarians tend to cling too much to the victimhood, to the syndrome, the trauma of Trianon, not taking responsibility for it, instead of recognizing that it did not happen out of nothing, there were reasons behind (Ficser 2019: 763-776.).

Overall, The Hungarian denial of their responsibility about Trianon and maintaining the victim mentality have been counter-productive and have created barriers between Hungary and its neighboring countries to reconcile, upholding geopolitical instability in the region. However, the “winners” of Trianon should also take responsibility and be warned as the Roman and Slovak elites have not learned much from the example of Hungary’s tragedy. They ignore the danger that is lurking to their borders of Trianon, as in an ideal situation, the winners should take responsibility too and provide autonomy to the Hungarian communities within their states. If the Slovaks and Romanians are not willing to make concessions and are pursuing a narrow-visioned and stubborn strategy, in the long-term they may lose more than to give autonomy to the Hungarian communities as history taught the Hungarians through Trianon (Ficser 2019: 763-776.).

The situation of the Hungarian minorities in Hungary’s neighbors is a tough issue and has a long history as it was already described above. The successor states who, in a metaphoric way, taken these Hungarian populations into custody have not been guarding, respecting the interests of these Hungarians in most cases. The inhuman treatment after the First and Second World Wars, the fact that after the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty there were no minority protection clauses that would protect these minorities, among other issues are signaling there are problems. However, it is interesting to see that the Slovaks and Romanians, for example, may not have been considering

these areas where the Hungarians live to be their own, because evidently they have not been invested, developed these areas, but rather exploited them economically such as in Transylvania.

As the Serbian case highlighted to be Hungarian, to remain Hungarian may not be easy and most likely this withdrawing Hungarian identity exists in these regions, which is an issue. It would be rightful to request more autonomy to regain some of their rights, to make it possible to remain who they are if they want to. Some of these Hungarians may hold onto their identity more stubbornly than others such as the Szeklers in Transylvania. In the last year there was an EU petition on the civil level that aimed to provide full autonomy to the Hungarian Szeklers in Transylvania, but it failed due to the disproportionate representation from the different EU members. The truth is these detached Hungarian peoples may have grown apart from Hungary in mentality due to their differing situations, regarding at least the fact that they have developed a minority consciousness. As it is stated above the states of Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine could take more responsibility for the peaceful cooperation of Central-East European states by providing more rights and autonomy to the Hungarian minorities learning from the mistakes of the Hungarians in the past. This is not only an issue for Hungarians but it also acts as a barrier for them too. Until these nations are not willing to acknowledge their wrongdoing and reconcile with the Hungarians and the past, it will also affect them. Furthermore, it is also true the Hungarians could get over it and not place themselves in victim mentality, in the position of the loser as a consequence of the First World War, but first be responsible and aim to process the issue, but due to the circumstances after 1945 new obstacles emerged that prevented a healthy processing, integration of the issue that will be analyzed in the next Chapter.

The experience and memory of Trianon for the Hungarians either consciously or subconsciously may be linked to recent historical events and the current Hungarian Fidesz government. The fact is that ultimately the Treaty of Trianon and the trauma it has caused, the loss of the Hungarian living space and dominance in the Carpathian region are the consequences of the immigration of foreigners after the Turkish were driven out of the Carpathian Basin. The Hungarian populations were decreased, while, especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, perhaps even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, foreign people with a differing mentality (such as more Balkan mentality of Serbians, Romanians) than the Hungarians or the friendly, familiar nationalities settled in the area of the Hungarian Kingdom leading to more conflicts, disintegration, “parallel worlds” within the state that led to the traumatic Trianon. The current migrant crisis into Europe since 2015, from the Muslim world, Africa and Asia with differing mentalities, may bring up for many Hungarians the fear of another Trianon, as the scenario is similar as it happened before, consciously or subconsciously,

even that the Fidesz is strengthening this narrative with its propaganda. This may explain why many Hungarians would not like to take in immigrants in the country.

In relation to the migrant crisis, while Angela Merkel the German Chancellor has been famous about its welcoming policy regarding the foreign migrants, Viktor Orbán opposed it and is presenting to stand against the “liberal West” and Western Europe. This reflects the Turanian movement of the interwar period of Hungary, when they rejected the West and questioned the Christianity of Hungarians, while searching for connections with the Hungarians’ Eastern ancient relatives. The Fidesz government’s questionable relations with some Western European EU members and its “Eastern opening” policy may be compared to the former Turanian movement.

This policy is aiming to decrease the economic reliance of Western Europe upon Hungary and is aiming to increase economic relations with the developing states of Asia, such as states in Central Asia like Kazakhstan, however, the results are questionable (Mészáros 2021). There will be more discussed about the Orbán regime and Trianon in Chapter 5.



## **4. In the shadow of communism**

### **4.1. The Soviet “liberation” and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution**

As Hungary was an ally of the Axis powers in World War II and the war was coming to an end, Hungary became occupied by the Soviet forces in 1945, then the Soviets established a communist regime in Hungary by 1948, like in other East-Central European states (Pastor 2016: 197-200.).

The root causes of the Hungarian Revolution can be traced back to 1945 when the Hungarian nation was “liberated” and at the same time occupied again by the Red Army. Soon a totalitarian terror network was created. After the Soviets took over Budapest in 1945, the most terrible event happened, which was the mass rape of Hungarian women by the Red Army. The euphemistic decree on February 14, 1945 abolished the prohibition of abortion and made these operations free, referring to the serious weakening of women’s bodies due to the war and poor healthcare. This was a wave of mass rape weighing down the whole country, which was accompanied by capturing many civilians as prisoners of war, the “malenky robot”. Hundreds of thousands of people, women, children and men were taken to the Gulag for decades. It is estimated the action affected around 300,000 Hungarians, while another 300,000 soldiers from the Second World War were taken there too. Half of these 700,000 people could never return to their country. Fathers, husbands, bishops were killed for protecting their female family members. However, this was not all, as the liberation meant great threat to the life, wealth, rights of freedom and the basic civil values. The Hungarian Communist Party was rising with Soviet backing and special state security organizations were created against the remaining Fascists, but also innocent civilians. Between 1945 and 1946, 45,000 Hungarians were taken to internment camps based on false pretenses and without any reasoning. By 1946, the Hungarian law created the legal conditions of arresting, murdering anyone who were against the communist regime. Between 1946 and 1956 thousands of Hungarians were incarcerated and 400 Hungarians were executed (Schmidt 2005: 213-222.).

Despite the fact that the Independent Smallholder Party won the 1945 Hungarian elections with 57 percent absolute majority, the actual power was in the hand of the communists. This made it possible that the leaders of the party were arrested due to their own alleged conspiracy and removed from power. The political opponents of the communists were either imprisoned or forced to

emigrate and by 1949 the communists eliminated the remaining elements of the Hungarian civil society. Thus, the majority of the Hungarian population, about 83 percent were left without political representation (Schmidt 2005: 213-222.).

Since Mátyás Rákosi returned from his Soviet emigration to Hungary in 1945, he not long after became the central figure in Hungarian politics. He was the leader of the Hungarian Communist Party and with some help from Moscow, he could subjugate the operation of the coalition government at that time.

The 1947 elections resulted in frauds by the communists. Besides the cheating with the “blue-tagged” ballots, the State Protection Authority applied administrative cheating and half a million Hungarians were not allowed to vote. The acceleration of the implementation of plans towards a one-party system occurred after signing the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty (Gyarmati 2019).

The new constitution named Hungary as the Hungarian People’s Republic that asserted the dominance of the physical workers, was the state of the workers and peasants, however, in this totalitarian dictatorship not even the workers had a say regarding the political matters. After the Rákosi regime neutralized all political opponents from other political parties, they went against the churches. They nationalized parochial schools supported atheism. The head of the catholic church was arrested for opposing the regime and deported many Catholic priests. New enemies were always found, who were sometimes the “imperialists”, the spies of Tito, then the Social Democrats, then some Generals, then members of the communist party and so on (Sásdi, n.d.).

The Rákosi regime utilized the Hungarian nation’s wealth, including all the economic tools, properties knowledge in a contra-productive way and consumed most of it. The living standard in Hungary in the post-war decade had not been improved, the situation of the Hungarians neither improved, nor it could recover after the Second World War. The new regime discriminated the whole society and they caused unnecessary sufferings. Many people were put to work dysfunctional jobs, which were considered to be “the most valuable to socialism” despite the people’s expertise or creativity. The Rákosi era was considered to be unlimited in the way this regime was always seeking and eliminating new enemies. The continuous abuse, terror and oppression extended to all the corners of Hungarian society. Nobody was in safety against this regime, not even the servants and own members of the regime (Gyarmati 2019).

The police officers and the leaders of public administration of the Horthy era, the large landowners, the gentry and former company owners were evicted from Budapest, about 12,000 people. The regime aimed to solve the lack of housing situation this way and these people were often evicted at dawn by the communist authorities and were put on trains guarded by the police, then sent off to their new locations. These families lost almost everything, barely had any money

and they could mainly only do hard physical jobs. Moreover, the peasantry was also not spared from communist terror. The 5-year communist plan aimed to collectivize agriculture, but the peasantry stick to their own lands. They were nevertheless forced to join the common agricultural groups and their taxes were increased. Then the service system appeared, which aimed to collect more and more products of the peasants in exchange for some small payment. Those who were not cooperating with the authorities, the authorities went to their houses and took every product the family had from the cellar to the attic. Those peasants who owned lands more than 25 acres constituted one of the most terrible class enemies of the system. They faced all kinds of discrimination, were propagated to be criminals and unique police units were created to beat them up (Sásdi, n.d.).

The Rákosi regime announced for the period of 1950 to 1954 to make Hungary “the country of iron and steel”. Under the order that they were preparing for the Third World War, all economic efforts were placed on the military industry, heavy industry and manufacturing industry to develop. For this, large amounts of workforce was needed that was directed there from agriculture. Already in 1950 there were serious supply problems as the agriculture sector was not developed and the produced crops were exported from Hungary. Thus, blaming it on the workers, rationing system was introduced in 1951 first for sugar, flour, then for bread, milk, meat and others. By 1953 the Hungarian nation was impoverished and most of the families were starving (Sásdi, n.d.).

One of the results of the Sovietization processes in Central and Eastern Europe was the appearance of the Stalinist cult and its imitation the mini Stalins such as the Rákosi cult. This Rákosi cult was partly based on the Soviet example, but it also had some Hungarian national roots. Rákosi was named “father figure”, “teacher of the nation”, “man of the people” and “caring leader” for example. Rákosi was traced back to Hungarian revolutionary traditions and was presented as the successor of Hungarian freedom fighters (Turbucz 2018: 663-665.).

Due to the death of Stalin in 1953, it became apparent that the communist bloc faces a crisis. As a consequence, Mátyás Rákosi, the representer of classic Stalinism was dismissed and Imre Nagy became the new Prime Minister. Imre Nagy opened the door of the internment camps and the prisons and due to some of his other concessions, he became famous as the grip of the regime was softened. However, Mátyás Rákosi could return to power in 1955, which caused resistance of the people with the leaders being reformcommunists grouped around Imre Nagy. Due to the international context, such as the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Soviet Communist Party or the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Austria in 1955 favored the coming Hungarian Revolution (Schmidt 2005: 213-222.).

Rákosi's rule lasted until 1956 when he was dismissed from the leader position of the Hungarian Workers' Party, after he once again moved back to the Soviet Union (Gyarmati 2019).

The increase of the societal tensions within the decade prior to 1956 led the Hungarians to have conflicts with the communist regime ranging from an existential uncertainty through losing properties, lands, the unlimited terror and violence till the systematic persecution of certain groups (Valuch 2008: 131-132.).

On October 23, 1956, a revolution and freedom fight broke out that succeeded for ten days until the Soviets crushed the movement. It may be considered an unexpected revolution that began with the peaceful demonstration of university students and their supporters in Budapest. They demanded to end the communist regime and the withdrawal of the Soviet army stationed in Hungary. As the authorities shot into the Hungarian crowds, an uprising began on 23rd of October and the violence was reciprocated with 250 deaths on that day. Although about 15,000 Hungarians took up arms against the regime, the whole country stood up for Hungarian independence. On 26 October the Hungarian Communist Party called for the establishment of a new coalition government and on 30 October Prime Minister Imre Nagy declared the end of the one-party regime, however, the next day, Nikita Khrushchev ordered the Soviet army to crush the revolution. From November 4 to November 11, 60,000 Soviet troops and 2,000 tanks defeated the freedom fighters. 2,500 Hungarians died and 20,000 were wounded, while due to the retaliations, 22,000 people were sentenced to prison and 300 were executed. As a consequence of the defeat, 200,000 Hungarians fled the country mostly through Austria and many of them have never returned. Many of them successfully reached the US as one of the major destinations. It is estimated that only 5 percent of the fleeing Hungarians were freedom fighters, while most of them escaped fearing the returning totalitarian regime (Pastor 2016: 197-200.).

Although in the rural areas the Hungarians did not have weapons during the Revolution, there was a civil revolution at the same time. The communist councils were abolished and self-governing local organs were created through bottom-up processes. The 1956 Hungarian Revolution constituted the freedom fight in Budapest for independence and the creation of civil democracy in the rural areas (Schmidt 2005: 213-222.).

As a result of the defeat of Nazism in Hungary, the Soviet "liberation" or rather occupation did not bring any good to Hungary but death and oppression and the freedom was taken away once again. Hungary slowly but steadily transformed into a far-left Soviet satellite state from the far-right Nazi satellite. Between 1945 and 1953 the totalitarian system was being built that first involved the mass rape of Hungarian women, the loss of property, the humiliation, the discrimination and the impoverishment of the Hungarian people, while the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty undid all the revisions

and the issue of the Hungarian minorities abroad was suppressed to be talked about, it was associated with the Nazi's aspirations. The classic Stalinist rule of Rákosi and the terror, then the saying of "Those who are not with us, are against us." highlight that this period was one of the most terrible periods for the Hungarians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The 1956 Hungarian Revolution, as some earlier Hungarian Revolutions mentioned above, was defeated, once again by foreign intervention just like in 1849. The brutal retaliation meant for the Hungarians that they have to be careful, while the emigration of about 200,000 Hungarians meant the withdrawal of the Hungarian identity to some extent. This Revolution may have further decreased the self-confidence, the bravery of Hungarians and the rebellious nature, the Hungarians' love and aspiration towards freedom and independence.

## **4.2. The Kádár regime and its "Goulash communism"**

After the Hungarian Revolution was defeated, János Kádár became the de-facto leader of Hungary for the next 33 years. From 1956 to 1988 Kádár had remained the first man both in the Socialist Party and in the government and this Kádár era has often been dubbed as "Goulash Communism" that will be explained below (Hungary Today 2016).

The Kádár regime showed a kinder communist attitude, called as a soft dictatorship or "Goulash Communism", however, it was founded on the brutal retaliation of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Hungarians were prohibited to talk about certain topics, creating powerful taboos such as the Revolution. It had been either named as a counter-revolutionary uprising or not mentioned at all. Between the Stalinist Rákosi regime and the Kádár regime one significant difference was that in the former one, Hungarians could talk about 10 topics as Rákosi demanded an active attitude from the people for the communist project and ideology, while in the latter there were 10 topics Hungarians could not talk about. Kádár shifted Rákosi's demand of an active attitude from the people to demand a passive attitude. Hungarians did not have to glorify communism, but instead by avoiding key topics they could enjoy their private lives (Hungary Today 2016).

János Kádár was considered to be a political opportunist in the sense that what mattered to him was solely to gain power. When the Hungarian Revolution was ascending, he supported its cause, but as the Soviets decided to intervene he changed sides and joined the cause for repression. He implemented the stick and carrot policy on the Hungarian nation, first subjugating the people by retaliation and terror, secondly buying them off with higher standard of living. The early years of Kádárism broke the spirit of the Hungarians, then the people were bribed by economic concessions.

It is also argued the Kádárist tolerance was a calculated one as the concessions could have been withdrawn at any time. Kádárism's social compromise was not what it supposed to be as it did not provide autonomy to social forces and did not safeguard the rights of the people (Lomax 1985: 102-110.).

Kádár absolutely bore responsibility for the terror and retaliation from 1957 to 1960. The new regime executed 300 people, imprisoned about 22,000, moreover interned 13,000 Hungarians but Kádár stated there would be no return to the Stalinist politics and removed key figures such as Mátyás Rákosi from political participation (Takács 2010: 113-123.).

Once the acts of retaliation served their purposes, he aimed to make a compromise with all corners of the Hungarian society through reconciliation, amnesties and economic reforms. In 1961 he stated: "Whoever is not against us, is with us", while in 1962 he even acknowledged that most of the Hungarian people do not favor Marxism, but they should not be regarded as class enemies (Lomax 1985: 110-111.).

Kádár announced political amnesty in 1962 to consolidate and legitimize his regime, especially in the eyes of the Hungarians. The detotalitarization of his regime may be considered as a careful strategy against to decrease political resistance. The regime allowed more cultural freedom and provided an improved standard of living to depoliticize the society. Significant economic reforms were introduced in 1968 and Hungarians were allowed to decide where to work more freely that opened space for the "second economy" (Takács 2010: 113-123.).

It is important to distinguish between the "first economy" and the "second economy" in the communist era. The "first economy" meant the socialist sector, the classic system, so the bureaucratic state and cooperative sector, while the "second economy" meant the sum of the official small family businesses and the informal private sector (Dupcsik 2016).

Kádár successfully neutralized and depoliticized the Hungarian public, so that people did not criticize the regime and talk about sensitive issues (Takács 2010: 113-123.).

The social compromise of the Kádár era can be summed up as the following:

"Provided they renounced all claim to participation in decision-making, the life of the population was made considerably easier. Everyday life became what was commonly perceived as tolerable" (Takács 2010: 113-123.).

The dependency of the regime on the factors of consumption, second economy and private property were considerable. The system can only survive if they opened up the private sphere that

was contradictory to the regime's ideology. This bred political apathy that led to privatizing state property, corruption, thus in two words moral distortion (Takács 2010: 113-123.).

As contradictions of the socialist society, the increasing consumer mentality and the decreasing socialist morality appeared in the Hungarian society in the forms of bribery, corruption, usury or misuse of influence and so on (Takács 2010: 113-123.).

Kádárism was named "atmospheric totalitarianism" as it was a form of socialist dictatorship with an invisible repression. If someone criticized the fundamentals of the regime, they would face the consequences, like when one stops breathing. As the Kádár regime tolerated behaviors unknown to the communist ideology to maintain their rule, it led to a moral distortion among the Hungarians. Although the direction was towards democratic transition, cynicism, corruption and stealing have become the norms that were inherited by the post-communist system (Takács 2010: 113-123.).

In the 1970s Western observers regarded Hungary as the most liberal state in the Eastern Soviet bloc and Hungarians often referred to themselves as "the happiest barracks in the camp". Although the Hungarian people may have relatively lived well, the Kádár regime was based on the collective bribery of the Hungarians. Its system contained cynical politicians who maintained a hypocritical and fraudulent compromise with the demoralized and corrupted Hungarian population (Lomax 1985: 110-111.).

Kádár proclaimed an alliance policy with all the Hungarian people and not returning to an iron rule. Loyal extra-party Hungarians were becoming involved in the common socialist goal, while there was a decentralization of authority and certain groups and institutions were provided with greater autonomy. Then, amnesty for most political prisoners was announced that ended the internment for many Hungarians. Some liberalization occurred in the cultural sphere and within social sciences but there were limits to the freedom and expression that was allowed. The policies of Kádár aimed to put the legitimacy of the system on satisfying the material needs of the Hungarians. It was understood that change may only come through the orders from Moscow, but still Kádár was able to partially satisfy the interests of the Hungarians within certain limits. The Kádár regime had achieved a neutral public acceptance but many negative features remained from the Rákosi regime, such as the pervasive propaganda or the authoritarian and petty bureaucratism. The standard of living in Hungary was improved along with the welfare functions like pensions and child care. However, there was a shortage of housing especially in and around Budapest in spite of construction programmes and measures to aid private constructions. The housing problem with other factors contributed to a high abortion rate, many divorces, and increasing rates of alcoholism and suicide (Kovrig 1978: 720-739.).

Under the Kádár regime the “eight men watching, one man working” saying was created. During communism there was officially zero unemployment and hard work was part of the Soviet ideology, many jobs were only for people to get by and not to achieve anything. The connection between honest work and societal, economic advancement ceased to exist. This is still prevalent in Hungary in the form that Hungarians will not necessarily get ahead through hard work (Hungary Today 2016).

There was a TV show, called “The Window” that best described the Kádár regime as it was kind of a reality show where people could complain about anything, except for the regime (Hungary Today 2016).

The term of “the little person” was indicative of this period how the Hungarians acted and thought. The little man can be considered as a plotter who is always looking for the next opportunity, and to get ahead that remained in the Hungarian consciousness (Hungary Today 2016).

The Kádár regime was also characterized by indebtedness. The current national and some of the personal debts originate from the communist times as spending was high to maintain the shortsighted Kádár regime and the lifestyle. All this debt at the end has become the problem of the next generation (Hungary Today 2016).

The communists in Hungary, just like within the whole Communist bloc, had many spies and informers spying on their own people. In contrast to other communist states, such as the former East Germany, the Kádár regime denied the fact they would spy on people, whereas in reality they did (Hungary Today 2016).

One of the most problematic characteristics of the Kádár regime was to co-opt the Hungarian people to comply with the communist regime either in an active or a passive way. After many traumas and terrible events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hungarians compromised and participated in their own oppression. They could live in relative peace, they could live a comfortable life with food, jobs and vacations if they became collaborators. This, however, came with a price too. It bent the spine of the Hungarian peoples, shattered their self-confidence and made them feel guilty and self-loathing. It is argued that the effects of this have not been remedied since the end of the regime (Hungary Today 2016).

The Kádár regime introduced the cultural policy of the 3 Ts, which stood for támogatás, tűrés, tiltás (promote, tolerate and ban) different artistic productions after 1956 (Huth 2021).

The communist ideology was from the beginning suspicious towards nationalist sentiments or aimed to exploit it and like in many Eastern European countries, the Soviet fatherland and a new kind of patriotism was created that even in the small Hungary the people could live better than in Western Europe where they are oppressed by the capitalist system. The Treaty of Trianon and the



pursuit for just revisions after the First World War was no longer considered to be legitimate for the communists as it allegedly advanced Nazism, socialist fraternity with neighboring countries was much more important than territories. During communism public opinion surveys highlighted that about half of those Hungarians asked limited Hungarian nationality only including Hungarians in Hungary, not considering those from the detached territories. In the 1980s due to the rising Slovak and Romanian anti-Hungarian nationalism, such as Ceausescu's plan to make thousands of Hungarians move from the countryside of Transylvania to agricultural centers, the Kádár regime allowed to publicly defend their ill-treatment in Hungary (Deme 1998: 307-313.).

On June 16, 1989 the fall of communism became apparent in Hungary and for the world when a reburial was held for Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs who were executed after the Hungarian Revolution (Schmidt 2005: 213-222.).

The Kádár regime really bribed the nation with a relatively high standard of living at that time, but as a consequence the Hungarians became their own worst enemies by becoming conformists to the regime. On the surface Hungarians had to passively accept the status quo but in the depth many of them may have developed self-loathing, anger and frustration. It was a form of self-deception that led to the distortion of the Hungarian collective identity. Hungarians could not be independent, they became reliant upon the socialist state and were disciplined not to do certain things, while also had to be loyal by all means to the regime, accepting the reality, compromising themselves, becoming a herd of sheep who have to obey to the system. The Hungarians had to be used to the one-party system, the soft totalitarian, authoritarian regime, which would take care of many things, the system, the people, treating the people as underage children. It bred a high level of acceptance to the status quo and political apathy. Often the Hungarians who became members of the communist party were not experts, competent persons but they were ultra loyal to the system and could do many harm to the ordinary Hungarians. These persons may have also felt more confident than the rest of the society as they could get protection under the shadow of communism. Furthermore, though this is also true to the Rákosi era, the distrust of the Hungarians towards each other may also be traced back to this period as often people were being observed, there were spied and sometimes even family members could not have trusted each other, because if they committed something, they could be punished even severely. The well-being of the Hungarians came at the price that their collective identity was deconstructed and the Hungarians had to forget about real freedom. Independence, freedom, and political participation became unknown to them that have its serious consequences as it will be seen below.

### **4.3. The effects of the communist era on collective identity**

The long decades of communism must have been devastating to the Hungarians both physically and mentally. First the behavior of the Soviet troops, the hard totalitarian system and the terror of Rákosi's rule broke the Hungarian society, took many innocent lives, impoverished the people and utilized the weapon of fear to a great extent. Although the days of the 1956 Revolution signaled some hope, it was brutally repressed then a compromise had to be made with Kádár that let the Hungarians live in an illusion, but at the same time it completely distorted the society. The rule of communism in Hungary has resulted in serious consequences affecting Hungary and the Hungarians till the present day.

The Kádár regime (33 years) may have been more mentally destructive than Rákosi's rule (9 years, the major period) and may have affected more deeply the Hungarian mentality regarding politics, societal functioning or social interactions. While the Rákosi era had proven to instill immense fear in the Hungarian people, the Kádár regime aimed to maliciously undermine the Hungarian collective behavior and create some underlying patterns in the subconsciousness of the people that would not only let them live a tolerable, perhaps even happy life, but could also cement the authoritarian Kádár regime in the ground and maintain its rule upon the Hungarian society.

The persecution of Christians, anti-nationalist measures and the prohibition of most of the pre-existing values considered to be important by the Hungarians had resulted in the general rejection of the communist state and a tendency to ignore its norms. The society became atomized and was set up for wide-range exploitation, moreover it led to an increased alienation of the people and the fragmentation of societal groups. As the old norms were abolished, prohibited but as communism could only create an anti-state or politically passive environment, it only left behind alienation, estrangement and apathy. Due to the communist narratives, social solidarity, tolerance and respect for the others largely declined by the 1980s. According to a survey from 1982-1983, only a third of the interviewed Hungarians considered tolerance as one of their top five values. The demoralization and apathy of the Hungarians aggravated societal disintegration. Suicide and alcoholism has been especially high among Hungarians, especially in communist times between 1960 and 1993 when Hungary was the number one on the top ten list with the worst suicide rates around the globe (Newberg 2019: 14-17.).

Post-communist Hungarian mentality was largely influenced in the Kádár era and due to the more than 40 years of communism that provided the Hungarians with distorted behaviors. Kádár bought the Hungarian people with some delicious goods, but the "Kádár pact" included two

destructive mentalities, which were the mentality of dependency and the culture of envy. It is stated that materialistic concerns of Central-East European societies play a significant role and can be used against the populations, what Kádár may have done. The Hungarian standard of living was low, there was not that much to spend on extras and most of the average family income was necessary to be spent on housing, utilities and food. For a large part of the Hungarians, this mentality of dependency has continued, worsened and exploited after the collapse of communism, for example that Hungarian workers were incapable to think for themselves (Bollobás 1995: 162-165.).

The Kádár pact, besides that it made Hungarians to be dependent and treated them like minors, provided false securities that were deceitful. Until Hungarians were given only the fish, there was no need, opportunity to fish by themselves with a net. The Hungarian society had successfully become homogenized, equal at the lowest standard of living, where mediocrity became the norm. The communists payed attention to the social status of the people to be equal and outstanding workers did not earn more, rather poor performance was the norm. Due to the regime change opportunities have multiplied and a thin layer of people either with skills, talent or a vision could make it in Hungary, however, only a thin layer. These successful people frustrated the other fallen behind, bitter and depressed Hungarians, of whom many became envy. Especially those who were still dependent on the state, do not like to see their fellow citizens succeed and have a zero-sum game mentality. This atmosphere of envy combined with the mentality of dependency may have been harsh to cope with for Hungarians. Without believing in self-reliance and autonomous living, Hungarian businessmen may not take a business venture, an unfamiliar road instead of the familiar, modest way. While if one is successful, he or she may have witnessed some manifestations of envy against them that would not take them closer to be beneficial to the society, to help the poor, instead they would hide their success and leave behind a shallow society (Bollobás 1995: 165-167.).

Despite Hungarians had lived better than others in the region under communism, pessimism and complaining have become characteristics of them, at least many say, but could have the forty years of communism been more positively viewed? The communist leadership did everything to limit the knowledge of Hungarians, such as about the values of democracy. Hungarian adolescents from the 1990s were foreign to the terms of solidarity, social safety and citizenship, while they tended to favor the authority of the state and the parents. A public opinion poll from 1995 conducted by Sonda Ipsos showed only 6 percent of Hungarians favored freedom of expression and a free press to be important. As Hungarians were accustomed to the rule of one party and there were no debates, only a theater in the Parliament, many Hungarians considered the debates of the multi-party system in the 1990s chaotic as if the government was losing control. This is because back in communist Hungary there was order and no place for confusion. The culture of negotiation is also

lacking in Hungary, which is normal in Western democracies but rarely characterize the countries to the East and South from Hungary, where disagreements turn to conflict and violence (Bollobás 1995: 167-170.).

Overall, during the de facto 44-year long communist dictatorship the Hungarian collective identity had been severely affected that last till the present day. Many positive aspects of the Hungarian identity were deconstructed, while new deviant patterns were formed and may have also remained to some extent.

The positive aspects that were deconstructed to a certain degree are the following: independent thinking, bravery, love for freedom, trusting each other and the system, entrepreneurial skill, societal cooperation, political participation, tolerance, solidarity, freedom of expression, favoring democracy as some of the major ones.

The negative aspects, patterns, mentality of the Hungarians that were either created or strengthened are the following: dependency upon the state, compromising themselves, fear, getting used to authoritarianism, self-loathing, political apathy, demoralization, distrust towards other people and the authorities, envy, self-destructive patterns: alcoholism, suicide, smoking, depression, alienation, lack of togetherness, lack of self-confidence, self-deception, becoming too acceptable conformists, getting used to corruption, stealing, political cynicism as some of the major ones.

## 5. From the regime change to the 21<sup>st</sup> century

### 5.1. The regime change of 1989

On June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1989 a ceremony and the reburial of the leaders of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, Imre Nagy, the martyred Prime Minister and four other important figures was held in Budapest that meant a point of no return for communism in Hungary. One year earlier, in 1988 a mass gathering was held to commemorate Nagy's execution that was repressed by the police, however, as Kádár was removed from power, the ceremony could be made possible. Then soon after an agreement was reached with the communist party about the reburial. Variable opposition forces were gaining influence in Hungary, while the new orders from Moscow stated that the Hungarian communists have to work on preserving their power in a post-communist Hungary. In 1989 on the commemoration of Imre Nagy and the other leaders, the opposition forces held a large demonstration. There were about 250,000 Hungarians on the reburial ceremony and the speakers on the demonstration called for a peaceful transition to a democratic system. On the demonstration Viktor Orbán, a founder of the Fidesz (and Prime Minister from 1998 to 2002 and from 2010 to the present that will be discussed further below) also held a speech in which he demanded that all Soviet troops should withdraw from Hungary. This speech was criticized by left-wingers, such as Ferenc Gyurcsány, who was at that time an important figure of the Communist youth organization. Then a political round-table was formed and some of the former communists, reformers and the opposition parties agreed upon a peaceful democratic transition, a new Hungarian constitution and multi-party elections (Budapest Business Journal 2020).

As the Hungarian Democratic Forum won the elections in 1990, based on the consensus of all political parties and the Hungarian public opinion, bilateral negotiations were initiated to protect the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring states, which signified the revision of the concept of Hungarian national community (Deme 1998: 307-313.).

The last Soviet troops left Hungary in 1991 and most Hungarians favored the peaceful transition that no purges against communists occurred. Although most of Hungary's 1990-94 Parliament were not communists, the 1994 Hungarian elections voted back the "ghost people", as the New York Times called, following similar tendencies in Lithuania, Estonia and Poland (Bollobás 1995: 159-161.).

It is argued the shadow of the communist system has not left Hungary and real regime change did not happen, because former communists figures, such as the already mentioned Gyurcsány or Gyula Horn and Péter Medgyessy, who became Hungarian Prime Ministers in the 1990s and the 2000s, were the embodiments of the previous system. They may have become the supporters of constitutional democracy from the 1980s, but they could preserve their powers for the next period, and who knows what other hidden interests, secrets are still lurking in the background (Horkay 2003: 62-72.).

For example Gyula Horn, who stood against the 1956 Hungarian Revolution as part of the Communist militia became the Prime Minister after “the regime change” as member of the Hungarian Socialist Party (Budapest Business Journal 2020).

At that time economists warned about the “Latin Americanization” of Hungary, which means that a small percentage of the country become absolutely rich, while the rest falls behind. From the 1980s through the 1990s this tendency could be seen in East-Central European states such as in Hungary, where former communists could put their hands on economic reforms. This is referred to as an Italian model, in which there is a corrupt government who lean on a semi-mafia business class, but in this case former communist members. In this ex-nomenklatura capitalists and ex-communist politicians share the power and dominate in different fields, leaving little space for other competitors. Sociologists in Poland, Slovakia and Hungary identified several hundreds of such business persons and that transforming political power into economic power is common in the region. Hungarian sociologists have identified the appearance of new ex-nomenklatura oligarchic families, who saved their power from the 1980s through institutionalization in certain areas of the economy in Hungary (Bollobás 1995: 162-165.).

Still, to assess the advantages and disadvantages of the regime change, first of all on the societal level, the advantages were the market economy, parliamentary democracy, possibility of pluralism, while some disadvantages may have been the increasing black market, decreased public services, market failures, worsening public safety, the appearance of radicals, segmentation and the increasing inequalities within the Hungarian society. On the individual level, the advantages may be gaining more freedom, civil and political rights, unlimited private properties and the possibility of higher incomes. On the contrary, the disadvantages may be the decreased existential safety, the dangers of structural unemployment and structural poverty, weakened social welfare system and the lack of prosecution for earlier wrongdoings (Tabajdi 2017: 14-15.).

It is stated the Hungarian nation has not reorganized itself after communism. Hungarians once again became a populace. The situation was much more uncertain than in the Kádár era and

the average Hungarians were puzzled, were waiting and feared to say out loud the nation, not to be condemned a nationalist (Nemeskürty 2003: 108.).

It seemed like the Hungarians were cluelessly standing after the door of freedom and independence had opened by external forces. After the Soviet troops had left it seemed Hungarian society was unable to strengthen into a self-governing state. The communists who changed their names were voted back to power, but no governments were able to create a successful, Hungarian welfare state (until the end of the 1990s), which is no surprise if one analyzes that the citizens had been the servants of foreign rule since 1945. The state organizing force became extinct inside the Hungarians and Hungarians may not be able to form their own state. After the Ottoman Empire defeated and broke Hungary after 1526, the Hungarians aimed to reclaim their independence first in the Rákóczi Freedom Fight with weapons, then in 1848 first with a peaceful strategy but later again with weapons, which was defeated, then after Trianon from 1920, which was buried under Nazi Germany in the Second World War. It is not surprising that after the daring 1956 Hungarian Revolution, Hungarians could not produce and name leaders that would have been accepted by the majority, because such leaders were appointed by the actual occupying powers to serve foreign interests (Nemeskürty 2003: 138-141.).

The citizens in Hungary were hoping that the US, just like in Western Europe after the Second World War, would send aid, cancel Hungary's debts, but these did not occur. Instead privatization has started led by a state-owned company camouflaged as a public limited company. The Hungarians believed they could get back their wealth, businesses, industries, lands, as their private properties were taken away in 1948. However, they were only provided compensation tickets they could buy shares or properties with. The privatization was undertaken in a competitive market environment and foreign capital flowed in. The most significant amounts came from Germany (25 percent), the US (13,5 percent), France (9 percent), Austria (5 percent), Belgium (4,5 percent), and the Netherlands (4 percent) that already constituted 61 percent. Those properties, for example companies, industries were not returned to Hungarians, but instead were exploited, sold to foreign hands (Nemeskürty 2003: 108-109.).

The "regime change" that was argued to have happened was a soft, peaceful transition into the pluralist democratic system but it could have happened in a revolutionary way through which all the former communists should have been punished, because as it was argued about the power, the leverage of the communists could have been preserved, saved for the next system. It is also questionable whether the new political parties who were emerging out from communism were indeed genuine or took in some communist elements. The "Latin Americanization" of Hungary could be seen in the coming years after 1990 until today. While it was a major issue that many

Hungarian properties were given to foreign hands, thus many key industries sold for example, inequalities have grown since the 1990s that may have created more hate and envy in the Hungarians towards one another. The Hungarian society may have been weak to let such a deceitful, peaceful regime change to happen in Hungary that would create a distorted, corrupt political system in which the most important thing of the politicians is to gain as much as possible while not caring genuinely about the Hungarian citizens. The Hungarians may have been too acceptable about the change, they may have been too passive to act and not prepared to take their freedom. The supposed regime change occurred by external forces not internally by the Hungarians and the Hungarians may not have had a common plan for the future.

## **5.2. The recent political culture**

It is widely acknowledged that the political culture is not only influenced by the current events, personal experiences, but also the happenings of the past, the turning points of history, whether they were tragic or uplifting moments. It is undeniable that the experiences of the predecessors about the politically relevant events are inherited from generation to generation and become part of the political culture. Compared to the institutional part of the political system, the political culture and the judgment of values change slower or are more difficult to change. From the above mentioned events of history, one may speculate the historical changes do have an effect on the Hungarian political culture. The Hungarian political culture, overall, exhibits both Western, or European and Asian, or Eastern national characteristics that points to an “in-between” East and West category (Varga 2008: 115-120.).

Some of the most distinctive characteristics of the Hungarian political culture after the regime change of 1989 are the following: 1. Passive resistance but there is a tendency towards eruptive political expressions and the tolerance of these. 2. An attitude of distancing from politics based on “contemplative realism” or not to be astonished by anything, and thus the refusal of political radicalism. 3. Political paternalism and political infantilism, but demanding real accomplishments from leaders. 4. Need for outstanding political figures but refusing a cult of personality. 5. Difficult sufferance of the rules, norms of the state and the tendency to circumvent them, but a developed sense of law, fearing their rights during confrontation, attachment to keeping fundamental rights. 6. Kuruc-Labanc tradition: unlimited desire towards independence contra realist political submission and the dilemma between “the homeland or progress”. This originates in the Rákóczi Freedom Fight from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century against the Habsburg rule in



Hungary, when Kuruc meant an “eternal rebel”, “eternal in opposition”, “true Hungarian”, while the Labanc as the compromising, “friend of the Germans” or “eternal collaborator” (Paár 2018). 7. A thousand-year-old statehood and constitutional thinking. 8. The weak democratic, but strong parliamentary tradition of the Hungarian political development. 9. The sense of being in-between East and West, “Middle-Europe”. 10. The attitude of “they betrayed, they sold us”, the sense of vulnerability but a strong need for joining, catching up and integration (Varga 2008: 115-120.).

The Hungarian political culture from a historical perspective is unique in the sense that it is partly inclusive, while also due to the linguistic, communicational isolation it is hardly opening after 1989. From the 1970s and 1980s the Hungarian society compared to European ones has become one of the most individualistic ones. This resulted in less solidarity nationally considering the whole nation and also regarding local groups, even more intensely by the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On the national level it manifests in the chauvinism of party politics, while the latter is incited due to an individual existential vulnerability. There is a tendency to apply administrative, bureaucratic methods. The Hungarian political elites especially from the 2000s have made majority decisions of largely one-sided, forcible, administrative and power based instead of legitimate decisions with societal support to correct mistakes, solve dysfunctional mechanisms (Varga 2008: 115-120.).

The sense of political competence of the Hungarian society during the Kádár-regime counted that 8 percent of the society were the participants, 84 percent were the subordinates and there was a strongly limited parochial power. After the regime change and in the 1990s it improved, became mixed meaning the number of participants increased and became more balanced with the subordinates. Still the political participation was low, the citizens were not that active and there was only a “participatory culture” voting in the elections the maximum. The political paternalism and infantilism constitute negative characteristics as the elites treat the people as minors, while the people aim to overly count on a caring state that lead to political demobilization and the lessening of societal, communal responsibility. On the positive side, the “contemplative realism”, the strategies of waiting for the wisdom, complaining and pessimism as being politically moderate and distancing themselves from politics ultimately help to socialize the people for survival, thus it helped the Hungarians through the worst storms of history staying alive. Overall the 1990s may also be labeled as the continuity of the inherited negative political culture enriched in all kinds of oppositions (Varga 2008: 115-120.).

In the 2000s the political participation has increased in Hungary, though still in the referendum about the EU accession in 2003, Hungarians participated proportionally the least (until the referendum of Croatia) with 45,6 percent negative record. Although the political culture in Hungary was becoming more “European”, the political activities, mobilization of people increased,

on the negative side there were the negative campaigns, vulgar style, unscrupulous promises, deception and so on (Varga 2008: 115-120.).

The most characteristic negative event in the 2000s in Hungary was the “speech of Ószöd” by the above-mentioned Ferenc Gyurcsány, member of the Hungarian Socialist Party and Prime Minister from 2004 to 2009, in 2006 with its shocking delivery and its content, moreover the aftermath, the political storm that resulted in street violence in Hungary, with such a political expression occurring prior to this only in 1956. This speech was supposed to be between the members of the Socialist Party, but it went viral in Hungary. In this speech Gyurcsány admitted that they lied to the society, lied to fellow party members about the truth, about the state of the economy. This brought a moral crisis in Hungary and the crisis of the government brought flames to the streets of Budapest. It is also argued it partially contributed to the substantial winning of Fidesz in the 2010 elections. It especially highlighted the cynicism and hypocrisy of Hungarian politics (Vida 2021).

After a period of hope for a more European political culture, the 2000s proved to have negative consequences such as the decreasing sense of political competence of the society, decreasing commitment towards public life and the weakening legitimacy of the democratic political system. It is argued that by the end of the 2000s the minimal consensus between Hungarian political parties ceased to exist creating a structural societal division (Varga 2008: 115-120.).

The fragmentation of the Hungarian political culture can be traced back to the prolongation of the “feudal” system, maintaining the “feudal” relations between large land owners and the other part of society. Due to the capitalization from the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the structure of the society had become congested until the end of the Second World War. This “congested society” was homogenized to some extent during communism period, while the regime change of 1989 resulted in the increasing of societal inequalities (Varga 2008: 115-120.).

This “congested”, “stalled” society had developed since the end of the Hungarian reform era with the defeat of the 1848-1849 Hungarian Revolution and due to the 1867 compromise as it fixed the structure of society. The gentry, the noblemen were not able to advocate, aid the development of the civil sphere, the advocacy of civil rights, thus they could not overcome the “feudal” system and became motionless and stationary (Bibó 1990b).

30 years after the regime change, in 2020 the Hungarian people representing all corners of the Hungarian society were surveyed about how they assess three different periods in Hungary, the Kádár regime, the period of 1990 to 2010 and the current Orbán regime from 2010. According to the Hungarians, 54 percent of them thought that life was better in the Kádár era than in 2020 and only 31 percent thought Hungarians could live better in 2020 than in the Kádár regime. The older

generations especially thought Hungarians lived well during before 1990. The participants perceived the main advantages of the Kádár regime to be order, predictability and opportunity for material prosperity as for example 63 percent of them stated there was order and social peace in the Kádár era. Then, many of the Hungarians were aware of the economic unsustainability of the Kádár regime and that only pro-communists could advance their careers better than were its disadvantages of the communism. The Hungarians regarded widespread corruption and social inequalities as the failures of the regime change. There is a large consensus on the issue that corruption has largely increased since the Kádár era. Lastly, a crucial fact is that while some older age groups favored the Orbán governments and senior citizens a left-wing government, 48 percent of the Hungarians under 30 could not favor a government, leading to the conclusion there is a lack of confidence, of political interest and of credibility towards the Hungarian political elite after 1990 (Bíró-Nagy and Laki 2020).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one Hungarian Prime Minister was murdered (István Tisza), four executed (Bárdossy, Imrédy, Szálasi and Imre Nagy), four exiled (Mihály Károlyi, Miklós Kállay, Ferenc Nagy, István Bethlen). One head of state died in exile (Miklós Horthy) and another in internment camp (Zoltán Tildy), not to mention other leaders. In a European context this number is very high that gives the impression the Hungarians do not consider their leaders to represent their interests and the indifference towards them is high. Hungarians got used to the fact that someone else is governing the country, even if Hungarians rebelled or complained about it. By the end of the Soviet rule, the reflex of the Hungarians to attach themselves to larger powers and to expect them to bring well-being to Hungary may have become stronger, even though such foreign powers had only exploited the Hungarians (Nemeskürty 2003: 138-141.).

The majority of the Hungarian elites are still preserving the worldview of the 1980s Hungary as they form opinions based on impressions, not facts, have large imagination and grandiose plans but they cannot make them a reality. There is a need for a more knowledgeable political elite, a new generation but there is the problem that the best experts go abroad from Hungary leaving behind the less competent ones (Publius Hungaricus 2007).

From time to time certain Hungarian politicians appeared telling promises that they would change the rules of the game, however, at the end they made the rules to serve them, thus increasing the people who think that for success having relationships is prevalent (Tóth 2017: 42-43.).

The lack of trust, the feeling of injustice, the selective understanding of norms and paternalism provide a solid ground for politicians who do not want to find a cure to these, but rather aim to exploit them (Tóth 2017: 43.).

Out of the continuous disruptions of the political direction of Hungary, only at least the minimal consensus of the political, economic and intellectual Hungarian elites could provide a solution. Ernest Renan stated that the nation is a common memory from the past and a common plan for the future. The problem of the Hungarians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was that they could not agree on an accepted plan for the future and Hungary was not able to move forward. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there were oppositions between becoming independent or making a compromise with the Austrians, between nationalists and liberals and between people suffering from an Orbán-phobia and dogmatic Orbánists mutually disowning, casting off the other and what they represent, casting off each other from the nation and calling them traitors. These acts of contempt, malice and hate that lead to polarization have not been overcome within Hungarian society in the past century, thus its memory lives among the Hungarians (Gyurgyák 2017: 71.).

Hungarian politics is one major reason that undermines the state to catch up with Western Europe for a hundred years as fearful, worried and uncertain regimes ruled after one another that in their fear of the next regime changes only concentrated to prolong their rule. For this they needed a tremendous amount of money. First these regimes were financed or forced to be financed from domestic sources, then they contacted foreign sponsors. The former undermined the development of the state and the security of the property. The state, which could not advance economically, wasted their financial sources on maintaining the regime, thus the vulnerable regime at the end was dependent on the external sources. When each regime failed, another one came and repeated the same cycle. These fearful regimes and the semi-skilled elites reproduce each other as the former takes advantage of the latter, and the latter is not able to prevent the new, next regime from undergoing the same cycle. Thus, the NER (the system of the Orbán regime) may be considered as a symptom of a far deeper problem. The fundamental problem does not lie in the Orbán regime, but in the distorted mechanism how the Hungarian political system works. Although the failures of the regime changes were consequences of the disease of Hungarian politics, the Hungarian elites could be held responsible for not treating their patient (Gyurgyák 2017: 74.).

Today the people who constitute the middle class in Hungary, considering their income situation, their standard of living is in a shaky position, do not have savings to make smaller or bigger reparations on their houses, are not able to put money aside for the future and cannot compensate their short of income due to an illness. The layer of society who is able to speak more languages, able to adapt constitute the minority of Hungarians (Tóth 2017: 42.).

Hungary's history, the past has consumed the present and the future of Hungary, Hungary could not leave behind the past, when a new autocratic regime by the Fidesz was formed many

years after the collapse of the communism that is based on loyalty without conditions, corruption, manipulation and a contra-selective political system (Bartha 2021).

### **5.3. The Orbán regime and its “illiberal democracy”**

In this sub-Chapter the rule of the Fidesz since 2010 until the present day (2021) is analyzed, but not in depth, focusing on the main policies, norms, behaviors, direction of the government that are affecting the lives of the Hungarian citizens and the collective identity of Hungarians.

Viktor Orbán with the Fidesz party had already governed Hungary for one term between 1998 and 2002, but he won the elections again in 2010, then in 2014 and then in 2018, though from 1998 to 2010 many things had changed like the direction of the Fidesz and what kind of people the leaders of the Fidesz turned into since, as already mentioned above, Orbán demanded the withdrawal of the Soviets in 1989. Many Hungarians may have trusted Orbán and the new government when they elected him to power in 2010, especially after the economic crisis and the issues with the previous non-Fidesz governments such as lies, corruption, socialist illusions or the already mentioned issue of privatization, among others, but in 2021 it seems Orbán topped other political parties' level of corruption, at least.

Between 1990 and 2010, a democratic system may have been working for a while, but due to Hungary's labile ground for democracy and its authoritarian, dictatorial past, the appearance of democratic deficit was not striking. The Fidesz's Hungary may be called today as an authoritarian populist regime or in other words a competitive authoritarian regime, where elections are unjust, twisted, but there are opposition parties taking part in them, unlike in Russia where citizens cannot vote for an opposition party making it a dictatorship. First in 2010 the Fidesz won occupying two-thirds of the parliamentary seats, which helped them form a constitutional majority that meant the Fidesz could govern and even change the Hungarian constitution how they like without the say of opposition parties (Ádám 2019).

The success of Fidesz is linked to a great extent to its redistributive policies, the creation of a business clientele and reallocating resources into richer segments of society, increasing inequalities. The Fidesz's policies have especially supported middle and upper-middle classes that provide the base of supporting the regime. EU funds are often allocated to the clientele of the regime (Ádám 2019).

Orbán's regime may also considered to be a hybrid regime, which is the mix of having democratic institutions and an anti-democratic exercise of power, transition between democracy and

clean dictatorship. This re-emergence of authoritarianism is not considered to be solely a Hungarian event, but a worldwide phenomenon. By the collapse of the Soviet Union, which supported authoritarian regimes, and the United States becoming the only superpower in the world supporting democratic systems, providing aid based on democratization democracies had increased worldwide by 89 countries in 2005. However, the opponents of democracy realized it is easier, less costly to “hack” democracies from the inside creating “illiberal democracies”, which are formally operational multi-party systems, but the civil rights, the liberal components of democracy, the rule of law and the checks and balances are constrained, abolished to certain degrees (Filippov 2018).

The Fidesz is controlling the executive and legislative branches of power but the independence of courts is also weakening, moreover the Fidesz has dominated all areas of social life from commerce to sports. Fidesz successfully overruled the checks and balances of the system and transformed the state media, the Constitutional Court, the Electoral Commission and other organizations to be loyal to them. Orbán is often called as a real dictator, however he does not aspire to be the “father of the nation”, but instead aims to polarize and divide the voters while securing the support of the biggest group (Krekó and Enyedi 2018).

Orbán’s aim was to rearrange state regulations and the political arena to provide the Fidesz with great advantages in the uneven playing field of their hybrid regime. Systemic corruption has become the most famous characteristic of the regime. An emerging clan state is disguised in the colors of the Fidesz that has a parasitic behavior upon the Hungarian society and the state itself. It is argued the nationalist propaganda, the centralization of power and the discrimination, xenophobia and the hate propaganda, among others, constitute the base of the regime. Nationalism in Hungary has appealed for many Hungarians after feeling dissatisfied with the post-communist circumstances as it gives them an identity and shows them where they belong in an otherwise alien, broken land (Bozóki and Cueva 2021: 109-112.).

It is indeed true in the Orbán regime the loyal party members and the favored Hungarians get ahead and are able to accomplish their interests on the expense of other people. To name one example the Hungarian courts may decide in a case in a manner that there is no Hungarian constitution the judges would have to be clinging to each time. There may be orders coming from above how some judges should decide, and even unfairly on the expense of the other. Thus, the EU critics about Orbán that in Hungary the rule of law is violated are indeed correct.

It is argued the Orbán regime is utilizing, co-opting the societal void left after the fall of communism and the Fidesz is aiming to recreate the Hungarian collective identity on the base of a unique Hungarian identity, conservatism and religion. This is done by emphasizing national symbols, national cohesion and the use of rhetoric, narrative against the migrants, the EU or certain

businessman. It is especially creating an “us versus them” narrative in its propaganda, propagating the end of the “traditional Hungarian culture” and displaying a lot of stereotyping and prejudice against non-group members. Thus, nationalism and national belonging became the cement that hold together Hungarian society and the rule of the Fidesz on the ruins of communism (Newberg 2019: 18-20.).

The Fidesz has been making an effort to change Hungarians, to install fear in them through the government propaganda since 2015 against George Soros and the millions of immigrants arriving to Europe. By 2017 the Fidesz media empire included all the regional newspapers and some of the most popular TV channels and news websites. In 2017 a lot of money was spent on different types of propaganda against Hungary’s “enemies” such as the migrants, Brussels and George Soros. By 2015, the anti-foreigner attitude in Hungary had increased the most in Europe, as only 10 percent of Hungarians would have permitted migrants to enter Hungary (Krekó and Enyedi 2018).

It is stated that the years of exposure of the Hungarians to the Orbán hate propaganda will change them to be receptive, to buy the message as 87 percent of Hungarians supported the anti-migration attitude and this propaganda is dangerously similar to the Kádár pact made with the Hungarians:

“If you mind your own business and let us conduct the affairs of the state as we see fit, you will be fine... the others, who aren’t like you somehow, aren’t fit or worthy of the same rights or protection as you are because they are free-riders, cherry-pickers, they don’t fit into what we think is the right way of a human being to exist.” (Hopkins 2020).

Some of the Orbán regime’s greatest faults, ignorance have been the state of the healthcare in Hungary, the increasing inequality, providing no fundamental rights for the people and the negative effect on Hungarian mentality. Even though policies can be shifted, the cumulative effects of the Fidesz propaganda could not be changed in a short period:

“What will remain is this mindset that you are not responsible for anyone but yourself and your smaller, nuclear family... that you don’t really have to care that there are second-class citizens, and that the different social groups within society should be kept apart and not care for each other. Any law can be overturned, policies reversed, but these ideas cannot be undone overnight.” (Hopkins 2020).

It is argued the Orbán regime has been capitalizing on the politicization of Hungary's past, especially the interwar period or the Horthy-era. Orbán used particular understandings and narratives, such as the metaphorical link between the 2006 anti-government protests and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the victim discourse that Hungarian historical events occurred by external forces and the new constitution in 2012, as it could serve a more complete end to the Soviet legacy, moreover the politicization of Trianon, the new Citizenship Law and the recalling of the "urbanist-populist" opposition, which divided the Hungary society within the interwar period into two groups: the liberal, socialist and Jewish elites from Budapest against the "true" Hungarians of the countryside and the peasants. Creating a narrative that Hungarians have been still suffering a collective trauma due to Trianon and that Horthy stands as a predecessor to Orbán (Toomey 2018: 1-3.).

Since 1998 Orbán has been advocating for a cultural and social reunification with the Hungarian diaspora in the Carpathian Basin and leaning towards more and more positively towards Horthy. Orbán has based his messages on a national unification project that could somehow resolve the Treaty of Trianon. The policies of the new Citizenship Law and the Day of National Cohesion fit into this framework. Since the 2015 European migration crisis, Orbán has aimed to defend Hungary against a "second Trianon" by building a border fence and implementing a campaign against the liberal Western Europe and Brussels. In 2014 after Russia annexed Crimea, Orbán publicly demanded from Ukraine to provide autonomy to the Hungarians in Ukraine, but it was rejected and it is thought to be rather a message intended for the domestic public. Orbán also framed Brussels as "the new Moscow" trying to colonize Hungary, while claiming to be an "antidote" to the former incompetent, "urbanist" government of Ferenc Gyurcsány and the liberal elite of Hungary (Toomey 2018: 7-15.).

The most significant development around the memory of Trianon has been the fact that after the Fidesz formed a government in 2010 the Hungarian Parliament adopted a new law about the memory of Trianon and the day of the signing of the Treaty of Trianon became the Day of National Cohesion, which implies the togetherness of the disrupted, detached national communities. The new XLV. Law of 2010 defined Trianon to be one of the worst tragedies of the Hungarians, which have caused unresolved issues until today. It further states the resolution of problems have to be done according to the principles of international law, through the cooperation of equal states based on mutual respect. Then mentions the unified Hungarian nation is under the authority of multiple states and that the national cohesion of the Hungarian communities should be built beyond the state borders (Feischmidt 2014: 59-60.).



According to Éva Kovács, the memory of Trianon has long not been a primary experience but is part of the communicative memory of the Hungarians. Today's concept of Trianon (Day of National Cohesion) is an ideological form that makes historical debates to serve politics and creates attitudes, not patriotism, but instead an increasing xenophobia, a desire for revenge and resentment that are present more or less in all societies. Instead of collective trauma, Kovács interprets Trianon as collective narcissism that the Hungarians lost their dominant position once and for all in the Carpathian Basin. Thus the discursive, performative recalling of Trianon, even on school memorial days is an irresponsible, narcissistic neurosis, instead of processing the past. There is no memory besides Trianon that could fill the major place of the Hungarian memory politics. The memory of Trianon is the expression of a long-term, controversial societal crisis and the initiative to solve this crisis in the way of a symbolic, ritual restoration for the humiliated self-esteem, instead of taking action in real time and in real space. Trianon is the symbol of a Hungary, which, instead of a response to the crisis, chooses the imagination of the ethnically and historically unified nation. The symbols of Trianon and Greater Hungary together provide the picture of an uplifting, self-confident, recognized national past. Thus, the main statement is that a new societal crisis creates the need for the Hungarian symbols, memories of former collective traumas (Feischmidt 2014: 54-58.). This may be a valid evaluation of how the Orbán government transformed the memory around Trianon but not the real memory of Trianon in the Hungarian collective consciousness.

The fact that thanks to the European Union it is easier to cross the borders, especially with Slovakia that is part of the Schengen zone and the Dual Citizenship law of the Orbán government are to be valued, because these indeed provide a chance for Hungarian minorities abroad to establish a stronger connection with their home, Hungary.

However, Orbán really should not compare himself to earlier Hungarian politicians as today times have changed and creating a discourse based on false promises or which have negative effects on the Hungarians are not to be welcomed. Then, the celebration day of the Day of National Cohesion may be counter-intuitive to be a celebration, because it reminds Hungarians on quite the opposite that the Treaty of Trianon rather disrupted the Hungarian nation and made the Hungarian minorities grew apart from Hungary. The day of signing the Treaty of Trianon may have to remain a day of mourning if Hungarians are to remember this event. It is another question whether to remember for Trianon or not to remember, but as it may not have been processed by many Hungarians, have not been accepted and the right-wing and the far-right supporters would commemorate it anyway, June 4<sup>th</sup> may better not be a celebration day as it is an act of self-deception. If one is to create a Day of National Cohesion then perhaps that day could have been put on another date.

While Stephen Béla Várdy (1997) argued Trianon shook the life-foundation of the Hungarians and is still to be felt in the Hungarian collective identity as a national malady, Orsolya Putz (2019) also acknowledged the Treaty of Trianon still plays a great role constructing the national identity. Putz thinks of Trianon as a metaphor in the Hungarian collective consciousness. Putz views Trianon and the Peace Treaty as agents, as persons who cause harm, and as means of disintegrating an object. Trianon is also viewed as a substance in the Hungarian mind and soul, moreover perceived as mental and emotional illness. Moreover, Sava (2020) pointed out the Trianon Trauma is some kind of *causa prima* that may influence the Hungarian collective identity the greatest and it belittles other events, then Gábor Egry (2020) acknowledged that the effects of Trianon are still lasting today and that there has been divisions about understanding Trianon between right- and left-wing political parties.

These interpretations may all be true and highlight the different sides of Trianon as it is a complex event, while it may also be compared to the act when the limbs of the body of a human are amputated.

Overall, it can be stated that the Trianon Trauma has not been processed by the Hungarians, because after new negative events occurred, the Hungarians, their collective did not have time to process all that, after the regime change the Hungarians may not have been able to take their fate and future into their own hands, there may be too much apathy, indifference in the people. The people may notice what is happening but then shrug their shoulders.

#### **5.4. The negative socio-psychological Hungarian environment**

Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century changes have been undergoing within the Hungarian population and there is a tendency of them not to know the past, aiming to abolish the past, to put their selfish interests in the focus, to act based on ego and achieve a more advantaged position than others, to embody hate and after a while these people even begin to hate themselves, because they are unsuccessful, they are lonely and then giving and receiving love is too late, thus after as they do not mind, they indulge in the various methods of self-destruction, while also call for the self-destruction of others. The crisis of the Hungarian consciousness has never been this terrible (Nemeskürty 2003: 130-131.).

It can be argued that Stephen I of Hungary laid down the foundation and the general direction the Hungarians should follow a thousand years ago by making Hungary a Christian Kingdom, however, this direction has been questioned both in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The fate of

Hungary and its place in Europe can be summed up in the following three standpoints. First, Hungary is geopolitically considered to be between two major powers, Germany and Russia, among whom either one will likely “eat” Hungary, that has determined Hungary’s foreign policy. Secondly, that Hungary is situated in Central Europe between Europa Occidens or Western Europe and Europa Oriens or essentially the Russian world either with its own characteristics or more distorted, chaotic characteristics in the so-called “Middle-Europe”. Lastly, Hungary may be considered to be on the semi-periphery of European civilization that it follows the patterns of societal organization and political philosophies of the Center but in a deformed way (Gyurgyák 2017: 55-56.).

There is a common aspiration in Hungary to catch up with Western European development since the end of the Dual Monarchy, so at least for a hundred years, but with less success as Hungary still remains on the semi-periphery. There are many people in Hungary who view the West either through pink fog, through illusions, or are fundamentally standing against the West, but there are less “Western realists” (Gyurgyák 2017: 57.).

One of the most fundamental elements of the Hungarian self-image and the nationalist historical traditions is Hungary as the champion of freedom and independence. One of the key elements of Hungarian political thinking and its biggest fiction is the thought of total sovereignty (Gyurgyák 2017: 58.).

If the past 100-110 years of Hungarian history is analyzed considering political-ideological systems, the conclusion is that a dozen fundamental regime changes have occurred. To summarize these fundamental changes, the dates are the following: 1918, March 1919, August 1919, 1944, 1945, 1948, October 1956, November 1956, 1989 and the most recently 2010 by the Fidesz (Gyurgyák 2017: 52-53.).

On top of these turns, if one is to add the territorial changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the foreign occupations, the migration of a great proportion of Hungarians, moreover the ideologies of the state and private medias from the “imperial ambitions of Hungarianness”, to “we are alone”, “no, no, never” slogans, from the “bastion of Christianity” or “the last fortress of Europe” to “the nation of the East” or “the last ally of Fascism”, from “the best apprentice of Stalin” to “illiberal democracy”, the difficulty of the task at hand seems overwhelming. These continuous interruptions, the lack of organic societal development, the restarts and failures and the contrasting ideologies have continuously damaged the public opinion and the Hungarian society (Gyurgyák 2017: 54.).

According to Tóth’s (2010) study, it was concluded that Hungary is situated exactly on the value map as its geographic position would predestine it to be, on the periphery of Western culture and near to the Balkan and orthodox worlds. The study highlighted four phenomenons that constitute the structure of the Hungarian value system. First of all, the Hungarian society strongly

lacks trust towards fellow citizens and the institutions. Secondly, Hungarians are in an ambiguous relationship with complying and breaching the norms. Their ability to perceive corruption is relatively high, but they regard it as part of life, and they regard the practices of corruption to be a habit of norm-breaching fellow citizens, not themselves. Third, the inequalities within the economy are perceived to be unfairly high and the ways to succeed in society and the mechanisms are considered to be unacceptable as instead of performance, success is linked to breaching the norms, finding the loopholes, stepping on other people on the way up, thus viewing the operation of the economy as a zero-sum game. Climbing the ladder of the societal hierarchy has been dependent upon the social capital Hungarians have and to a lesser extent on aspirations or on personal ambitions. Finally, the Hungarian society is highly dependent upon the state: redistribution and state solutions are preferred instead of the solutions, mechanisms of the market. Furthermore, in 2013 in a follow-up study the perception was examined that when “their people” are in power in politics, they tend to trust better the institutions they control and these people are more forgiving about the corruption “their” party undertakes. This means the previously known tribal mentality has rather strengthened by 2013 than it was in the past 15-20 years (Tóth 2017: 37-39.).

Still, looking at the European values’ map, it is visible that from North to South, from West to East Hungary is not out-of-place on this map regarding the indicators of trust, tolerance and attitude towards norms (Tóth 2017: 43.).

There is one more way to approach the question of Hungarian mentality, which is to analyze the historical cultural patterns and the long-term prevalent societal groups that provide the basis for Hungarian mentality. Two societal groups had been the determining ones throughout Hungarian history, which are the mentality of the serfdom and peasantry and the mentality of the noblemen and gentry. The well-known mentality of the serfdom and peasantry constituted the respect for traditions, fear of reforms, jealousy, hating the rich, distrust, diligence, selfishness, self-exploitation, stubbornness, backwardness. While the noblemen-gentry mentality was characterized by a tendency to rule, administrative experience, a historical sense, materialism, over-consumption, individualism, selfishness, protectionism, aspiration for guise, respect for authority, passive resistance, antisemitism, “rank syndrome”, etc. These two mentalities have been the dominant in Hungarian society in contrast to aristocrat, proletarian or civilian mentalities, as the latter had not developed to a greater extent in Hungary (Gyurgyák 2017: 66.).

Zsolt Beöthy derived the characteristics of the Hungarian nation from its antiquity and Asianness as many others too. He argued in his work from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that the essence of the Hungarian mentality can be found in the image of “the lone horseman”. He draws the picture of a horseman appearing from ancient times near the Volga river on the steppes as he calmly stands

and pays attention to the surroundings. He is calm, has no fear and no illusions, only regards the things he sees, but with a clear vision. According to Beöthy, this provides a picture about the Hungarian spirit and the way of life of the earlier nomad Hungarians. He states that this thousand-year old horseman-nomad experience was deeply embedded in Hungarians and the characteristics of courage, barbarian pride, love of freedom, directness and willingness of resistance. Others derive a different shade of characteristics from this Asian inheritance, such as a warrior-like, ruling people with either a negative or positive connotation. Sándor Karácsony concluded this unique mentality differing than the European in the characteristics of passive resistance, apposition of people, dissension, waiting for wonders and postponing tasks. However, the link with this ancient nomad, Asian mentality may be questionable due to the amount of time passed since then and the ethnic and migrational changes that occurred in a thousand years (Gyurgyák 2017: 64.).

Another perspective to approach the characteristics of the Hungarian nation is by Lajos Prohászka, who condensed the characteristics of each nation, community into a symbol, into one metaphysical image that describes them, for example the Romans as organizers, the English as settlers, the Germans as wanderers. These images do not describe the results of biological or historical developments, but embody the objective spirit, which guides that nation. He argued that the Hungarian is a hidden, concealed soul characterized by finitism, the aspiration for finiteness, simplicity and delimitation, while also being reluctant towards problematic, unresolved issues. The Hungarian person does not have relatives, he or she is being abandoned, not being understood, is unwelcomed to being seen in Europe, thus consequently he or she puts himself or herself in a box, delimiting himself or herself. The finitist is in constant running from the facts, as he or she feels to be beaten down, consumed by them, and even if he or she returns to these things, it is in the form of dreaming. From the position of being in the opposition and in the dreams though, it is impossible to rule, to form a reality without being crippled and broken, meaning not others but rather himself or herself. There are two ways the Hungarian is running from the facts, either escaping into the national past or into bitterness. The author concludes that it is not impossible to break out from this image and states that the foreign, looked down upon, hiding soul who had to escape from the East may find the way to the West (Gyurgyák 2017: 65.).

Social psychologist Béla Budai identified some characteristics of the Hungarian mentality, such as depression, alcoholism, despair, withdrawal, a tendency of self-destruction, for which one reason the Hungarians had to repress much about themselves in the past hundred years. Some examples may be shame, hopelessness or keeping a secret about relatives who emigrated due to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution or the guilt complex about the pre-1918 behavior towards other nationalities in historical Hungary. If someone is thinking about Hungarian nationality, he or she

may be labeled as a nationalist, however, it is perceived that the suppression of the past results in a Hungarian identity crisis (Deme 1998: 314.).

János Gyurgyák argued the first attribute that characterizes the Hungarians is that they are individualists to a great degree, there is great selfishness in the Hungarian people, to satisfy their own interests, while the social and community life of Hungarians is weak. Secondly, the Hungarian society is a divided and polarized community and only the necessity and the common language binds it together. Thirdly, the Hungarian society is hateful and selfish. This correlates with the polarization as the political and intellectual elites incite and make people uncertain, instead of lending help to them. He does not see old characteristics present today such as friendly, welcoming, hospitable, laughing people. The fourth characteristic is that the Hungarians are complaining, it is a dissatisfied society. Dissatisfaction is not a negative attribute in itself, because it may lead to more action, but this is not the case with the Hungarians. If one looks back at the Hungarian history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they notice the fate of the Hungarians was not merciful and the two events of Trianon and 1944-1945 has to a large extent changed the Hungarian society for the worse (Bartha 2021).

If one is to understand the present characteristics of the Hungarian collective identity, the period of socialism cannot be neglected. The ideological structure during the Soviet occupation to maintain peace in the society did destroyed and suffocated the Western values and behavioral patterns, constrained the use of creativity and innovation, honored loyalty, conformity and made the status quo a norm, while punished any divergence from it (Tóth 2017: 40-41.).

A lack of trust towards the institutions might mean the parents, grandparents in Hungary had negative experiences. In familial memories, historical memories there is a picture about Hungary that reminds them Hungary did not have its own public life, public administration but it was always dominated, dictated by occupying forces, foreigners. If Hungarians think about succeeding in life, they remember what it was like to survive the era of socialism and the “first economy”. If Hungarians think about breaching norms as either a virtue or a sin, they reflect the earlier reality of their relatives (Tóth 2017: 40-41.).

Studies have shown that at the time of the regime change in 1989, the classical and official socialist values have decreased and the importance of material values have significantly increased. In contrast to Europe, Hungarians are more hedonists, individualists, more aspiring for security, but are adaptive to a lesser extent, are non-conformists, while the distrust towards the institutions and people and their dissatisfaction about the present situation are conspicuous. They also less likely to accept inequalities, interpret the norms selectively and have a tendency to accept the paternalist behavior of the state (Gyurgyák 2017: 67.).

Furthermore, discussing the Hungarian mentality, the wagon camp logic or the tribal group identities are unavoidable to mention. The rigid political group identities have characterized Hungarian politics, it is this logic that determines intellectual thinking. The structure that forms rigid wagon camps is based on loyalty, personal relationships and capital, not on real achievements. This logic infected the traditional political left-right dichotomy and it was further burdened by devastating oppositions. After all, this logic has serious consequences on intellectual independence, not allowing to perceive, view the issues in itself, objectively with common sense but rather looking at the circumstances too and whom would this opinion benefit (Gyurgyák 2017: 69-70.).

The Hungarian people generally consider the demographic situation of Hungary, the low birthrate and the aging population of the country to be either a Western, European or Christian phenomenon, or “the Hungarian curse”. The myth that there is a higher birthrate in each of Hungary’s neighboring countries for at least a century can be considered now a national tradition. This “curse” is thought to be partly the cause of the Hungarian historical traumas and in a longer term is argued it may lead to the death of the nation. This stands as a stubborn myth as 68 percent of the interviewed Hungarians believed that in the neighboring nations more children are being born than in Hungary in 2016. However, this myth is not true, because there are only slight differences between these countries, for example comparing the birthrates of Hungary with 1,44 and of Romania with 1,34 or of Slovakia with 1,40 from 2016 do not provide significant differences. Despite this slightly harsh myth, there is a continuous trend of population decline both in Hungary and in Central-Eastern Europe that stated if the current circumstances do not change much, by 2020 there would be 9,5 million people in Hungary (which came true), while by 2050 it would decline to 8,2 million people (Kapitány and Spéder 2017: 177-185.).

The phenomenon of population decline can further be examined in the populations of Hungarian minorities beyond Hungary’s borders. The number of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin decreased by more than 1 million persons in the past 90 years. If the proportion of Hungarians outside Hungary’s frontiers in the Carpathian Basin is examined, it was 32,1 percent in 1910, while it decreased to 17,6 percent in 2001. While the population of these Hungarian minorities was 2,763,625 person in 1991, it was expected to decrease to 1,934,152 persons by 2021 (Bárdi 2017: 130-135.).

In 2017 the fertility rate of Hungary was documented to be 1,4-1,5, which is better than the absolute minimum of 1,24 in 2011 but lags behind the EU average of 1,6 (Kapitány and Spéder 2017: 177-185.).

Annamária Zseni (2017), who is a psychologist, analyzed the self-identity, the soul of the Hungarian nation with specific psychological methods.

There is a strong sense of purpose and the feeling of being a special, chosen nation characterizing the Hungarians. The Saker falcon as the bird of the myth of the ancient Hungarian origins represents the spirit bird of unconditional love. The vulnerability of the Hungarians can be found in its identity, where the love, the trust were the defining features, straight talking without any hidden agendas, deception or betrayal. The Hungarian can be deceived because they do not know what was deception and thus their self-defense was not developed against it. There is a high degree of negative emotions present such as fury and the feeling of inertia. The Hungarian collective at the present is too weak to explore the pains of the past that puts a barrier between them and positive emotions. Detaching from the past and their identity, and their life force create further weaknesses (Zseni and Jelenczki, 2017: 113-120.).

The duality also characterizes the Hungarian collective, which points to the need for balance. First of all, the Hungarians think of themselves as an outstanding nation, but on the other hand Hungarians think they are a guilty nation, do not deserve a good fate and have to be punished for the sins of others too. The collective subconsciousness stores a power-seeking, aggressive ancient image about the nation. The unconditional goodness has a defining role in the collective, this is why the intense rage, assertive, self-defending aggression are not acceptable emotions, but it is not possible to survive without these. But if Hungarians are aggressive, then remorse, expiation, sacrifice will follow. The shame, the sin and the conflict within the nation, moreover the remorse deriving from these make the Hungarians unable to fight. Hungarians take on the role of the victim even without any actual sins, because through the psyche they feel themselves to be guilty without any real sins. The Hungarians need to believe that they are strong and connect with their ancient operating identity. Before the earlier Christian faith, the clear and simple Hungarian ancient religion was the base of the Hungarian identity. The focus of this religion was the unconditional fidelity towards justice, which is a defining character of the Hungarians that may separate them from other communities. The Hungarians may not feel themselves well in the present, because they are not able to connect to their past and they exclude themselves from their place that way (Zseni and Jelenczki, 2017: 72-76.).

The Hungarian nation fears its own emotions, its own conscience, power, unprocessed past, identity, its own roots and not take them into account. The nation is hopeless, weak and due to the internal turmoil it hits the ground again. It is not able to stand up even when there are intense internal urges. The pain is the representation of a complex definition that involves sadness, fear, shame, guilt, grief and suspicion. The grief cannot be relieved, it cannot reach the level of fury. The involvement of the Hungarian nation in this pain ties down its energies, thus the nation is incapacitated and is drifting towards the death of the nation without knowing what is happening.



The Hungarian nation is not acting actively, out of self-will but it is like the behavior of a surrendering suicide. The Hungarian nation needs to let go of the pain, the sacrifices it had given, by forgetting what had happened and moving on, otherwise the Hungarians may lose their life force (Zseni and Jelenczki, 2017: 80-85.).

Due to the unresolved issues of the past the life force of the Hungarian collective is tied down and the past issues are present being unresolved in the present, thus the collective lives in the past (Zseni and Jelenczki, 2017: 121-123.).

The nature of the confusion is that in the present the Hungarian collective is in a frozen state and the aspirations to act are low, while the collective's emotional well-being is characterized by sadness, distrust, hopelessness, fear and threat. Being in the actual present is lacking from the Hungarians and it is highlighted by the facts that there is no connection between generations and there is no connection between the past and the present. Due to the weak life force and the self-defending mechanisms, solving the present issues and the renewal are cannot be materialized. The younger generation are leaving the Hungarian collective while the middle generations are prevented from taking action through indifference and escapism through self-destruction. Due to the confusion of the Hungarian collective identity, several events, turns are not being included exactly as they had happened whether these were painful, shameful events. The counterfeiting, encryption of such events create gaps between generations, between the past and the present. Due to the presence of the gap, the connection with the negative happenings is lost, but also with all of the past events. The connection with the glorious past is also cut, from where the Hungarians could build their self-confidence, their life force, their self-identity. In this way the Hungarian identity is becoming uncertain and the rest of the given energies are unfocused, disintegrated. The lack of order is a serious issue that points out nothing is what it seems to be, creating uncertainty. There is no structure, mirror, a reliable environment where self-reflection, self-definition could take place. The self-identity in an uncertain environment between the extremes may increase the confusion. In this state, where there is a lack of order, the unprocessed issues of the past are indeed dangerous that could bury the current system under itself (Zseni and Jelenczki, 2017: 121-123.).

After analyzing the Hungarian historical events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, recent behavioral and political developments, changes in Hungary and the consequences these events had on the Hungarian collective identity, it is important to highlight and conclude the major findings about the Hungarian socio-psychological environment or in other words within the Hungarian living space, based on the experiences. The following statements below should be viewed as the major, general trends, tendencies to describe the collective identity, especially on the societal, interpersonal levels, the social identity of the Hungarians, but not the unique personal characteristics of the Hungarians.

This does not mean that each Hungarian person may own such characteristics as it is described below, but the majority may have a few or more of these behavioral patterns:

1. General fear and fear of the unknown: The dismemberment of Hungary due to the Treaty of Trianon resulted in a shock, a weakening of the Hungarian nation by external forces and vulnerability that may have led to a fear of similar events, actions. The meaning of external forces is highly relevant, as Hungary was tri-partitioned by the Ottoman invasion, the 1848-1849 Hungarian Revolution was defeated by external forces, by the Russians, the Treaty of Trianon was endorsed by the Allied powers and implemented by Hungary's neighbors, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution was also crushed by the Soviets and more recently the Orbán government is propagating Hungary is threatened by the liberal West and the unknown, foreign migrants (preparing a "second Trianon"), which are external forces. The fear of the unknown may be partially a legitimate source of fear. Moreover, generally the communism has greatly broken the Hungarian society and inflicted fear and terror upon them especially during Rákosi's rule and how they retaliated the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

2. The culture of distrust: During the 44 years of communism the Hungarian people were being observed by spies and informers and there were taboos the Hungarians were not allowed to talk about. If someone was misbehaving, rebelling or mentioning events they should not have done, they were punished or even taken away and never be seen again. They lost their trust and self-confidence in themselves too. This created such an atmosphere that it was even not recommended to trust their own family members and friends of the people, not to mention the authorities. In the post-communist system the "speech of Öszöd" highlighted the best that the politicians, the government cannot be trusted, because they could lie many times and promises are not kept.

3. Pessimism and a negative worldview: Pessimism and a negative worldview originates in the Trianon Trauma that disrupted the sense of unity of the nation, which was unjust, and the attempt to remedy it had failed due to the Nazi takeover in Hungary, while the Hungarians had to suffer a lot under the communist dictatorship. After the regime change many Hungarians were and have been disappointed by the existing issues, problems of the system, which can be seen through the high level of nostalgia of the Hungarians towards the Kádár era. Due to the traumas that happened in the past and the low standard of living, poverty, the hopelessness Hungarians may feel, moreover that the Hungarians do not see, do not find a solution to the issues that drag them down

and lose hope. The Hungarians may be pessimists and may forcibly move to abroad to find a better life, but it does not solve their issues.

4. Victim mentality, sense of a disrupted nation: These characteristics may be especially due to the Trianon Trauma, the fact that the Hungarian collective was dismembered, amputated into different parts when the Treaties detached the Hungarian minorities to abroad. This may be felt by both Hungarians from Hungary or the Hungarian minorities.

5. Self-destructive behaviors and withdrawal: many Hungarians are prone to self-destruction such as alcoholism, smoking, substances, suicidal acts and depression lacking a vital life force. This had been at the lowest point during the Kádár era, but to a lesser extent present in the post-communist era. The vitality, the will of the Hungarians have decreased due to the hopelessness.

6. The culture of complaints, blaming others and not taking responsibility: Complaining may have become a norm during the Kádár era when it was allowed to complain about anything except the system and communism. In the post-communist period it is common knowledge that many Hungarians complain about their lives, complain about the government even more openly but often do not do anything to better the situation, to take the responsibility for their own actions. By complaining, blaming others the Hungarians justify their incapability to act.

7. Empty individualism, zero-sum game mentality and egoism: Due to the moral distortions and deviant operation of the Kádár regime, Hungarians have become more materialistic individuals and got used to pursuing their own interests not caring about the interests of the community as during communism the Hungarians were treated as a populace not being able to defend their interests or have influence over the government. As inequalities have grown in the post-communist system, some Hungarians could break out from the average standard of living and pursue their selfish goals, while many developed their egos and did not care about other when climbing this hierarchic ladder. Many Hungarians have become avoidant, insensitive to other people's issues, a lack of empathy. These characteristics may also be derived from the long-standing serfdom-peasantry contra noblemen-gentry historical opposition.

8. The culture of envy, high level of dependency: The culture of envy is connected to the empty individualism and the growing inequalities, when Hungarians became more and more envious of what other people have that they do not. For some Hungarians the low degree of

inequalities, the equality of socialism were just and optimal, but they also became more dependent on the state and when this dependency ceased to exist, they could not adapt and could not be more prosperous, were unable to be creative, take on challenges and go on an unfamiliar road. Then, many Hungarians got used to not needing to participate or have a say in politics and developed political apathy, indifference, not only because in communism it was the norm not to share your opinion, not to vote, but also because of the recent Hungarian political culture.

9. Lack of morality, high level of corruption, cynicism: It has been possible to act immorally, unethically since communism when the most loyal Communist party members had the most power and could act with a certain degree of impunity, gain, earn more than they should and behave in ways it should not be allowed. Such an atmosphere was passed on to the post-communist era, where many Hungarians would say morality ceased to exist and the politicians, entrepreneurs are corrupt, cynical and immoral.

10. Lack of life force, lack of courage, apathy: The anger, frustration of the Hungarians may not have come to the surface at the time of the region change due to the transition and the Hungarian people may not have taken back their self-determination and full ownership of their country, because the events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century lessened the Hungarians' bravery, life force, togetherness and at the fall of communism, Hungarians were not that active, but may have been rather passive to let the former communists get away with their punishments and build a new system on the former one.

11. Aloneness, not being understood, isolation: As the metaphor of "the lone horseman" depicted and based on the uniqueness of the Hungarian language, which does not have any real linguistic relatives in Central-East Europe, moreover that the Hungarians migrated to the Carpathian Basin from the East in contrast to the Indo-European neighbors, one may say the Hungarians are like a small isolated island on the sea and their true relatives may lie towards the East far far away.

12. Lack of order: The Hungarian nation does not see the lack of order, which is surprising. Without order there are great action dynamics, conflicts, ideas, initiatives alternating until the level of chaos. The good intentions and the plans remain without structures and the energies are consumed without achieving the desired changes. Without order there is no creation, the order provides the structure and rhythm of the actions, thus it is needed. If the Hungarians are building on the unresolved pain of the past, then there is no stability and in such a case the anger, the pain may

resurface and destroy the present. The Hungarians are aiming to cover the nation's emotional operations with the egoistic behaviors to keep the distance from emotions (Zseni and Jelenczki, 2017: 93-98.).

The Hungarian nation as a consequence of the historical traumas reached this negative, current state, but this does not mean that Hungarians do not have positive characteristics and the above-mentioned characteristics may only reflect rigidly the collective identity based on historical, societal facts. It is important to highlight the Hungarians may be an indeed ancient folk or nation based on the Sumerian-Hungarian language connection, and to mention the inclusive nature of the Hungarian tribes from early times to the announcement of religious freedom first in Transylvania within Europe. It is important to highlight the hospitality, the goodness of the Hungarians that can be heard from foreign visitors. It is time the Hungarians regain their self-confidence and rediscover their true strengths, virtues.

Leo VI the Wise, who was the Emperor of Byzantine and lived between 866 and 912, stated the Hungarians endure exhaustion, the coldness, the freeze, the burning heat and destitution, moreover they are freedom lovers and like magnificent things. Then, a French philosopher, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, who lived between 1689 and 1755, stated the Hungarians are famous about their love of freedom, heroic courage, noble and generous character and there is a legendary reputation about their kind hospitality (Dr. Papp, 2019: 329-332.).

## 6. Towards a positive, peaceful transformation

### 6.1. Readdressing the historical traumas

The trans-generational effects usually have traumatic origins. The trauma is the sum of mental and physical insults that exceed the tolerance of the individual or the community, thus they become incapable to effectively process what had happened and restore the former state of balance. In the case of a community, which is not able to process traumatic events, the trauma has become locked in the soul and creates a barrier between generations. This has the consequence that families, larger communities or on the level of the society the unresolved issues may return (Zseni and Jelenczki, 2017: 20-24.).

The imprint of the events that have influenced, defined the fate of the nation is preserved throughout the ages in the subconsciousness of the nation's soul. The next generations are guarding the symbolic crypt where these events, humiliations, wrongdoings, disgraces are embedded in the walls. Until these are locked in the walls, the energy of the nation is stuck, tied down. There is a need to explore all the secrets towards a better future, everything that is hidden, each disgrace, secret and wrongdoings. There is a need to name all the wrongdoings and all the wrongdoers. It is also the interest of the wrongdoers and their successors to unlock all the wrongdoings and take responsibility, because only then reconciliation may occur. Someone or a nation may also feel to be a wrongdoer when they think they are the responsible for the act, but they did not have any influence on the happenings (Zseni and Jelenczki, 2017: 30-33.).

The steps of processing the unresolved past are looking at the facts, acknowledging them, naming the responsible actors, taking responsibility for the actions of the Hungarians, apologizing for any wrongdoings and integrating the results (Zseni and Jelenczki, 2017: 91-93.).

It is crucial to once again bring up the debate whether remembering or forgetting certain events would do more good than harm to the society. First of all, the people who do not learn from history will ultimately be deemed to repeat it. Without making younger generations to remember, commemorate some crucial Hungarian events, how would they be more resistant to tricky political manipulations and tactics, or against far-right or far-left agendas? Such movements usually climb in through the window of society with undetectable slogans such as in the name of "freedom" or "prosperity". If people do not learn about their history, at least a little, they may become rootless. People who do not know where they came from may not be able to determine the direction where

they should head forward. Still, some traumas may be necessary to be forgotten as they take up too much space in the collective to create space for a common, healthy future. Forgetting and forgiving help the people to leave behind the old ways, but may retain the valuable lessons. Thus, a combination of remembering and forgetting may be the ideal way after all.

In order to relieve the Hungarian collective from its past, the Hungarian history should be taught in the schools as objectively as possible, the governing Hungarian government should not implement, propagate distorted facts, false discourses or create celebration days from traumatic events. New Hungarian leaders would be needed, who recognize the importance of getting to know, realizing and processing the past, because only then the collective identity of the younger generations will be freed from the negative effects that are weighing down the society. Such new leaders would also need to take responsibility for the mistakes, wrongdoings of the past and realize the experiences, lessons of those.

## **6.2. Positive transformation of the Hungarian living space**

In the current state there is no order in Hungary, because the Orbán government is one of the most corrupt governments of Hungary as the Corruption Perceptions Index according to Transparency International has dropped 11 points to 44 by 2019 from 2012, becoming one of the most corrupt states in the European Union besides Romania and Bulgaria (Portfolio 2020), the Hungarian courts are not independent, the local governments do not have enough power, there is no rule of law in Hungary and the well-being, interests of the Hungarians are not guaranteed, while the return of the political parties of the opposition would not be promising either. Until there is no order, no significant changes can be implemented. Thus, all the corrupt and unethical politicians, entrepreneurs and leaders should be removed from power and in a bottom-up process, a new generation of leaders and experts may take over who genuinely care about the interests of the people and represent the Hungarians. When the corrupt, negative leaders are pushed out from the system, then order may be gradually restored, which means the Hungarian courts will independently responsibly represent justice, there will be rule of law, the new Hungarian and local governments would be made accountable, the elections would be more ethical and fair, among others.

If there are moral, responsible leaders and the order is restored, then the well-being of the Hungarian people would also increase and their lives would become better. The negative patterns of the Hungarian society through the guidance of the leaders and all the entrepreneurs, local organizations could be teared down, deconstructed and cooperation may be encouraged between the

people. The role of the local leaders is especially important too. Bottom-up organizations would be highly important, because the people may better trust familiar leaders, not someone foreign to the ordinary citizens, who were selected from the members of a political party as distrust is high towards such persons. Also, in the digital age technology has provided humans with so many opportunities that it may be difficult to mobilize people for a common cause than in earlier decades, even though information is able to spread rapidly.

As a final step “the level of Middle-Europe” should be achieved by increasing diplomatic relations with Hungary’s neighbors in the Carpathian Basin and through the advocacy of closer cooperation with them. Before contacting the neighboring states where Hungarian minorities live, closer contact and cooperation should also be established between these Hungarian communities and ask them what would serve their interests, what would they like. Then, a more serious effort should also be taken to reconcile completely and review the common history with the neighboring states, because there are currently damaging discourses present and how history is taught affects the people’s behavior. Each party should recognize the other, should be more empathetic and admit their wrongdoings to each other, so that the relations between Hungary and its neighbors such as Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia may be eased and the different issues such as the issue of the Hungarian minorities may be addressed, resolved. Tangible results are not guaranteed, and as mentioned above even the European Union may lack the will to help to guarantee minority rights, but it would be in each party’s interest to provide the Hungarian minorities with more extensive linguistic, cultural, educational rights, at least, and to respect their ways of life, their culture.

It may be argued that globalization could serve such minority issues in the long run in East-Central Europe, but there is a value to native, ancient communities and their cultures that should not be forgotten as probably many values, cultures, knowledge may have become extinct due to internationalization and other factors such as human greed. Even if the power of globalization brings different nations together and the younger generations may be more susceptible to positively evaluate some nations than their ancestors did, one should never know how history will unfold, moreover the more extensive, centralized power due to globalization can either be put in good or evil hands that need to be taken into account.



## 7. Conclusions

This research analyzed the Hungarian collective identity based on the historical trajectory of the Hungarian nation from the origins of the Hungarians through the era of the Habsburgs into the difficult, traumatic 20<sup>th</sup> century till the present age of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how such historical events have affected the behaviors, attitudes, mentality of the Hungarians, their subconsciousness and the Hungarian living space.

Regarding the methodology, the realist, objective analysis of the historical events and the idealism, the subjective analysis of how such events have affected the Hungarian collective identity greatly complemented each other throughout the work. The approach of historical inquiry was proven to be quite effective to explore the link between the Hungarian people, the people who are part of the Hungarian socio-psychological environment and the historical events, while constructionism aided in setting up the “diagnosis” about the negative characteristics of the Hungarian living space.

Collective identity or in other words collective consciousness is formed through social interactions between humans who are creating a “cloud of collective”, which means they share certain beliefs, values, understandings and to a lower or higher degree they become bound to each other, conform to each other and may be mobilized. Collective identity means a joint awareness and recognition that humans who constitute a group have the same social identity. Such collectives are ranging from the family units, a circle of friends to political groups and nations. As many other collectives, the Hungarian is a national collective that have pre-modern ancient roots, a common language, a common history and more, who occupy a certain territory and share the same culture. The Hungarian collective has generic and specific characteristics such as a common fate and shared symbols such as the national flag.

The Hungarian socio-psychological environment was analyzed, which does not exclusively contain ethnic Hungarians, who only practice Hungarian cultural traditions, speak Hungarian or live in Hungary since birth or a longer time, but also people with multiple identities such as a Spanish person who have been living in Hungary for a longer time or a Hungarian person from the Hungarian minority area in Serbia regardless of citizenship. A Spanish person may bring his or her own characteristics, but he or she may gradually become part of the collective, especially by speaking Hungarian after a longer period. A Hungarian person may also be part of the Hungarian collective, who is living in the US for a longer time, but he or she had lived for a longer time in Hungary and still preserves such characteristics and interact with their Hungarian family online.

The collective identity of the Hungarians have been affected negatively by the Trianon Trauma and the communist era in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, moreover the recent political developments since the regime change and the by current Orbán regime in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Trianon Trauma means the signing of the Treaty of Trianon on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920 for many Hungarians that dismembered Hungary into five unequal parts, but as this research highlighted the Trianon Trauma has to be understood as a process, and not a single event that led to the fall of the historic Hungarian Kingdom due to internal and external reasons, while the consequences of this trauma, this dismemberment has far-reaching effects ranging from the irredentist politics of the interwar period until the celebration of the Day of National Cohesion implemented by the Orbán regime. The Trianon Trauma is still defining Hungarian historical memory and was named a national malady, the substance in the Hungarian mind, among others as it is still present in the Hungarian collective. The legacy of Trianon has lived on in the lives of the Hungarian minority communities as they have been facing from time to time a difficult fate in the neighboring countries of Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia. Although Trianon did not only have negative consequences, it meant and means for many Hungarians, either consciously or subconsciously the disruption of a sense of belonging, trauma, a loss and others.

Then, the communist period with its 44 years was indeed detrimental to the Hungarian society. The Soviet occupation, the mass rape, then the merciless rule of Rákosi and the spread of terror, the enemy-seeking led to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution that was brutally crushed and the actions retaliated. It broke down the bravery, the self-confidence of the Hungarians, and on top of this the past, talking about Trianon was suppressed. The following Kádár regime was built on the retaliation of the Revolution and this soft dictatorship bribed the Hungarians with the high standards of living to become collaborators in their own suppression. Although the regime's 33 years had some positive attributes, in the long-term it led to an increased dependency on the state, rise of self-destructive behaviors, culture of distrust and political apathy, among others.

The regime change and the dismantling of communism, the new democratic system highlighted the issues the communist period left behind and did not bring the promised hope for the Hungarians such as increasing inequalities or the return of ex-communists. Then, the democratization of the 2000s did not prove to be successful and the lying, the cynical political culture was reflected in the "speech of Öszöd", besides other major issues such as corruption that topped in the Orbán regime after 2010. The Orbán regime has become the most corrupt one in Hungary with its defining rich business clientele, with its hateful propaganda and manipulation, with its strong grip on power and with tearing down the democratic checks and balances in Hungary. It has co-opted the historical memories of Hungarians about Trianon, Horthy, the lives of

the Hungarian minorities, moreover created enemies from the migrants, Brussels and George Soros with its rhetoric. Ultimately, Orbán did not represent the well-being, the interests of the Hungarians but used them to maintain the regime and further distorted the Hungarian society.

As a result of the Hungarian historical trajectory, from the Trianon Trauma until the manipulation, experiences of the Orbán regime, the identified general, major characteristics of the Hungarian collective identity, from which a Hungarian person may have a few, are the following: 1. General fear and fear of the unknown, 2. The culture of distrust, 3. Pessimism and a negative worldview, 4. Victim mentality, sense of a disrupted nation, 5. Self-destructive behaviors and withdrawal, 6. The culture of complaints, blaming others and not taking responsibility, 7. Empty individualism, zero-sum game mentality and egoism, 8. The culture of envy, high level of dependency, 9. Lack of morality, high level of corruption, cynicism, 10. Lack of life force, lack of courage, apathy, 11. Aloneness, not being understood, isolation and 12. Lack of order.

Readdressing the historical traumas, issues should go hand in hand with the positive transformation of the Hungarian socio-psychological environment. As the political system in Hungary is corrupted and there are no moral, competent, genuine leaders who represent the Hungarians, new ethical leaders should emerge with the support of the people in the context of a bottom-up process, while the participation of the people and the role of local governments to restore the order is also important. Along with such aspirations and especially when there is order and the people are genuinely represented, the crypts of the traumatic historical events should be reopened, the facts explored and the responsibility taken for them, moreover the false discourses being unjustified, then healing may occur that could ultimately reconnect the nations in the Carpathian Basin with each other to increase cooperation and reach a state of positive peace.

Due to the limited scope of my study, further research may be conducted. First of all, on the tools, methods how the Orbán regime utilizes historical memories to their advantage, uses media propaganda to manipulate the people and how they are able to mobilize Hungarians to stay in power. Secondly, on the situation of the Hungarian diaspora more extensively and how their collective identities have been shaped, how did they live through these hard historical times. Thirdly, on the broader ethnic tensions and frozen conflict that exist between Hungary and some of its neighbors such as Romania or Slovakia due to the Hungarian minorities living there. Moreover, as this research did not include qualitative measures to assess the Hungarian collective identity, neither it conducted interviews that could be done in a follow-up on this topic.

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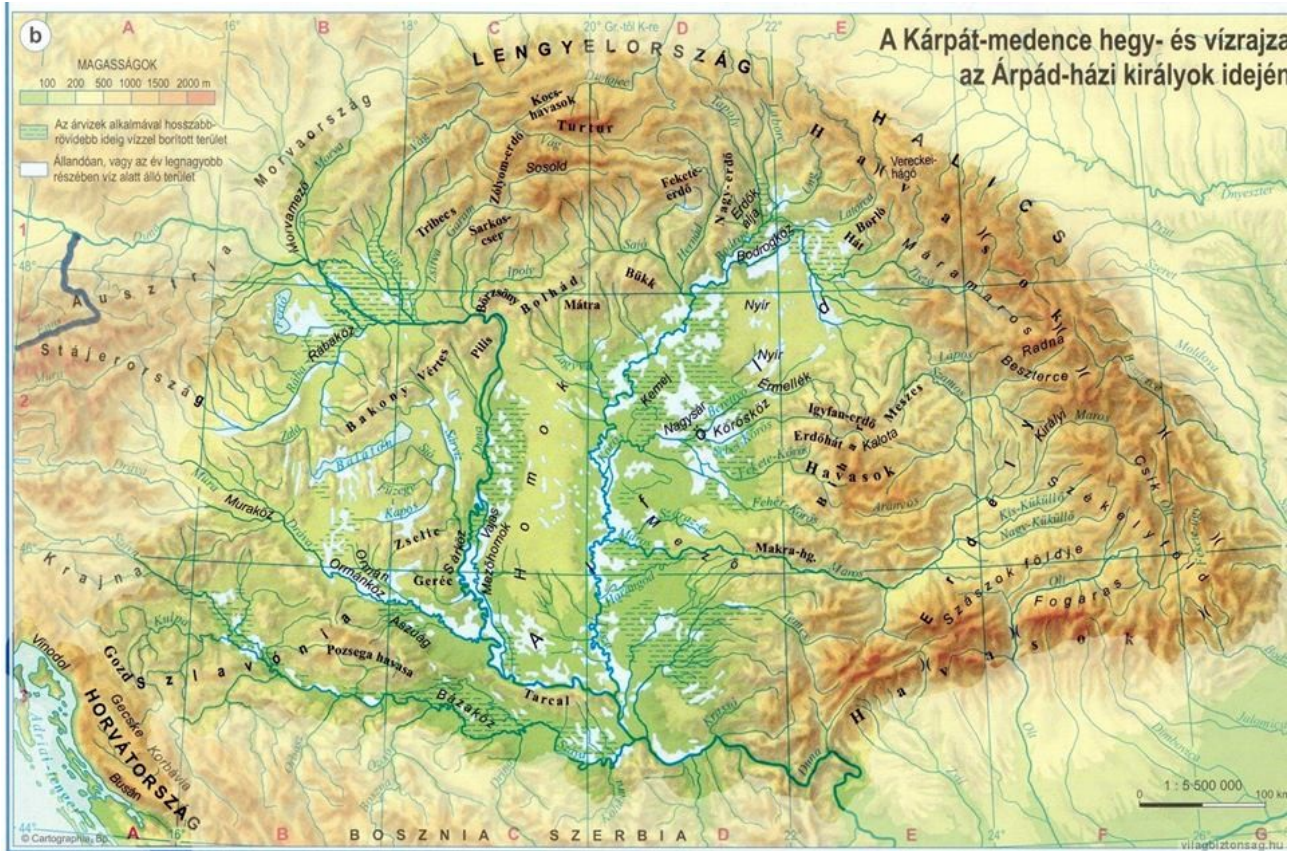
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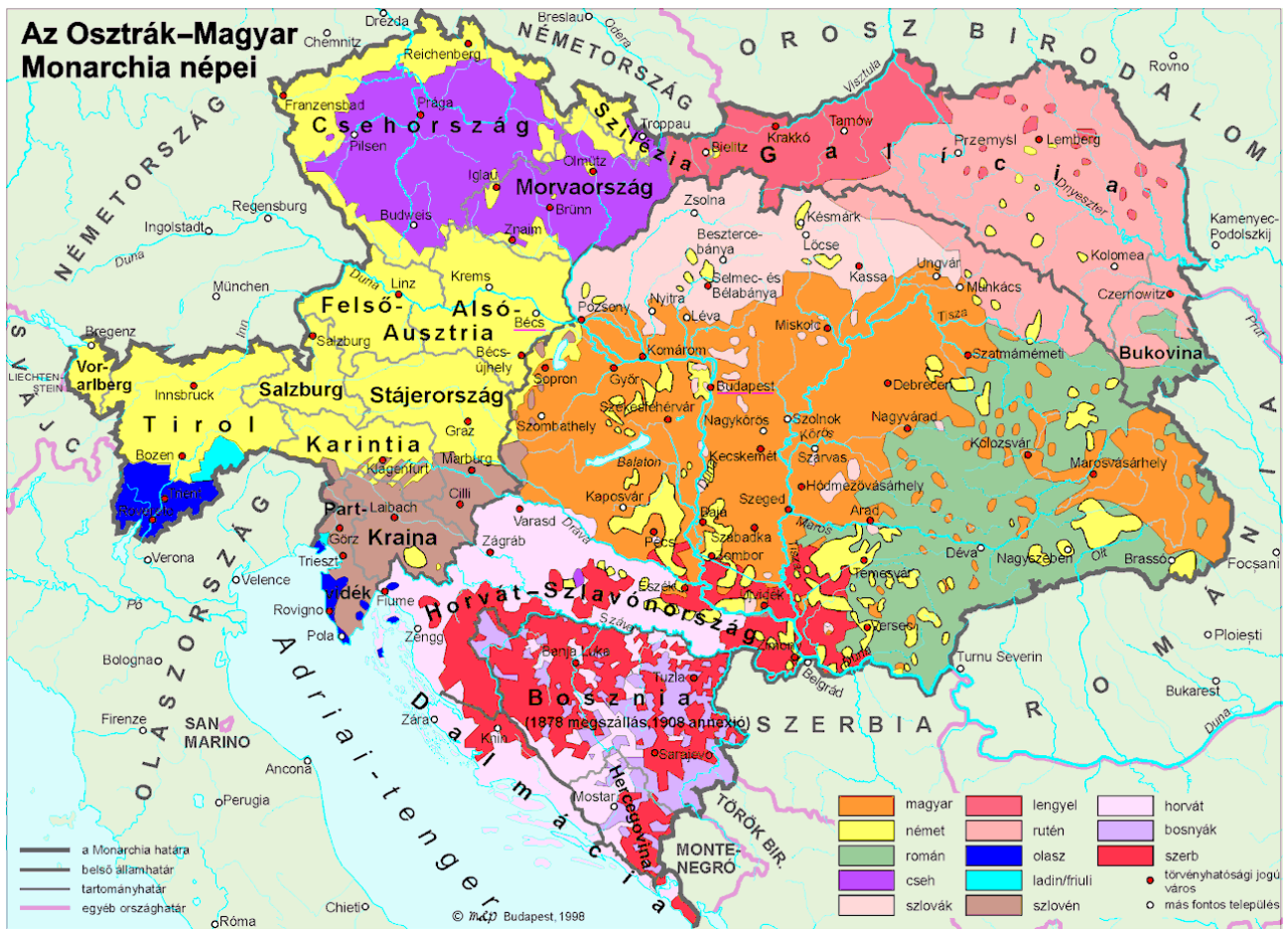
## 9. Annexes

### Annex A: Maps



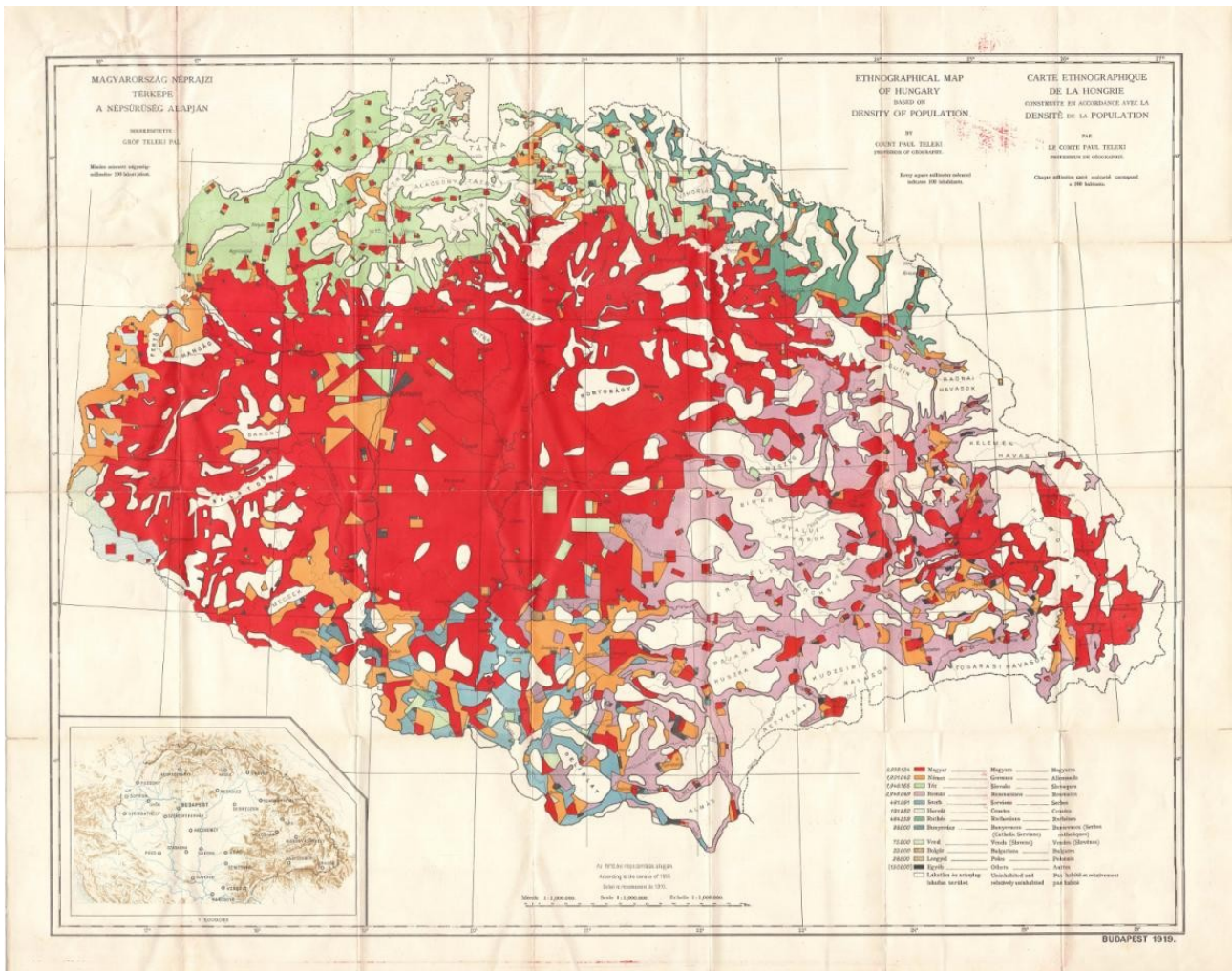
**A.1:** The territorial attributes of the Carpathian Basin in the age of the Árpád-dynasty in about 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was the territory of the early historical Hungary or Greater Hungary.

Source: <http://fenymag.hu/a-magyar-oshonos-a-karpat-medenceben/nagy-magyarorszag-2/>



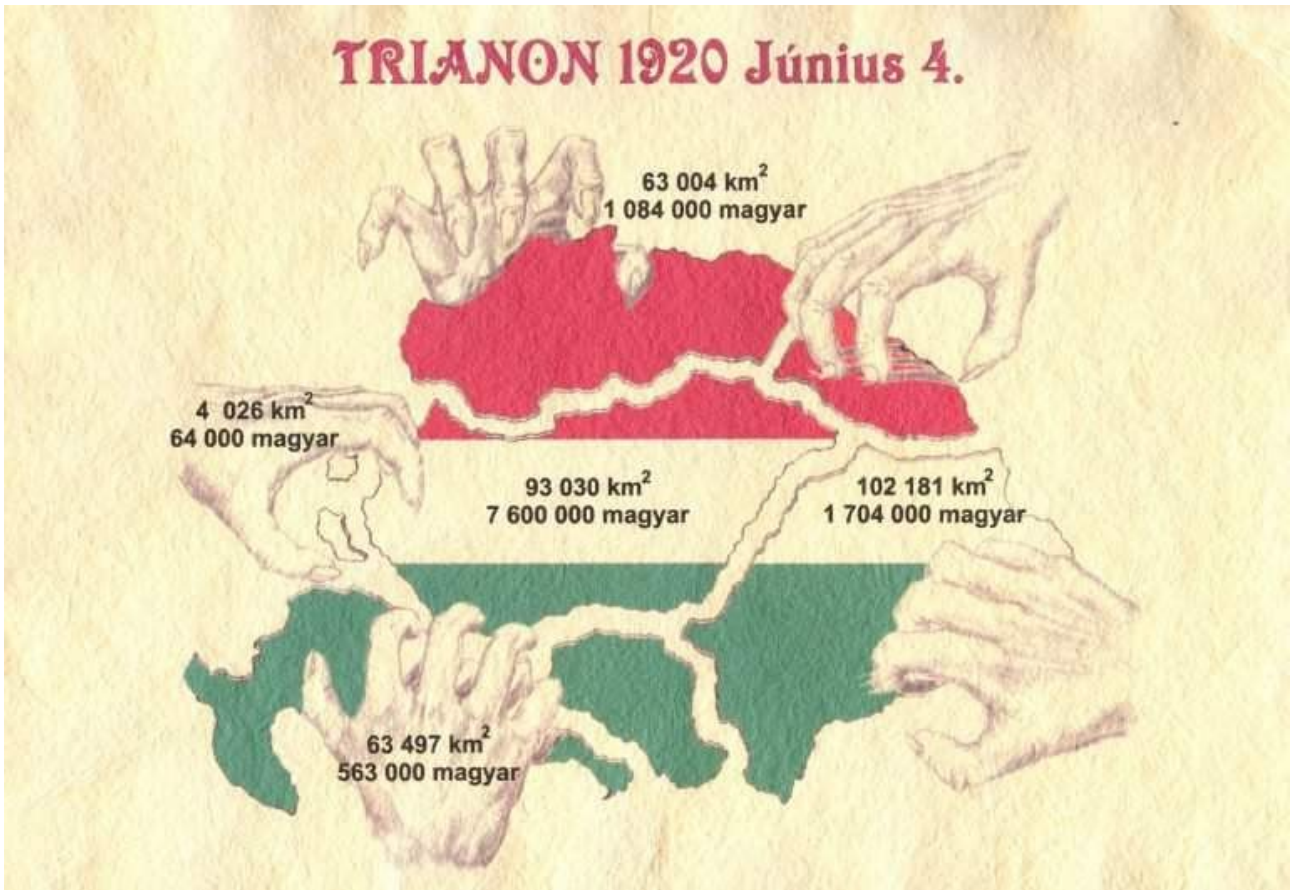
A.2: Nations of Austria-Hungary in 1910.

Source: <https://mapsontheweb.zoom-maps.com/post/89546160863/ethnic-composition-of-the-austro-hungarian-empire>



**A.3:** A version of the Red Map of Pál Teleki showing the ethnographic map of Hungary in 1910. This map was presented by the Hungarian delegation at the Peace Conference after the First World War.

Source: [https://pangea.blog.hu/2019/05/29/carte\\_rouge](https://pangea.blog.hu/2019/05/29/carte_rouge)



A.4: As a consequence of the Treaty of Trianon the map shows the number of Hungarians becoming detached from Hungary.

Source: <https://dailynewshungary.com/quotes-about-the-treaty-of-trianon-by-famous-non-hungarian-people/>



A.5: Territorial revisions of Hungary between 1938-1941 with the color green showing Hungary after the Treaty of Trianon.

Source: <https://hu.pinterest.com/pin/485333297350747124/>