

CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

# THE EVOLUTION OF ETHNOPOLITICAL PARTIES

*A comparative study of ethno-political representation of the German-speaking minority in  
South Tyrol, Italy and the Hungarian-speaking minority in Slovakia*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. ETHNOPOLITICAL PARTIES: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ...</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. SOUTH TYROLEAN PEOPLE’S PARTY .....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	13
2.2 REGIME CHANGE FACTORS .....	15
2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS .....	17
2.3.1 Economic and Sociocultural Factors .....	17
2.3.2 International Factors .....	19
2.3.3 Kin State Factors	24
.....	
2.3.4 Political Factors .....	27
2.4 INTERNAL FACTORS .....	30
<b>3. HUNGARIAN PARTIES IN SLOVAKIA .....</b>	<b>34</b>
3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	34
3.2 REGIME CHANGE FACTORS .....	36
3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS .....	39
3.3.1 Economic and Sociocultural Factors .....	39
3.3.2 International Factors .....	42
3.3.3 Kin State Factors	44
.....	
3.3.4 Political Factors .....	47
3.4 INTERNAL FACTORS .....	49
<b>4. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>52</b>

**Bibliography** ..... 56

## Preface

Parties based on ethnopolitical appeals occur in both Western and Eastern Europe. However, it was the salience of the ethnic cleavage in post-Communist Eastern Europe that renewed the interest in ethnopolitics, which seemed to be neglected due to the “static interpretation of the ‘freezing’ of party systems around settled cleavages of region, class and religious denomination.”<sup>1</sup> The examples of the South Tyrolean People’s Party (*Südtiroler Volkspartei*, SVP) representing the German- and Ladin-speaking minority<sup>2</sup> in Italy and the Hungarian parties in Slovakia confirm the durability and success of ethnopolitics in both Western and Eastern Europe.

The thesis analyses and compares the evolution of these two ethnopolitical parties according to the theoretical framework developed by Ishiyama and Breuning.<sup>3</sup> In the book *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, they set themselves three goals: “(1) outline the shape and intensity of ethnic resentments that are at the heart of each case; (2) explain how in each case political leaders and parties choose to play into these resentments; and (3) straddle the traditional division between Western and Eastern Europe.”<sup>4</sup> This thesis focuses on explaining the different evolutions with respect to the coherence and unity of the two ethnopolitical parties. It attempts to refine the theoretical framework and challenge some of the conclusions presented in the book

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<sup>1</sup> Huri Türsan, “Ethnoregionalist Parties as Ethnic Entrepreneurs,” in *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*, ed. Lieven de Winter and Huri Türsan (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The history of the South Tyrolean Ladins (the remnants of the original Rhaetian population) is closely linked to the Habsburg empire, which adopted a relatively tolerant position towards the Ladin community. After the separation of South Tyrol from Austria the Italian Government wanted to Italianise this minority too. This might explain why the Ladins, despite the Romance roots of their language, prefer to associate with the German-speaking group in South Tyrol, which was also under the threat of losing its identity. See Anton Holzer and Barbara Schwegler, “The Südtiroler Volkspartei: A Hegemonic Ethnoregionalist Party,” in *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*, ed. Lieven de Winter and Huri Türsan (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> John T. Ishiyama and Marijke Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. x.

This study is based on a comparative analysis of the two cases and its aim is to explore the different evolution of the two ethnopolitical parties. The common ground for the comparative analysis is the theoretical framework, which is critically reviewed in the first theoretical chapter. This is followed by two empirical chapters that apply the framework to the two cases. The conclusion presents hypotheses about the development of ethnopolitical parties in a comparative perspective.

## CHAPTER 1

### ETHNOPOLITICAL PARTIES: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ishiyama and Breuning compare and explain the activities of ethnopositional parties representing ethnic minorities in six European countries. The individual case studies are divided into three sets of paired comparisons that are supposed to represent “the various types of ethnically bipolar countries.”<sup>5</sup> The first set compares the East European cases of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms representing the Turkish minority in Bulgaria with the Hungarian parties in Slovakia; the second set compares the Russophone parties in Estonia and Latvia; and the third set compares the West European cases of the *Volksumie* and the *Vlaams Blok* representing the Flemish population in Belgium with the Scottish National Party and *Plaid Cymru* in the United Kingdom.

The selection of both countries and ethnopositional parties representing the ethnic minorities presents two serious problems. On the one hand, the authors claim that all of the national cases “have ethnic kin states across their border.”<sup>6</sup> However, this does not apply to the case of the United Kingdom. The Scottish and the Welsh minority groups do not have a proper ethnic kin state across the border, although the authors attempt to establish a link between these two groups and the Republic of Ireland by referring to the common Gaelic language (which is anyway spoken only by a minority of the Scots and the Welsh).<sup>7</sup> Although the mentioned ethnic groups are historically and linguistically close to each other, they do not form the same ethnic group (as other cases included in the book) and therefore the neighbouring country cannot be labelled as an ethnic kin state.

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<sup>5</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> In this case, the selection of ethnopositional parties representing the Irish minority group in the Northern Ireland would have been more appropriate, but would have brought other obvious problems.

The second problem is related to the selection of the ethnopolitical parties. The authors first define the ethnopolitics as encompassing “the aspirations short of the creation of a nation-state and the congruence of culture with polity.”<sup>8</sup> Despite this clear definition, the chapter on the Flemish ethnopolitical parties includes the *Vlaams Blok*, a party that calls the Belgian state “a historical error”<sup>9</sup> and aims at transforming Flanders into an independent state.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the selection of the West European cases, the absence of the SVP representing the German minority in Italy<sup>11</sup> is surprising because of several reasons. First of all, this case fits the criteria established by Ishiyama and Breuning better than the West European cases actually included in their book. It represents a divided state “where there are at least two large, geographically concentrated ethnic groups in competition with each other.”<sup>12</sup> The SVP fits also the other two conditions for inclusion: existence of a parliamentary system (thus controlling for the effects of presidentialism) and the already mentioned existence of an ethnic kin state across the border. The SVP also fits the definition of the ethnopolitical party, since its programme has not questioned the territorial integrity of the Italian state, but aims to “protect the South Tyrolean ethnic group within the Italian state.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the SVP is Europe’s most successful ethnopolitical party in terms of “electoral performance, office-holding and policy achievement.”<sup>14</sup>

Ishiyama and Breuning deal with ethnopolitics at a theoretical level in the introductory chapter ‘Ethnopolitics and Ethnic Parties.’ First they draw a distinction between nationalism and ethnopolitics, putting the dividing line at the call for the creation of a nation-

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<sup>8</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>11</sup> The SVP in South Tyrol represents also the Ladin minority. However, this paper focuses on the issues related to the dominant German minority.

<sup>12</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Antony Evelyn Alcock, *The History of the South Tyrol Question* (Geneva: Graduate School of International Studies, 1970), p. 320.

state. For the purposes of the book, they define the ethnopolitical party as “an organisation that purports to represent a particular ethnic group and seeks political power to impinge on the relative power or position of ethnic groups.”<sup>15</sup> To explain the evolution of ethnopolitical parties they develop a comprehensive theoretical framework of factors affecting their evolution. Three types of explanatory factors affecting the behaviour of ethnopolitical parties are: “(1) those that focus on the effects of the regime change; (2) those that emphasise the features of existing systems; and (3) those that concentrate on the internal characteristics of the parties.”<sup>16</sup>

*The regime change factor* represents a new political opportunity that occurs after the change of the regime, especially during a transition from authoritarian rule. Ishiyama and Breuning outline two opposing trends resulting from regime change and democratisation. On the one hand, the introduction of democratic competition and extended political participation in ethnically divided societies often leads to a disintegrative ethnic conflict. On the other hand, they claim that “even when the opportunities presented by such a regime change push the ethnopolitical party into making extreme demands, these demands may be tempered over time, especially if democratic transition is successful and there is a period of democratic consolidation.”<sup>17</sup>

The authors identify four kinds of *environmental factors*, i.e. factors that emphasise the features of existing systems. These include economic, sociocultural, international, and political factors. They claim that the *economic factors* are most commonly cited as being associated with increased ethnic tensions. This development might be caused by differential economic performance among groups that may increase resentments in a segmented society.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Türsan, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 8.



The framework identifies two types of *sociocultural factors*. The first type is related to certain sociocultural features of a country that aggravate the level of resentment resulting from political and economic factors. The second type is based on the structure of group relations. There are ‘ranked systems,’ in which social class and ethnic origin coincide and ‘unranked systems,’ in which various ethnic groups coexist, each internally stratified.<sup>19</sup>

The *international factors* mentioned by Ishiyama and Breuning include “the tendencies within the region toward political integration or its inverse, disintegration.”<sup>20</sup> The other dimension of the international factors is the type of cross-border ethnic ties between the minority group and its ethnic kin state.

The *political factors* include the effects of institutional factors on politics in ethnically divided societies, particularly the effects of representational mechanisms (such as the electoral law and federalism) and the structure of the constitutional order (presidential versus parliamentary systems). The debate over various representational mechanisms that determine political stability in ethnically divided democracies has two dimensions. The first dimension deals with the scope of representation (the extent to which representation is commensurate with political divisions in society); and the second one with the quality of representation (the primary units to be represented).<sup>21</sup>

The *internal factors* are based on the assumption that internal characteristics of the party determine its behaviour. These factors include the impact and working of different kinds of ethnic elites that dominate the ethnopolitical movements. The authors distinguish among political (politicians, civil servants, military), cultural (writers, clergy) and economic elites (businessmen and trade union leaders). The nature of the ethnic leaders and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 10-11.

organisational structures have an important role in the development of the ethnopolitical parties too.<sup>22</sup>

This study applies the aforementioned theoretical framework to the cases of the SVP representing the German minority in Italy and the Hungarian parties in Slovakia. However, the aim of this study is not only to apply the theoretical framework used by Ishiyama and Breuning to a different pair of cases, but also to refine it, to challenge some of the conclusions presented in the book, and to correct few factual errors that appear in the chapter on the Hungarian parties in Slovakia.

This study treats economic and sociocultural factors as one group due to their mutual interdependence. The differential economic performance of ethnic groups (economic factor) determines the structure of group relations and results into the establishment of ranked systems or the reinforcement of gaps between groups ‘locked’ in already existing ranked systems (sociocultural factors). Moreover, there is a mutually reinforcing effect, because the existence of historically established ranked systems promotes differential economic performance of the ethnic groups ‘locked’ in these ranked systems. The other aspect of the sociocultural factors, namely “the existence of fewer groups [that] tends to heighten resentments generated by developmental inequalities”<sup>23</sup> is directly related to the differential economic performance of these groups through the developmental inequalities that belong to economic factors.

The refinement of the theoretical framework of factors affecting the evolution of ethnopolitical parties suggested in this study focuses on environmental factors. This study suggests that it is necessary to refine what Ishiyama and Breuning call the international factors to take more into account the attitude and relations of the political parties in the ethnic kin state towards the ethnopolitical party in the neighbouring state. It seems that these

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<sup>22</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 13-15.

relations have a significant influence on the evolution of the ethnopolitical party. In particular, the consensus or conflict within the political system of the ethnic kin state over the policy towards the ethnic minority across the border has an impact on the unity of the ethnopolitical representation of the minority group.

Therefore, this study divides the international factors into two groups of factors – *international factors* dealing with broader influence of international arena on the ethnopolitical party and impact of integrative and disintegrative tendencies within the region and *kin state factors*, which are related to the internal political developments within the ethnic kin state. This split is not a mere division of the international factors as defined by Ishiyama and Breuning, because the new category of kin state factors does not deal with general ‘cross border ethnic ties,’ but goes to a different level examining the treatment of the ethnic minority question in the ethnic kin state and the impact of the political parties in the kin state on the development of the ethnopolitical party across the border.

The conclusion challenged by this study is the one about ethnopolitical party coherence and the effects of representational mechanisms. Ishiyama and Breuning claim in their search for a common denominator explaining the development and behaviour of the ethnopolitical parties in both the Western and Eastern European cases that “the most compelling set of factors relates to the form of representation.”<sup>24</sup> This conclusion is almost exclusively based on the comparison of the Belgian and British representational mechanisms and their effects on the ethnopolitical parties. However, Ishiyama and Breuning do also note that “representation alone does not provide a sufficient explanation for ethnopolitical party behaviour.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 8-9.

<sup>24</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 178.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

The Belgian political system of proportional representation makes it relatively easy for a new party to enter the parliament, thus it provides little incentive for dissatisfied party members to remain within that party rather than breaking away and forming a new group. According to Ishiyama and Breuning's interpretation, there was minimal or almost no incentive for the Flemish nationalists to settle their differences and stick together within one ethnopolitical party. The structure of political opportunity facilitated a successful break-away from the *Volkspartij* and the establishment of the *Vlaams Blok*.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the British political system of majoritarian representation makes the entry of a new political party into the parliament more difficult and therefore promotes the unity of the party.<sup>27</sup>

The selection of the two particular cases is justified by a number of similar factors relevant to the status of both ethnic minorities and the development of their political representation through ethnopolitical parties. Moreover, a direct comparison of an ethnopolitical party from Western Europe with one from Eastern Europe is in line with the intentions of Ishiyama and Breuning to "straddle the traditional division between Western and Eastern Europe."<sup>28</sup> These two parties exhibit more similarities than the parties selected by the authors, who also admit that the West European cases of Belgium and Great Britain exhibit "notable differences from the Eastern European and Baltic cases."<sup>29</sup>

This study uses the comparative methodology and applies the most similar systems design (MSSD) to the analysis of the evolution of two ethnopolitical parties. The use of the MSSD is justified by a number of relevant similarities of the two cases that may seem apparently different due to the West/East divide. Use of the MSSD is based on the assumption that the difference between Western and Eastern Europe has not had any

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>27</sup> However, the impact of representational mechanism in the UK did not have the same impact on the extreme right, which has remained heavily fragmented.

<sup>28</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. x.

<sup>29</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 176.

influence upon the formation of either of the discussed ethnopolitical parties. The similarities concern the ethnic minority itself, its position in the political and party system of the country, status of ethnopolitical party, history and geographical location of the minority.

The first and foremost similarity of both cases is that the ethnic cleavage is a durable dimension in both political systems and has been strongly reflected in electoral results. This factor has been strongly related to the second similarity, i.e. ethnopolitical parties have a capability to gain the votes of almost the whole ethnic minority electorate. Therefore, they politically represent a vast majority of the ethnic minority population (around 80-90 per cent). This similarity is related to the main puzzle of the thesis, which is to explain the different evolution of the ethnopolitical parties in both cases. Why has the German minority in South Tyrol been represented by one hegemonic ethnopolitical party, while the Hungarians in southern Slovakia have been represented by three competing ethnopolitical parties?

Other similarities of the two cases include the political system. In both countries, the ethnopolitical parties have relatively easy access to the political system either due to the suitable decentralisation of the state (Italy), or through the proportional representation system (Slovakia). Although, in the case of Slovakia the access to the political system is made more difficult by the five per cent electoral threshold.

The representational arrangements partially compensate for the difference of the relative size of the two ethnic minorities versus the majority nation. In Italy, the decentralisation of the state and its territorial division provide for the possibility that the SVP can dominate the autonomous province of South Tyrol. In Slovakia, the ethnopolitical representation of Hungarians gains importance in the political system at the national level due to the relative size of the minority. More generally speaking, the period of establishment of both ethnopolitical parties coincides with the transition from a totalitarian one-party regime to a pluralistic multi-party system.

There is a similarity related to the status of the ethnic minorities themselves, because both ethnic minorities are territorially compact and geographically located along the border with the titular nation upon which they can (and do) draw external support.

The history of both minorities shows similar features as well, since both minorities were suppressed in their recent histories under authoritarian regimes (Fascism in Italy/Communism in Slovakia). Another historical similarity is that both ethnic minorities were historically an integral part of the neighbouring ethnic kin state (Austria/Hungary) and the current borders dividing them were established only after the end of the First World War. Moreover, in the past, Austria and Hungary dominated the present ethnic majority (Slovakia) or a substantial part of it (Northern Italy). The issue of history is strongly linked with historical resentments and perception of grievances on the side of the ethnic minority group towards the ethnic majority group, and vice versa. Grievances and resentments are similarly perceived by minority and majority group in both cases.

However, there are also several differences. The size and proportion of the ethnic minority population in both countries is different (approximately 300 000 Germans in 57 million Italy versus around 600 000 Hungarians in 5 million Slovakia). The relative size influences the position of ethnic minority and its political representation versus the majority nation.

## CHAPTER 2

### SOUTH TYROLEAN PEOPLE'S PARTY

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

South Tyrol, together with the province of Trento, formed part of the Habsburg monarchy for more than 600 years and was separated from the newly founded Republic of Austria in 1919, under the Treaty of St. Germain.<sup>30</sup> The Italian government during the negotiations with the Triple Entente demanded “the Cisalpine Tyrol, the geographical and natural frontier (the Brenner)...”<sup>31</sup> However, the geographical or natural frontier was not the only basis for Italy to claim South Tyrol.

According to Mazzini's calculations the area south of Brenner (South Tyrol combined with the province of Trento) had an overwhelming Italian majority of 420,000 out of 600,000 inhabitants.<sup>32</sup> The Austrians contested the coupling of South Tyrol with the Trentino.<sup>33</sup> However, the ethnic considerations were overruled by the strategic and military grounds and the Peace Conference at St. Germain transferred the whole Cisalpine area of the former Austrian Empire to the Kingdom of Italy.

After its inclusion into the Italian state, all the German political parties in South Tyrol united to form the German Association (*Deutscher Verband*), which pursued the goal of creating an autonomous province of South Tyrol within Italy. The autonomistic programme of the political representation of the German-speaking South Tyroleans was very significant,

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<sup>30</sup> Federal Chancellery, Federal Press Service, *Autonomy for South Tyrol: A Model for Europe?* (Vienna: Federal Chancellery, 1997-99), <http://www.austria.gv.at/e/service/presfeature/suedtirol.htm>.

<sup>31</sup> A. Salandra, *Italy and the Great War* (London: Arnold, 1932), quoted in Alcock, p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> M. Toscano, *Storia Diplomatica della Questione dell'Alto Adige* (Diplomatic history of the South Tyrol question) (Bari: Laterza, 1967), p. 26-28, quoted in Alcock, p. 20-21.

<sup>33</sup> The Austrian estimate for the population of South Tyrol was 251,000; out of which 221,000 were German, 6,950 Italian (some 3%), and 9,350 Ladins. (A. Leidmaier, *Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft in Südtirol* (Population and industry in South Tyrol) (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1958), p. 362-363, quoted in Alcock, p. 15.)

because it became the cornerstone of the South Tyrolean policy: autonomy in a form sufficient to maintain the German ethnic character of South Tyrol as compensation for the loss of the right to self-determination.<sup>34</sup>

In October 1922 Mussolini became Italian Prime Minister and a policy of forced Italianisation of South Tyrol started.<sup>35</sup> In 1923, a programme for denationalisation was approved by Mussolini and the Fascist Grand Council.<sup>36</sup> The industrialisation of predominantly rural South Tyrolean economy became an important tool of the Italianisation. This policy resulted from a theory formulated by Mussolini that “in a bilingual zone the language spoken by the economically active part of the population would gain the ascendancy over the language spoken by the passive party.”<sup>37</sup> The result of governmental policies was that the Italian population dominated the industrial and administrative sectors centred in towns, while the German-speaking South Tyroleans remained based on the land dominating the agrarian sector.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the ethnic division was reinforced by a social, economic and territorial division.

The situation of South Tyrol grew more complicated after Hitler’s accession to power in Germany in 1933, because his regime was dedicated to the overthrow of the Versailles system and to the defence of German minorities abroad. However, due to the crucial importance of the strategic partnership with Italy, Germany was going to make an exception to her policy precisely in South Tyrol. The solution to the South Tyrol question was

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<sup>34</sup> Alcock, p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 31-33; Holzer and Schwegler, p. 160; Jonathan Fox, “Tyroleans in Italy,” in *Minorities at Risk* (April 1995): <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/mar/italstyr.htm>; Giuliana Andreotti, *Euroregione Tirolo: un nuovo modo di pensare l’Europa* (Euroregion Tyrol: A new way of thinking Europe) (Trento: Edizioni Colibri, 1995), p. 84.

<sup>36</sup> The programme called, among other things, for the appointment of Italians as clerks; Italian to be the official language; dissolution of the German Association; suppression of the name *Südtirol* and its replacement with *Alto Adige* or its German equivalent *Oberetsch* (Upper Adige); the encouragement of Italians to immigrate into the area, Italianisation of German place names and personal names. (Speech of Senator Tolomei at the Bolzano Theatre, 15 July 1923, quoted in Alcock, p. 33-34.)

<sup>37</sup> B. Bussolini, *Il Trentino veduto da un socialista* (The Trentino seen by a Socialist) (Florence: Quattrini, 1911), p. 38, quoted in Alcock, p. 40.

<sup>38</sup> Alcock, p. 44.



voluntary transfer of the population.<sup>39</sup> The total number of population entitled to opt was almost 267,000; out of which from 77 to 81 per cent opted for Germany, and between 19 to 23 per cent opted for Italy (*Dableibers*).<sup>40</sup> Due to the Second World War, most of the inhabitants that ‘opted’ for Germany did not emigrate. The war years were concluded by a short-lived period of anti-Italian revenge during the German occupation of South Tyrol (1943-1945).<sup>41</sup>

### REGIME CHANGE FACTORS

After the end of the Second World War, following the collapse of both Nazism and Fascism, a new political opportunity for the German-speaking population appeared. The outcome of the regime change and appearance of a new political opportunity during the transition to democracy was the foundation of the SVP in May 1945. The party was established by the anti-National Socialists or non-National Socialists who were most frequently the *Dableibers*.<sup>42</sup> Since its foundation in 1945, the party “has occupied a hegemonic power position within the political system in South Tyrol.”<sup>43</sup> Table 1. shows the electoral results of the SVP in provincial elections (percentage of votes and number of seats). Table 2. shows the ethnic composition of the South Tyrolean population according to the results of censuses.

Table 1. Electoral results of the SVP in provincial elections.

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<sup>39</sup> As Göring expressed himself: “the South Tyroleans should be put before the choice of returning to Germany (naturally getting rid of all their possessions in South Tyrol) or renouncing forever to be considered Germans.” (M. Toscano, *Pagine di storia diplomatica contemporanea* (Pages of the contemporary diplomatic history) (Milan: Giuffrè, 1963), p. 179, quoted in Alcock, p. 50.)

<sup>40</sup> Alcock, p. 56-57.

<sup>41</sup> Günther Pallaver, “South Tyrol, the ‘Package’ and its Ratification,” *Politics and Society in Germany, Austria and Switzerland*, vol. 2, no. 1/2 (Spring 1990): p. 71.

<sup>42</sup> Claus Gatterer, “Südtirol und der Rechtsextremismus,” (South Tyrol and the extreme right) in *Rechtsextremismus in Österreich nach 1945* (Extreme right in Austria after 1945), Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes (The documentation archives of the Austrian Resistance) (Wien:

Year (Seats)	1948 (20)	1952 (22)	1956 (22)	1960 (22)	1964 (25)	1968 (25)	1973 (34)	1978 (34)	1983 (35)	1988 (35)	1993 (35)	1998 (35)
% (Seats)	67.6 (13)	64.8 (15)	64.4 (15)	63.9 (15)	61.3 (16)	60.7 (16)	56.4 (20)	61.3 (21)	59.4 (22)	60.4 (22)	52.0 (19)	56.6 (21)

Sources: Holzer and Schwegler, p. 157 (1948-93); Südtiroler Landtag, *Regional- und Landtagswahlen '98* (Bozen: Südtiroler Informatik, 1998): [http://www.provinz.bz.it/vote/bz/landtag\\_d.htm](http://www.provinz.bz.it/vote/bz/landtag_d.htm) (1998).

Table 2. Ethnic composition of South Tyrol.

Year	Germans (per cent)	Italians (per cent)	Ladins per cent)	Others (per cent)
1910	89.0	2.9	3.8	4.3
1921	75.9	10.6	3.9	9.6
1961	62.2	34.3	3.4	0.1
1971	62.9	33.3	3.7	0.1
1981	64.9	28.7	4.1	2.2
1991	65.3	26.5	4.2	4.0

Source: Holzer and Schwegler, p. 162.

Particular regime change factors favoured the establishment and development of only one ethnopolitical representative of Germans in South Tyrol. These factors were strongly related to the high level of historical resentments and to the particular situation of South Tyrol after the Second World War. There were two very important problem areas connected with the regime change: the question of citizenship of those Germans that opted for Germany and the loyalty of the whole German minority group towards the Italian state. Both issues were a direct threat to the very existence and survival of the German element in South Tyrol. German minorities were expelled from their homes in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Baltic states. The perception of threat worked as a factor contributing to the homogeneity of the German element in South Tyrol. The traumatic experiences of the preceding historic period determined the political identity of the SVP.<sup>44</sup> The ethnicised cultural cleavages between the ethnic groups were fostered by “the enduring discrimination of the German population.”<sup>45</sup>

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Österreichisches Bundesverlag, 1981), p. 256.

<sup>43</sup> Holzer and Schwegler, p. 156.

<sup>44</sup> Schmidtke, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Thus, the particular circumstances during the formation of the SVP fostered its self-reflection as a “conservative party uniting all classes, and claiming exclusive representation of the German- and Ladin-speaking population.”<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the unified character of the South Tyrolean political representation had already a precedent in the German Association between the two world wars, which was able to “unify the Catholic-conservative camp and secure their influence under the Fascist regime because of its close ties with the Catholic Church.”<sup>47</sup> A remark in the SVP’s newspaper *Dolomiten*, illustrates the importance of unity of the German minority in South Tyrol: “we do not want to be socialists, communists, liberals, or christian democrats, we want above all to be Tyrolean.”<sup>48</sup>

## **ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS**

### **Economic and Sociocultural Factors**

Economic factors contributed to the unity of the SVP too, because the German population of South Tyrol was not only predominantly involved in agriculture, and thus constituted a relatively homogenous socioeconomic group, but this socioeconomic division was reinforced by the distinction between German dominated villages and alpine rural areas and Italian dominated towns of South Tyrol, especially Bolzano.<sup>49</sup> Another factor contributing to the reinforcement of intra-ethnic solidarity was that the differentiation between Italian dominated towns and German dominated rural areas was achieved by a

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<sup>46</sup> Holzer and Schwegler, p. 160.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>48</sup> Alcock, p. 197.

<sup>49</sup> The percentage of agrarian population in South Tyrol in 1960 was 42%. However, among the German-speaking element it constituted 70% (Alcock, p. 361). In 1961, the German made up 95.3% of the employment in the agrarian sector. Italians dominated the public administration (75.4%), and were overrepresented in the industrial sector (49.6%) (Alcock, p. 363).

process of industrialisation during Fascism and by emigration of urban German population<sup>50</sup> and immigration of Italians mostly from the less developed southern Italy.

The SVP strongly opposed the industrial zone of Bolzano. The decision to establish the Industrial Zone of Bolzano was linked with the goal of increasing the number of Italians in South Tyrol during Fascism. However, Italians saw it as the “motor of the industrial economy”, while the SVP accused the zone for being “anti-economic ... merely to denationalise the South Tyroleans.”<sup>51</sup> The economic programme of the SVP was based on the support of certain branches of the handicraft sector, setting up ‘indigenous’ firms in the valleys, rationalisation of agricultural sector, and expansion of tourist sector.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the structure of group relations in South Tyrol resembled to certain degree that of ‘ranked systems,’ in which social class and ethnic origin coincide. The internal stratification of the German-speaking South Tyroleans was not sufficiently developed due to the predominance of rural and agrarian element. The different social background of two ethnic groups was reflected also by the average income. There was a significant disparity between the average income of Italians and Germans in South Tyrol.<sup>53</sup>

The socioeconomic inferiority of German-speaking element in South Tyrol resulted in its underrepresentation in the overall number of pupils in South Tyrol. Although the Italian ethnic group formed only about one third of the population of South Tyrol, it had many hundreds more students than the German ethnic group.<sup>54</sup> The SVP realised the drastic nature

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<sup>50</sup> The social and economic background of those that emigrated played an important role. It was estimated that some 67% of the South Tyroleans employed in industrial and handicraft activities departed, but only 9% of those employed in agriculture. The departures were particularly large from the towns (Alcock, p. 58.).

<sup>51</sup> Alcock, p. 262.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>53</sup> The annual per capita income per active member of population in 1961 was 943,370 lire for the Italian and 744,199 for the German. The disparity amounted to more than 20% (Alcock, p. 265).

<sup>54</sup> In 1950-51, the figures were 1,522 and 2,823 for Germans and Italians respectively` in 1960-61, the disparity was 3,893 to 4,721. (Alcock, p. 257).

of the educational backwardness of the German minority and therefore urged that “everything be done to raise the average education of the South Tyroleans.”<sup>55</sup>

The demographic and socio-economic situation in South Tyrol promoted the ethnic mobilisation and perception of ethnic solidarity. Due to the high level of socio-economic homogeneity, the SVP was established and functioned as the sole representative of the German minority group struggling both for its minority rights and for its social and economic interests. This was reflected by the fact that the SVP became an all-class party and its electorate has been characterised “by a high degree of inter-class voting.”<sup>56</sup>

### **International Factors**

International factors were very important in shaping the evolution of the SVP and in determining the developments of the South Tyrol question as such. The extraordinary importance of the international factors was due to the fact that the South Tyrol issue was legally given an international dimension after the end of the Second World War, in the course of the Paris Peace Conference in 1946. The Paris Agreement, concluded by Italian and Austrian Foreign Ministers De Gasperi and Gruber, was an integral part of the Italian Peace Treaty.<sup>57</sup>

The SVP delegation at the conference worked in the position of the advisers of the Austrian government that had the instructions to do its best to have the ethnic rights of the South Tyroleans guaranteed.<sup>58</sup> The policy of the SVP aimed at recognition of the right to self-determination of South Tyrol and reunification of South Tyrol with North Tyrol and Austria.

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<sup>55</sup> Alcock, p. 259.

<sup>56</sup> Holzer and Schwegler, p. 166.

<sup>57</sup> Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano – Alto Adige (Autonomous Province of Bolzano – Upper Adige), *L'Autonomia dell'Alto Adige* (Autonomy of South Tyrol) (Bolzano: Giunta provinciale di Bolzano, 1994), p. 12.

<sup>58</sup> Karl Gruber, *Between Liberation and Liberty* (London: Deutsch, 1955), p. 59, quoted in Alcock, p. 111.

Part of this policy was a request to have an opportunity for a plebiscite in the sense of Atlantic Charter. By making the highest possible claim – a claim to self-determination and a plebiscite – the SVP did not have to face a difficult decision about co-operating with the Italian government and about the settlement of the South Tyrol issue within the Italian state. Therefore, the ethnopolitical elite and its South Tyrolean constituency in the ethnically polarised post-war South Tyrol remained highly united behind the essential claim to self-determination and did not have to face the internal struggle over various options of remaining within the Italian state.

However, the Great Powers decided that South Tyrol was definitely to remain within Italy.<sup>59</sup> The decision was mainly due to the strategic value of the Brenner Pass and on the economic grounds.<sup>60</sup> After the decision of the Great Powers, the SVP dropped the self-determination claim from its programme and replaced it by a quest of achieving the autonomy.<sup>61</sup> This decision did not lead to a split in the SVP, because in the context of the starting Cold War and persisting fears of pan-Germanism, it was not realistic to ask for more.

The SVP, as a party claiming to represent the whole ethnic minority group of South Tyrol, had the only realistic choice of pursuing a wide-ranging autonomy within Italy. The realistic approach to the policy formulation was best expressed by the SVP representatives at a meeting during the Paris Peace Conference, when they said that “although self-determination was what had been sought, the Agreement was the best obtainable solution under the circumstances.”<sup>62</sup> Actually, the choice for the SVP was either agreement or nothing. The Austrian Foreign Minister Gruber stated too that “the only possibility was to get an

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<sup>59</sup> Giuliana Andreotti, *Euroregione Tirolo: un nuovo modo di pensare l'Europa* (Euroregion Tyrol: A new way of thinking Europe) (Trento: Edizioni Colibri, 1995), p. 92.

<sup>60</sup> Electrical power plants in South Tyrol have been extremely important for the industry of North Italy.

<sup>61</sup> M. Toscano, *Storia Diplomatica della Questione dell'Alto Adige* (Diplomatic history of the South Tyrol question) (Bari: Laterza, 1967), p. 322, quoted in Alcock, p. 112.

<sup>62</sup> Alcock, p. 135.

autonomy for the South Tyroleans within the Italian state.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, the fact that the achievement of self-determination became impossible, which was confirmed even by the closest and most natural ally of the South Tyroleans, may explain that the switch of the goal from self-determination to autonomy did not lead to the split in the SVP. Moreover, the SVP has never renounced the right to self-determination for South Tyroleans, therefore could not easily be accused of betraying the interests of South Tyroleans. The position of the Austrian government regarding South Tyrol was similar, stating that “the Agreement was the best solution possible under the circumstances, and that it did not mean that Austria has renounced South Tyrol.”<sup>64</sup> This equivocal position also fostered the unity of the SVP, because it appeased the radicals within the party, who were not forced to renounce the self-determination claim and could not blame the party leadership for doing so. The party leadership stated that “although the right to self-determination had been denied them, this right is eternal, and could not be taken away.”<sup>65</sup> However, the party was ready to stand by the Agreement and implement it.

The Paris Agreement stated that the “German-speaking inhabitants of the Bolzano Province and of the neighbouring bilingual townships of Trento Province will be assured a complete equality of rights with the Italian-speaking inhabitants, within the framework of special provisions to safeguard the ethnic character and the cultural and economic development of the German-speaking element.”<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Austria became an internationally recognised protecting power.<sup>67</sup> Italy was supposed to grant South Tyrol an autonomy statute that would be the tool of the protection of its ethnic minority. However, the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>65</sup> *Dolomiten*, 5 October 1946, quoted in Alcock, p. 148.

<sup>66</sup> Official Text of the Paris Agreement, *Il Nuovo Statuto di Autonomia* (The new statute of autonomy) (Bolzano: Giunta provinciale di Bolzano, 1989), p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> Federal Chancellery, Federal Press Service, *Autonomy for South Tyrol: A Model for Europe?* (Vienna: Federal Chancellery, 1997-99), <http://www.austria.gv.at/e/service/presfeature/suedtirol.htm>.; Giuliana Andreotti, *Euroregione Tirolo: un nuovo modo di pensare l'Europa* (Euroregion Tyrol: A new way of thinking

drafting of the autonomy statute marked the beginning of a lengthy struggle of the SVP for more autonomy and a higher level of self-government. One of the main reasons for this struggle was the Italian decision to couple South Tyrol with the province of Trento in a single autonomous region. However, this region had an Italian majority. Moreover, the transfer of competencies to the region did not fulfil the expectations of the SVP.

The international dimension of the South Tyrol question became again evident in 1960 when Austria submitted the South Tyrol question to the General Assembly of the United Nations. This decision followed unsuccessful negotiations between the Italian government and both the SVP and the Austrian government on a new autonomy statute. The Austrian government claimed that “the only real fulfilment of the Paris Agreement was the 1958 SVP draft autonomy statute.”<sup>68</sup> This draft provided for wide-ranging autonomy for South Tyrol alone (i.e. the province of Bolzano). The General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution “[urging] the two parties concerned to resume negotiations with a view to finding a solution.”<sup>69</sup>

The lengthy negotiations between the Italian government, the SVP and the Austrian government continued until 1969. The Austrian position was “that it would be impossible to accept any solution not accepted by the South Tyroleans.”<sup>70</sup> In summer 1969, the negotiations reached a decisive phase and by the end of 1969 an agreement was reached on a new statute of autonomy, with an operational calendar governing its enactment and implementation. The new, second statute of autonomy granted far reaching powers of self-government to South Tyrol.<sup>71</sup> The statute was approved by the SVP Congress and subsequently by the Austrian

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Europe) (Trento: Edizioni Colibri, 1995), p. 98.

<sup>68</sup> Alcock, p. 329.

<sup>69</sup> UN Document A/SPC/L.50 of 27 October 1960, in Alcock, p. 24-25. General Assembly of the United Nations

<sup>70</sup> Alcock, p. 433.

<sup>71</sup> Federal Chancellery, Federal Press Service, *Autonomy for South Tyrol: A Model for Europe?* (Vienna: Federal Chancellery, 1997-99), <http://www.austria.gv.at/e/service/presfeature/suedtirol.htm>.



Parliament.<sup>72</sup> In 1992, 30 years after its adoption, the last measures of the new autonomy statute were implemented and the SVP Congress and the Austrian government declared the implementation of the autonomy package as completed and the South Tyrol issue to be formally closed at the international level.<sup>73</sup> However, the Austrian government does not forget to remind that “ the internationally recognised protecting power of Austria remained as before, and there has been no renunciation of the right of self-determination.”<sup>74</sup>

The relations between the Italian government, the Austrian government and the SVP must be seen also in the context of Austrian attempts to join the European Community (EC). Austria was interested in ending the international quarrel with Italy in order to avoid the fear of a veto from Italy.<sup>75</sup> The Austrian interest in ending the dispute worked as a moderating pressure on the radical wing of the SVP to constructively continue the negotiations about the implementation of autonomy, rather than making new radical demands.

## **Kin State Factors**

There are several indications that Austrian domestic politics directly influenced the evolution of the SVP. The SVP was formed in 1945 and in the same year, an all-party coalition government was formed in Austria. Austria has been classified as a consensual country on the basis of its principle of sharing, dispersing, and limiting power.<sup>76</sup> It appears that the features of Austrian consociational domestic politics, involving the two main parties,

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<sup>72</sup> Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano – Alto Adige (Autonomous Province of Bolzano – Upper Adige), *L'Autonomia dell'Alto Adige* (Autonomy of South Tyrol) (Bolzano: Giunta provinciale di Bolzano, 1994), p. 12.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>74</sup> Federal Chancellery, Federal Press Service, *Autonomy for South Tyrol: A Model for Europe?* (Vienna: Federal Chancellery, 1997-99), <http://www.austria.gv.at/e/service/presfeature/suedtirol.htm>.

<sup>75</sup> Pallaver (1990), p. 76.

<sup>76</sup> Arend Lijphart, “Democratic Political Systems: Types, Cases, Causes, and Consequences,” *Journal of*

the Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP*) and the Socialist Party of Austria (*Sozialistische Partei Österreichs, SPÖ*), had an impact on the evolution of the SVP.

Austria had a 'Grand Coalition' of these two parties from 1945 to 1966. The ÖVP and the SPÖ represented two large segments of the Austrian society and their parliamentary support exceeded 80 per cent during this period.<sup>77</sup> The importance of the South Tyrol issue in Austrian domestic politics was manifested when Austria became independent after 10 years of occupation in May 1955. After signing the State Treaty and accepting the neutrality status, Foreign Minister Figl declared that "the State Treaty and neutrality status did not prevent Austria from concerning herself with South Tyrol."<sup>78</sup>

Initially, the Austrian policy towards the SVP and the South Tyrol issue was formed by the ÖVP, the dominant party of the Austrian government, because the SPÖ committed itself to avoid the question in its press and to keep a low profile on the issue.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, there has been a certain relationship (*Verwandtschaft*) between the SVP and the ÖVP from the very beginning of the former's existence.<sup>80</sup> This resulted from the fact that these parties represent a rather conservative, mostly Catholic electorate. At the level of international party formation, they are linked by their common membership in the European People's Party that unites European Christian Democrats, and in the European Democratic Union, the umbrella organisation of Christian Democratic and conservative parties.

However, later the consensual character of the Austrian domestic political scene led to a bipartisan policy towards the SVP, which was manifested both by the ÖVP and the SPÖ. The very first manifestation of a common position on the South Tyrol issue was a joint ÖVP-

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*Theoretical Politics*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1989): pp. 33-48.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>78</sup> Alcock, p. 272.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>80</sup> Claus Gatterer, "Südtirol und der Rechtsextremismus," (South Tyrol and the extreme right) in *Rechtsextremismus in Österreich nach 1945* (Extreme right in Austria after 1945), Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes (The documentation archives of the Austrian Resistance) (Wien: Österreichisches Bundesverlag, 1981), p. 256.

SPÖ resolution during the Paris Peace conference “regretting that it had not been possible to obtain the rights of freedom for the South Tyroleans at the Peace Conference, and emphasised that the Austrian attitude in no way amounted to a withdrawal of Austrian rights on South Tyrol.”<sup>81</sup>

Dr. Koref, an SPÖ parliamentary deputy, stated during a parliamentary debate accusing Italy of not fulfilling the Paris Agreement, that regarding the South Tyrol issue “the SPÖ is firmly resolved to co-operate in foreign policy matters with the coalition partners.”<sup>82</sup> This statement marked a new trend in the party, which was due to domestic policy reasons and aimed at building up the socialist strength in Tyrol and Vorarlberg that were traditionally more sensitive to the South Tyrol issue and were dominated by the ÖVP. The North Tyrol ÖVP played a very important role in the Austrian domestic policy with regard to South Tyrol, because it exerted pressure on the ÖVP and through it on the federal government to keep the South Tyrol issue on the political agenda. The common position on the South Tyrol issue was confirmed also from the ÖVP side by the then Foreign Minister Toncic who said that “since the Austria’s South Tyrol policy was bipartisan, there was no need to await the results of the [Austrian] elections [in order to start the negotiations with the Italian government in 1963].”<sup>83</sup>

The impact of Austria on the SVP included not only the support of moves made by the SVP, like in the case of the SVP memorandum of 1954, or the SVP draft autonomy statute of South Tyrol in 1958,<sup>84</sup> but also pressure on the SVP. Already during the Paris Peace Conference, Austrian Foreign Minister Gruber’s role was to moderate the SVP’s claims and to persuade the SVP representation about the value of the Agreement.<sup>85</sup> Another example of Austrian pressure on the SVP was that the Austrian government advised the SVP

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<sup>81</sup> *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, 2 October 1946, quoted in Alcock, p. 140.

<sup>82</sup> Stenographisches Protokoll, National Council, VII Legislature, vol. 1, 24 sitting of 8 December 1953, in Alcock, p. 235.

<sup>83</sup> Alcock, p. 398-399.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240; p. 329.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

“not to persist in a demand for a separate autonomy [from the province of Trento],”<sup>86</sup> which blocked the negotiations with the Italian government. The secretary-general of the SVP von Guggenberg described Austria’s position as a ‘cold shower’ for the SVP delegation.<sup>87</sup> Before submitting the South Tyrol issue to the United Nations, Austrian Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky stated that “there could be no question of departing from the Paris Agreement and calling for self-determination.”<sup>88</sup> During the SVP Extraordinary Congress, Kreisky even “warned the SVP to be careful about calling for self-determination.”<sup>89</sup>

Thus, the consensual nature of the Austrian politics towards the SVP promoted the unity of the party and legitimised its moderate policy and its renunciation to call for self-determination. The attitude of the Austrian political parties discouraged the radicals from the SVP to call for more than Austria was ready to accept.<sup>90</sup> The fact that South Tyrol was not an issue of Austrian politics on which to compete for voters by making higher demands than the competing party also contributed to the moderating impact of the Austrian domestic politics on the SVP.

## **Political Factors**

The evolution of the SVP contradicts the expectations formed by Ishiyama and Breuning on the basis of the political factors related to the representational mechanism. Access of the SVP to the political system has been easy due to the suitable decentralisation of

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<sup>86</sup> Otto von Guggenberg, “Von der Entstehung des Pariser Vertrages 1946 bis zum Erlass des Autonomiestatuts,” *Der Fahrende Skolast* (1957): p. 21, quoted in Alcock, p. 166.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>88</sup> Alcock, p. 320.

<sup>89</sup> *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 5 May 1960, quoted in Alcock, p. 325.

<sup>90</sup> The impact of the Austrian domestic politics on the evolution of the South Tyrolean ethnopolitics has been confirmed also by the developments outside of the ÖVP-SPÖ coalition. The success of the radical right-wing Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ) was mirrored by the establishment of the Freedom Party of South Tyrol (*Südtiroler Freiheitlichen*, SF). Similar development occurred in the case of the South Tyrolean Greens (*Grüne*) that were naturally linked to their ideological partners in Austria (See more in

the Italian state. South Tyrol forms an autonomous administrative and self-governing unit of the Italian state, and therefore within the political system of the South Tyrolean province there is little incentive preventing access of new ethnopolitical parties. The position of the SVP cannot be endangered even by the proposed change of the proportional representation system to the majoritarian representation system, because the German-speaking population dominates the province of Bolzano - South Tyrol.

However, the challengers of the SVP for the representation of the German-speaking minority of South Tyrol were not successful and none of the splinter groups threatened the hegemonic position of the SVP on the provincial level. Throughout its history, the electoral support of the SVP has always reached “about 90 per cent of the votes of the German- and Ladin-speaking population.”<sup>91</sup> Other German ethnopolitical parties have never been able to gain more than 16 per cent of the votes in South Tyrol. Before the 1993 elections, the ethnopolitical challengers of the SVP never surpassed 10 per cent of the votes.<sup>92</sup>

The first opposition group to the SVP was formed in 1973. The Social Democratic Party of South Tyrol (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Südtirols*, SPS) was established as a left-wing opposition to the SVP by one of its former members. However, the appeal of the party was not durable. After initial relative success, when it gained 5.1 per cent of votes in the 1973 elections and two seats in the provincial assembly, it gained only 2.1 per cent and one seat in the 1978 elections, and only 1.3 per cent of votes and no seat in the 1983 elections.<sup>93</sup>

However, the most recent elections showed a decline in the integrative power of the SVP, although the party was able to gain more than 50 per cent of the votes (52.0 per cent of votes in 1993 and 56.6 per cent in 1998). Parties that were previously of marginal or no

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Political Factors, pp. 28-29).

<sup>91</sup> Pallaver (1990), p. 73.

<sup>92</sup> Günther Pallaver, “Il caso sudtirolese: La Südtiroler Volkspartei: Modello di un successo di un partito etnonazionale,” (The South Tyrolean case: the South Tyrolean People’s Party: A success model of an ethnonational party) paper presented at the conference “The regional-national parties in Italy and Europe” (29 May 1998): p. 3.

importance appeared and began to challenge the hegemonic position of the SVP over the ethnic minority electorate of South Tyrol.

There are two kinds of challenges to the hegemonic position of the SVP. The first one is coming from the right and is represented by the Freedom Party of South Tyrol (*Südtiroler Freiheitlichen*, SF) and the Union for South Tyrol (*Union für Südtirol*, UFS). The SF demands a radical break from the Italian state (i.e. a potential unification with North Tyrol and Austria) and gained a respectable percentage of the votes in the 1993 elections (6.1 per cent), but its support declined and in the 1998 elections it gained only 2.5 per cent of votes and lost one of its two seats in the provincial assembly. The UFS gained 4.8 per cent of the votes in the 1993 elections and 5.5 per cent of votes in the 1998 elections, which gave it in both cases two seats in the provincial assembly.<sup>94</sup>

A completely different kind of challenge to the SVP comes from the Greens (*Grüne*). As a party of the left, they strongly oppose the politics of ethnic segregation in South Tyrol and they were established as an attempt to form an inter-ethnic party including all language groups. However, today their voters are primarily German-speakers. The Greens exercise a certain influence on the SVP political agenda regarding the environmental issues. The electoral results of this party have oscillated around 6.7 per cent in the three most recent provincial elections. The Greens gained 6.7 per cent of the votes in the 1988 elections, 6.9 per cent of the votes in the 1993 elections and 6.5 per cent of the votes in the 1998 elections. Each of the electoral results gave them two seats in the provincial assembly.<sup>95</sup>

The latest electoral results show that the German minority group in South Tyrol has been increasingly less bound to the ethnic community, and orients itself more towards

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<sup>93</sup> Holzer and Schwegler, p. 166.

<sup>94</sup> Holzer and Schwegler, p. 157, p. 169; Consiglio della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, *I risultati delle elezioni provinciali del 22-11-1998* (Results of the provincial elections on 22-11-98) (Bolzano: Consiglio della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, 1998): [http://www.provinz.bz.it/consiglio/land98\\_it.htm](http://www.provinz.bz.it/consiglio/land98_it.htm).

<sup>95</sup> Holzer and Schwegler, p. 157, p. 169, p. 172; Consiglio della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, *I risultati delle elezioni provinciali del 22-11-1998* (Results of the provincial elections on 22-11-98) (Bolzano: Consiglio

genuine political issues.<sup>96</sup> However, the perception of belonging to an ethnic group still has primary importance, because the total vote for ethnic parties in South Tyrol almost equals the proportion of the ethnic minority population in South Tyrol.

The hypotheses presented by Ishiyama and Breuning would suggest a different development. According to expectations related to the effects of representational mechanisms on ethnopolitical parties, there is little incentive to keep the SVP united and the occurrence of successful splinters is highly probable due to the easy access of new ethnopolitical parties to the political system. Contrary to the expectations related to the political factors, the SVP has remained united and “has hardly been contested in its domination of the political scene in South Tyrol.”<sup>97</sup>

During more than 40 years of the existence of the SVP (from 1945 to 1988), the impact of the effects of representational mechanism on the party disproved the conclusion presented by Ishiyama and Breuning that “the most compelling set of factors relates to the form of representation.”<sup>98</sup> The form of representation did not change in South Tyrol throughout the post-war period, but the successful ethnopolitical challengers started to appear only in the late 1980s and throughout 1990s. The success of these parties cannot be explained as a result of the effects of representational mechanism on the ethnopolitical parties, because representational mechanism has remained the same.

## **INTERNAL FACTORS**

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della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, 1998): [http://www.provinz.bz.it/consiglio/land98\\_it.htm](http://www.provinz.bz.it/consiglio/land98_it.htm).

<sup>96</sup> Oliver Schmidtke, “Ethnic Mobilisation in South Tyrol,” *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 1 (March 1998): p. 38.

<sup>97</sup> Oliver Schmidtke, “Ethnic Mobilisation in South Tyrol,” *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 1 (March 1998): p. 25.

<sup>98</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 178.

Internal factors affecting the evolution of the ethnopolitical parties listed by Ishiyama and Breuning include the internal characteristic of the party and stress the importance of the leading personality of the ethnopolitical party that shapes the political opportunity.<sup>99</sup> With regard to the SVP, two features appear to have shaped the evolution of the party. Apart from the importance of the party leader, it is the extraordinarily strong organisational structure and massive membership in the SVP.

Silvius Magnago became the leader of the SVP in 1957 replacing a group of “moderately conservative notables,”<sup>100</sup> who led the party from 1945. Magnago remained the leader of the party till 1991 and the head of the provincial government from 1960 to 1989. Holzer and Schwegler call Magnago a “historic leader”<sup>101</sup> and a “charismatic party chairman”<sup>102</sup> This was, because he was able both to preserve the unity of the party and to build it into a “professionally led, financially strong, well organised and modern mass party.”<sup>103</sup> The group around Magnago that took over the party leadership consisted mostly of Optants for Germany who were “brought up by two Fascisms, Italian and German, who were moulded by the front line experience in the Second World War, and who considered democracy only a tough, not always successful tactics of the Old Men for concessions from Rome.”<sup>104</sup> The change in the party leadership meant a shift towards increased radicalism and nationalism, which resulted in a renewed call for a special autonomy independent from the province of Trento.<sup>105</sup>

Magnago was able to use the mutually reinforcing effect of the coded collective identity that coincided with the socioeconomic cleavage: ethnic identity founded its socioeconomic base in the economic privileges of the Italian population and in turn the perceived

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>100</sup> Holzer and Schwegler, p. 160.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>104</sup> Gatterer, p. 257.



deprivation in the economic sphere fostered forms of ethnic solidarity and the definition of economic interests in terms of ethnic belonging.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, the party leadership has deeply rooted the SVP in the ethnic subculture and in order to secure the hegemonic rule pursued a strategy “of ‘ethnic patronage,’ whereby the distribution of the material resources (money, jobs, housing, etc.) is bound up with ethnic belonging and party membership, thereby establishing and securing the political loyalty along ethnic lines.”<sup>107</sup>

The SVP was extremely successful in mobilising and recruiting membership and becoming an exceptional mass party. Already by 21 September 1945, only 5 months after its foundation, the SVP claimed a membership of 50,000.<sup>108</sup> In the 1970s the party had a “paid up membership of 35 per cent of the ethnic vote and 23 per cent of the entire electorate of South Tyrol.”<sup>109</sup> Finally, a successful organisational diffusion of the SVP was reflected also in the 1990s, when the party reached over 80,000 members in 1993 and approximately 73,000 in 1996. The SVP occupies a top-ranking position with respect to European countries with the organisation degree (the ratio of party members to voters) of more than 40 per cent.<sup>110</sup>

The outstanding achievement of the SVP in integrating the German-speaking vote and keeping the ethnopolitical representation unified within the party was facilitated by “intra-party differentiation of social interests.”<sup>111</sup> Employers, farmers, and employees form non-autonomous units within the party. The workers are the weakest group, which might be explained by the fact that the industry sectors have been dominated by Italians, and therefore farming and trade, mainly small and medium sized companies form the strong conservative

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<sup>105</sup> Holzer and Schwegler, p. 162.

<sup>106</sup> Schmidtke, p. 35.

<sup>107</sup> Pallaver (1990), p. 75.

<sup>108</sup> *Dolomiten*, 24 September 1945, in Alcock, p. 81.

<sup>109</sup> Antony Evelyn Alcock, “South Tyrol.” Personal e-mail (19 May 1999).

<sup>110</sup> Holzer and Schwegler, p. 168.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

majority of the SVP.<sup>112</sup> This way, the party reflects the fact that South Tyroleans are “politically conservative group with a strong sense of ethnic self-identity.”<sup>113</sup>

The strategy of power (ethnic patronage and large membership) partly explains the overwhelming and unbroken success of the SVP and its unity. This strategy gives the German politicians control over the out-group (Italians in South Tyrol), as well as of the in-group (Germans in South Tyrol) and it promoted an integrating identity of the SVP as a collective party for all the German-speakers in South Tyrol and led to its unchallenged position as a hegemonic party in the province.<sup>114</sup> Thus, the well defined principles of inclusion and exclusion used by the SVP are “essential to the success of ethnoterritorial politics.”<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>113</sup> Jonathan Fox, “Tyroleans in Italy,” in *Minorities at Risk* (April 1995): <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/mar/italstyr.htm>.

<sup>114</sup> Schweigkofler, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> Holzer and Schwegler, p. 170.

## CHAPTER 3

### HUNGARIAN PARTIES IN SLOVAKIA

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The areas of southern Slovakia, populated predominantly by the Hungarian minority became a part of the newly created Czechoslovakia in 1918. Before, the territory of what is now Slovakia formed an integral part of Hungary for more than 1000 years.<sup>116</sup> The multinational Austro-Hungarian empire was dissolved by the peace treaties after the First World War<sup>117</sup>, supposedly in accord with the principle of national self-determination. However, similarly to the case of South Tyrol, “economic, political and strategic considerations; and efforts to make the new states viable were regarded more important than self-determination.”<sup>118</sup>

The border was not designed according to the ethnic composition of the population also due to its mixed nature and due to Hungary being one of the losers of the First World War. Thus, presently, Slovakia’s largest ethnic minority is Hungarian, which is concentrated primarily in southern Slovakia, with a population registered at 570,000. Moreover the region inhabited by Hungarians constitutes an almost continuous, five-hundred kilometre long strip along the Slovak-Hungarian border.

Before the Second World War, in November 1938, a decision about the so-called ‘First Vienna Award’ was taken by Joachim von Ribbentrop and Count Galeazzo Ciano. The ‘First Vienna Award’ was an indirect result of the Munich Agreement reached by the Four

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<sup>116</sup> Zuzana Poláčková, “Stotridsať rokov maďarsko-slovenských vzťahov” (One hundred thirty years of Hungarian-Slovak relations), *Slovak Foreign Policy Association Newsletter* (November 1998): <http://www.sfpa.sk/>.

<sup>117</sup> The border between Czechoslovakia and Hungary was demarcated by the Treaty of Trianon signed on 4th June 1920. (Anthony Komjathy, “The First Vienna Award,” *Austrian History Yearbook*, vol. XV-XVI (1979-1980): p. 133.)

Powers in September 1938 and meant a re-annexation of a 11,927 km<sup>2</sup> area with a population of 869,299 (84.4 per cent of Hungarian mother language) to Hungary.<sup>119</sup>

After the Second World War, a campaign promoting the transfer of the respective minority populations between Slovakia and Hungary was resisted by the Hungarian government and therefore resulted in transfer of only 150,000 persons, unlike the almost complete expulsion of the German minority from the Czech Sudetenland.<sup>120</sup> Under the Communist regime, Hungarians were a socially-disadvantaged minority due to “their own refusal to integrate into the Czechoslovakian system and to learn the language, for without the fluency in the lingua franca their economic and political opportunities were severely limited.”<sup>121</sup> However, the Hungarian minority was allowed to form a cultural organisation *Csemadok* (Cultural Association of Hungarian Working People in Czechoslovakia), whose aim was “to promote the ‘cultural’ identity of the Hungarians living in Czecho-Slovakia.”<sup>122</sup> The Communist authorities opposed any effort at regional autonomy for minorities and strictly supervised their activities. After the Soviet intervention in 1968, a drive towards the creation of a purely Czech and Slovak state was renewed and continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>123</sup>

## REGIME CHANGE FACTORS

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<sup>118</sup> Komjathy, p. 133.

<sup>119</sup> Anthony Komjathy, “The First Vienna Award,” *Austrian History Yearbook*, vol. XV-XVI (1979-1980): pp. 131-132; Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, *Report on the Situation of Hungarians in Slovakia*, <http://www.htmh.hu/rep-frame.htm>.

<sup>120</sup> Jonathan Fox, “Hungarians in the Slovak Republic,” in *Minorities at Risk* (September 1995): <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/mar/slvhung.htm>.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/mar/slvhung.htm>.

<sup>122</sup> Darina Malová, “The Development of Hungarian Political Parties during the Three Election Cycles (1990-1994) in Slovakia,” in *Slovakia: Parliamentary Elections 1994: Causes – Consequences – Prospects*, ed. Soňa Szomolányi and Grigorij Mesežnikov (Bratislava: Slovak Political Science Association and Fridrich Ebert Foundation, 1995), pp. 206.

<sup>123</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 54.

Following the collapse of the Communist regime, a new political opportunity appeared for the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. The formation of the Slovak party system has shown “the power of collective identities in a continuous division of post-Communist society by shaping citizens’ loyalties along ethnic lines.”<sup>124</sup> However, the outcome of the regime change was not the creation of a single ethnopolitical party representing virtually the whole Hungarian electorate in Slovakia, but the appearance of three major ethnopolitical parties: the Coexistence Political Movement (*Együttélés Politikai Mozgalom*), the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (*Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Mozgalom*, MKDM), and the Hungarian Civic Party (*Magyar Polgári Pártja*, MPP). This development can be partly explained by the regime change factors.

The three Hungarian parties in Slovakia have very different roots, which influenced their evolution after the regime change as separate parties instead of one united party. The formation of the Hungarian parties was not influenced by a perception of external threat, since the loyalty of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia was not questioned. The independence of Slovakia changed the situation, because the loyalty of the Hungarian parties to Slovakia started to be questioned and these parties were accused of aspirations to reunify Hungarian-populated areas in a ‘Greater Hungary.’ The change of situation occurred only after the formation of the Hungarian parties, therefore the aspect of ‘loyalty’ of the minority to the state did not play any role during the formation of the Hungarian parties, but only later.

Coexistence, initially the largest of the Hungarian parties, was established in February 1990. First, it claimed to represent all ethnic minorities in Czechoslovakia. The party grew out of the Independent Committee for the Protection of Hungarian Minority Rights in Czechoslovakia, which was established by the prominent dissident and Hungarian national

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<sup>124</sup> Malová, p. 201.

rights activist Miklós Duray in 1978. Duray had been twice arrested for his activities aimed against the Communist policies towards the Hungarian minority.<sup>125</sup>

The MKDM grew out of the local Hungarian Christian Democratic Clubs that were being established after the regime change by Christian oriented Hungarians in Slovakia within the Christian Democratic Movement (*Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie*, KDH). The MKDM separated from the KDH in March 1990, following the structuring of the Slovak party system along the ethnic lines. However, initially, the MKDM emphasised the interest in keeping intense contacts between both parties. The MKDM-KDH relations worsened during the 1991-1992 period when the Slovak Christian Democrats used a nationalistic appeal regarding Slovak sovereignty.<sup>126</sup>

The MPP was established already in November 1989 under the name of the Hungarian Independent Initiative (*Független Magyar Kezdeményezés*, FMK), which was part of the umbrella anti-Communist alliance, Public Against Violence (*Verejnost' proti násiliu*, VPN). The party was founded by two long-time anti-Communist dissidents, László Nagy and Lajos Grendel. Although the party leadership had similar dissident roots as Coexistence leader Duray, they emphasised liberal and civic values and rejected nationalism, arguing that “democratisation must precede the drive to fully gain Hungarian group rights.”<sup>127</sup>

Thus, the division of the Hungarian ethnopolitical representation at the time of the regime change facilitated the establishment of the three above mentioned ethnopolitical parties competing for the Hungarian minority voters. However, for pragmatic reasons these parties had to form electoral alliances in order to pass the five per cent threshold required for entering the Slovak Parliament.

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<sup>125</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 56.

<sup>126</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 57; Malová, p. 207; p. 212; *Report on the Situation of Hungarians in Slovakia*, <http://www.htmh.hu/rep-frame.htm>.

<sup>127</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 57.

Table 3. illustrates the support of the three Hungarian parties in Slovakia (percentage of the votes and number of seats) and their electoral coalitions. In the 1990 elections, the MPP as a component part of the Public Against Violence participated in its general electoral victory (29.3 per cent) and gained 6 seats. Coexistence and MKDM formed a coalition in the 1990 and 1992 elections. The MPP contested the 1992 elections on a separate ballot list and failed to enter the parliament. Therefore, in the 1994 elections, the three Hungarian parties formed a coalition in order to avoid a possible loss of votes of the Hungarian minority electorate. On 21 June 1998, the Hungarian parties merged into a single organisation, the Hungarian Coalition Party (*Magyar Koalíció Pártja*, MKP), in order to minimise the negative impact of the changed electoral law in the 1998 elections. Table 4. shows the ethnic composition of the Slovak population.

Table 3. Electoral results of the Hungarian parties in parliamentary elections.

Party	1990	1992	1994	1998
MPP	(6)	2.3% (0)		
Hungarian Coalition	8.64% (14)	7.42% (14)	10.18% (17)	
MKP				9.12% (15)

Sources: Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 51; p. 61; Malová, p. 207-208 (1990, 1992, 1994); Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, *Results of the Parliament Elections* (Bratislava: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 1998): <http://www.volby.statistics.sk/volby98/eng/results/results.asp> (1998).

Table 4. Ethnic composition of Slovakia.

Year	Slovaks (per cent)	Hungarians (per cent)
1920	65.7	21.5
1930	68.4	17.6
1961	85.3	12.4
1991	85.6	10.8

Source: Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 54.

A factor contributing to the existence of parallel political structures of the Hungarians parties to the Slovak parties was that, according to the fact-finding mission of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, at the time of the regime change and even after,

there were “no major problems between Slovaks and ethnic Hungarians.”<sup>128</sup> Therefore, there was not a high level of mutual ethnic antagonism that would have promoted a natural suppression of the differences among the Hungarian ethnopolitical parties and their unification to face the existential threat from the majority.

The electoral results of the Hungarian ethnopolitical parties in Slovakia almost mirror the percentage of the Hungarians among the Slovak population, thus “Hungarian nationality is an almost perfect indicator of voting for Hungarian National Parties.”<sup>129</sup> However, the attractiveness of Hungarian ethnopolitics was not naturally translated into a single hegemonic ethnopolitical party. Even after the merger of the parties into the MKP, the original parties have continued to keep their identity.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS**

### **Economic and Sociocultural Factors**

The economic and sociocultural factors shaping the Hungarian ethnopolitics contributed to the evolution of the parallel political structures among the Hungarian political parties too. Although the majority of the Hungarian minority population in Slovakia is concentrated in the agricultural areas along the Slovak-Hungarian border, it is not completely homogeneous from a socio-economic point of view. Moreover, the Hungarian minority is not homogeneous with regard to the Christian orientation of its members. The distinction on the

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<sup>128</sup> Jonathan Fox, “Hungarians in the Slovak Republic,” in *Minorities at Risk* (September 1995): <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/mar/slvhung.htm>.

<sup>129</sup> Kevin Deegan Krause, “Hungarians, Slovaks and Political Party System Development in the Slovak Republic,” (April 1996): <http://www.nd.edu/~kkrause/papers/asn96.htm>.



socio-economic and religious issue dimensions promoted the establishment of the differentiated ethnopolitical parties.<sup>130</sup>

Coexistence focused first on protection of the interests of all minorities in Czechoslovakia; later it shifted more towards the Hungarian working-class constituency. The MKDM was based on the rural Roman Catholic electorate, while the MPP consisted of intellectuals and appealed prevailingly to the urban Hungarian electorate.<sup>131</sup> This focus on different constituencies shaped the political orientation of these parties too. Coexistence defines itself as “centre-based political movement ... standing for both liberal and conservative traditions.”<sup>132</sup> However, in the economic field the party gives “priority to agriculture that should be subsidised by the government.”<sup>133</sup> This focus is due to the importance of the large rural constituency.

The MKDM has supported conservative and Christian ideas, its constituency has been dominated by farmers (private and collective farms), Roman Catholic believers and small and medium-size entrepreneurs. The party has emphasised conservative values, such as the importance of family life and local communities as a base for political structures. In its economic programme, it gives priority to the transformation and development of agriculture.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> The 1991 census has shown that 54.3 per cent of the Hungarian population lives in settlements with a population under 2,000 and 42.7 per cent in small towns with a population under 20,000. Around 30,000 Hungarians live in Bratislava. Hungarians are more religious (80.5 per cent) than the rest of the entire population (72.7 per cent). The rate of Hungarians employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishery sector (23.8 per cent) is higher than the rest of the population (Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, *Report on the Situation of Hungarians in Slovakia*, <http://www.htmh.hu/rep-frame.htm>).

<sup>131</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 64.

<sup>132</sup> Coexistence web site, <http://www.hhrf.org/egyutt/angol.htm>.

<sup>133</sup> Malová, p. 211.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211-212.

The MPP has declared liberal and civic values, and favoured a decentralised government. Its programme attempted to articulate liberal and minority issues in a particular model of regionalism, unifying individual rights and collective identity.<sup>135</sup>

Ishiyama and Breuning notice that a factor affecting the evolution of the Hungarian ethnopolitical parties has been a notably higher unemployment rate in the Hungarian populated regions of southern Slovakia.<sup>136</sup> It is surprising that in the context of the high unemployment rate, there has not appeared a single left-wing Hungarian ethnopolitical party, which would have completed the parallel political structures of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. It has been argued that this development was due to the fact that the Communist Party enjoyed “significant support of the Hungarian minority and was well organised also in southern Slovakia.”<sup>137</sup> Moreover, the Party of the Democratic Left, the successor of the Communist Party, nominated also Hungarians for its candidate lists.

The Hungarian parties in Slovakia had different economic, social and political goals with unequal emphasis on the ethnic issue. The difference stemmed to a certain degree from different socio-economic, sociocultural and religious background of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Thus, the level of heterogeneity was sufficiently high to promote the existence of parallel ethnopolitical parties representing the Hungarian minority.

## **International Factors**

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<sup>135</sup> Malová, p. 214-215.

<sup>136</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning (p. 59) state that the highest unemployment occurs in the areas that were most dependent on the armament trade listing the districts of Rimanska Sobota, Michalovce, Rožňava, Orlová and Velký Krtíš. However, the Slovak armament industry has been concentrated in the Váh Valley (*Považie*) region and the unemployment in the southern, Hungarian populated areas of Slovakia has been due to their dependence on the declining agriculture and due to the general lack of industry and infrastructure. Moreover, the district of Orlová was probably included by mistake, as it is a district of the Czech Republic.

<sup>137</sup> Malová, p. 204-205.

International factors affected the development of the Hungarian parties in Slovakia in the context of the “the tendencies within the region toward political integration or its inverse, disintegration.”<sup>138</sup> The programme of both the Slovak and Hungarian governments declared a priority of integration into the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). All the Hungarian parties are championing Slovakia’s Euro-Atlantic integration.<sup>139</sup>

The ties of the Hungarian minority with its ethnic kin state have been very important to both groups. The Hungarian foreign policy has been based on three priorities: “the Euro-Atlantic integration, relations with neighbours and Hungarian minorities abroad.”<sup>140</sup> The first democratic Hungarian government of József Antall emerged as a champion of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Antall’s right-wing government “emphasised the Euro-Atlantic integration and the minorities issue. Relations with neighbours were subordinated to the issue of Hungarian minorities located on their territories.”<sup>141</sup> The government kept the border issue “floating,” which contributed to the deterioration of relations between Hungary and Slovakia. Hungary, which was already a member of the Council of Europe threatened to veto the membership of Slovakia and was convinced by other member states only to abstain on the vote.<sup>142</sup>

The change of government after the parliamentary elections in 1994 brought a change in the logic of the Hungarian foreign policy, because it gave priority to the Euro-Atlantic integration and intended to solve the issue of Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries

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<sup>138</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 9.

<sup>139</sup> Kevin Deegan Krause, “Hungarians, Slovaks and Political Party System Development in the Slovak Republic,” (April 1996): <http://www.nd.edu/~kkrause/papers/asn96.htm>.

<sup>140</sup> László Póti, “Maďarská zahraničná a bezpečnostná politika a Slovensko” (Hungarian foreign and security policy and Slovakia), *Slovak Foreign Policy Association Newsletter* (November 1998): <http://www.sfpa.sk/>; The author is a researcher at the Institute for Strategic and Defence Studies of the Hungarian Ministry of Defence.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, <http://www.sfpa.sk/>.

in a more moderate way. This approach resulted in the Basic Treaty signed by Slovakia and Hungary in 1995, guaranteeing certain minority rights of Hungarians in Slovakia and ruling out the possibility of border changes.<sup>143</sup>

The issue of the Slovak government's disrespect for the Hungarian minority rights has been criticised on the international level by the European Union, individual member states, Hungary, the United States and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, who have repeatedly expressed concern "over the political and ethnic tensions in Slovakia."<sup>144</sup>

At the level of international political party formations, the Hungarian parties in Slovakia sought to join some of the international organisations of political parties, since these international party formations are "still an important element in legitimising a political party in the national political system."<sup>145</sup> Coexistence has full status in the Liberal International and the Federalistic Union of European Nationalities.<sup>146</sup> The MKDM is a member of the European Democratic Union and the European People's Party, while the MPP is the member of the Liberal International.<sup>147</sup> The decision of the European Democratic Union not to accept Coexistence was based also on the negative attitude of the MKDM, which argued that Coexistence is too nationalistic.

## **Kin State Factors**

The Hungarian domestic political scene after the regime change was characterised by a high level of fragmentation and a confrontational atmosphere between the centre-right

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<sup>142</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 65.

<sup>143</sup> Krause, <http://www.nd.edu/~kkrause/papers/asn96.htm>; Póti, <http://www.sfpa.sk/>;

<sup>144</sup> Edwin Bakker, "Growing Isolation: Political and Ethnic Tensions in the Slovak Republic," *Helsinki Monitor: Quarterly on Security and Co-operation in Europe*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1998): p. 30.

<sup>145</sup> Malová, p. 208-209.

<sup>146</sup> Coexistence web site, <http://www.hhrf.org/egyutt/angol.htm>.

government led by the Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Forum*, MDF), which initiated the regime-change, and the centre-left and liberal opposition of the post-Communist Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Pártja*, MSZP) and two liberal formations: the Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokrata Szövetsége*, SZDSZ) and the Federation of Young Democrats (*Fiatal Demokrata Szövetsége*, FIDESZ). There was no consensus among these two blocks over the Hungarian foreign policy regarding the relations with the neighbouring countries and relations with the Hungarian minorities abroad. The confrontation over these two issues on the Hungarian domestic political scene promoted the division of the ethnopolitical representation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.

The MDF government was conservative and slightly nationalistic. Relations with neighbouring countries were subordinated to the issue of Hungarian minorities. The attitude towards Hungarian minorities beyond Hungary's border lacked “a diplomatic approach, too, and this contributed to the deterioration of relations between Hungary and a number of neighbouring states, among them Slovakia.”<sup>148</sup> The MDF policy supported the stream among the Hungarian ethnopolitical parties that was most nationalistic and confrontational. In fact, the Coexistence leaders had very good contacts with the MDF and their leader Duray often participated in election rallies of the MDF. Moreover, the interaction with Hungarian domestic politics became apparent when he withdrew the invitation for the FIDESZ leaders to visit Slovakia.<sup>149</sup>

The MPP has close ties to the liberal FIDESZ.<sup>150</sup> The approach of the MPP towards the solution of the minority related problems has been least confrontational and most willing to co-operate with Slovak democratic political parties. In fact, the MPP grew out of the broad VPN movement and in the beginning did not support the Hungarian movements in becoming

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<sup>147</sup> Malová, p. 211; Mesežnikov, <http://www.ivo.sk/books/GlobalReport97/domestic.html>.

<sup>148</sup> Póti, <http://www.sfpa.sk/>.

<sup>149</sup> Malová, p. 209.

an independent political force. The FMK, a predecessor of the MPP, was heavily criticised by the MDF and the two competing Hungarian parties in Slovakia for forming a coalition with Slovak politicians in the period from 1990 to 1992.<sup>151</sup> In its campaign against the FMK, the MDF did not hesitate to use also the news programmes of the Hungarian state television that are popular among Hungarians in Slovakia.<sup>152</sup> Thus, the moderate and conciliatory approach of the MPP towards the relations between majority and minority in Slovakia was not supported by the MDF, which favoured the more radical and nationalistic Coexistence, which was allied with the MKDM. The MKDM has been also linked to the MDF, through their common membership in the European People's Party.

The MDF almost disappeared after the 1994 parliamentary elections, which resulted into a government led by the social democratic MSZP and the liberal SZDSZ. The parties presented a new foreign policy strategy based on the integration priority. The new strategy favoured "a moderate solution of the Hungarian minorities issue and an improvement of bilateral relations."<sup>153</sup> The new approach towards foreign policy was based on the reasonable perception that "the development of relations with neighbouring countries and attempts to improve the situation of ethnic Hungarians minorities ... are closely related to Hungary's preparations for accession."<sup>154</sup> In fact, the MSZP-SZDSZ coalition suggested that the MDF policies towards neighbouring countries "hindered Hungary's Euro-Atlantic integration."<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Krause, <http://www.nd.edu/~kkrause/papers/asn96.htm>.

<sup>151</sup> Lajos Grendel, *Moja vlast' Absurdistan* (Absurdistan, my native country) (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1998), p. 48.

<sup>152</sup> Kálmán Petőcz, "Slovenskí Maďari nie sú nacionalisti," (Slovak Hungarians are not nationalists) interview by Štefan Hríb, *Domino Fórum*, vol. 9 (March 1999): p. 5; Kálmán Petőcz was the deputy chairman of the MPP and currently is the deputy chairman of the MKP.

<sup>153</sup> Póti, <http://www.sfpa.sk/>.

<sup>154</sup> Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad, *Hungary in a New Europe: The Modernisation Programme of the Government of the Republic of Hungary* (9 November 1995): <http://www.htmh.hu/rep-frame.htm>.

<sup>155</sup> András Kelemen, "Hungarian Minorities Issue," (Hungarian Democratic Forum web site), <http://www.mdf.hu/documents/hungminor1.htm>.

The new programme explicitly stated that “Hungary will not subordinate bilateral relations to the minority issue.”<sup>156</sup> The more moderate course of the leading Hungarian parties towards the minorities and neighbouring nations and decrease of the internal confrontations over these issues on the Hungarian political scene was followed by a further rapprochement of all three Hungarian parties in Slovakia after the 1994 elections. Thus, Hungarian political scene ceased to have a polarising effect on the Hungarian parties in Slovakia.

While in opposition, during the 1994-1998 period, FIDESZ transformed itself from a liberal party into a more right-wing party. The transformation was reflected also by a change in its name to the Federation of Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Party (*Fiatal Demokrata Szövetsége-Magyar Polgári Pártja*, FIDESZ-MPP). The victory of a centre-right coalition of the FIDESZ-MPP and its junior partner, the MDF, in the 1998 elections meant a practical reintroduction of the principles of Antall’s foreign policy, although with fundamental changes to it.

Though the foreign policy is again based on the same three pillars: “the Euro-Atlantic integration, good neighbourliness, and a consistent protection of the Hungarian nationalities,”<sup>157</sup> the new government is more moderate regarding the issue of ethnic minorities and does not consider any changes of borders. János Mártonyi, the new Foreign Minister, is “probably the most moderate and pragmatic figure of the foreign policy establishment and a promoter of a more intensive regional co-operation.”<sup>158</sup>

## **Political Factors**

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<sup>156</sup> *Hungary in a New Europe: The Modernisation Programme of the Government of the Republic of Hungary*, <http://www.htmh.hu/rep-frame.htm>.

<sup>157</sup> Mihály Beke, “*About the New Government: The first hundred days of the new Hungarian centre-right government*,” (Hungarian Democratic Forum web site); <http://www.mdf.hu/documents/newgovern.htm>.

<sup>158</sup> Póti, <http://www.sfpa.sk/>.

The evolution of the Hungarian parties in Slovakia does not fully confirm the expectations, formed on the basis of the political factors related to the representational mechanism. Although the access to the political system is relatively easy due to the proportional representation system, there is a five per cent electoral threshold for entering the national parliament.

The hypotheses presented by Ishiyama and Breuning would suggest a different development. According to expectations related to the effects of representational mechanisms on ethno-political parties, there is an incentive for the ethno-political representation of Hungarians in Slovakia, struggling to overcome the five per cent electoral threshold to enter the political system, to keep united.<sup>159</sup> The political representation of the Hungarian minority has not formed a single ethno-political party, but three differentiated ethno-political parties competing for the Hungarian minority voter.

However, the structure of competition created a sufficient degree of threat to force the Hungarian parties to form an electoral alliance. Further, the access of the Hungarian parties to the political system was threatened by the new electoral law that deteriorated the conditions for participation of electoral coalitions in the 1998 elections. Another factor fostering a closer co-operation of the Hungarian parties was the character of the Slovak party system, which was structured according to two main cleavage lines. The first is strongly related to the “national and ethnic identity.”<sup>160</sup> The dominance of the nationalistic Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (*Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko*, HZDS) and the Slovak National Party (*Slovenská národná strana*, SNS) in the period 1992-1998 was perceived as a threat by

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<sup>159</sup> Paradoxically, Ishiyama and Breuning claim that “the use of PR means that there is always a strong incentive for the various Hungarian parties to remain organizationally independent” (p. 75) and they don’t take into account the five per cent electoral threshold that should significantly limit this incentive.

<sup>160</sup> Malová, p. 200.



the Hungarian minority and therefore forged the unification of the Hungarian ethnopolitical representation.

Initially, the Hungarian parties considered various ways of common participation in the elections that would not compromise the organisational and political independence of the original parties (i.e. union of parties, formation of a new electoral party, participation of candidates of two parties on the electoral list of the third party). However, in the end, the Hungarian parties followed pragmatic reasons and merged into the single MKP, which is the legal successor of the former three Hungarian parties. Within the MKP, the former Coexistence and the MKDM founded the Christian-Conservative and People's Platform<sup>161</sup> and the former MPP founded the Civic-Liberal Platform.<sup>162</sup>

The MKP was formed only as a result of the external pressure of the newly passed electoral law, which has been explicitly confirmed at the MKP Civic-Liberal Platform's web site, which states that "the general assembly of the Hungarian Civic Party, under the pressure of the electoral law, accepted the fusion with the Hungarian Coalition Party, and formed the Civic-Liberal Platform within it."<sup>163</sup> The leaders of the MKDM were less enthusiastic about the merger than the Coexistence leadership.<sup>164</sup> MKDM leader Béla Bugár explained the reluctance of his party to merge with the others by a fear that "if the unification came about, it would be dominated by the Coexistence agenda and would serve only narrow party interests."<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Originally, the former Coexistence founded a National Liberal Platform and the former MKDM a Christian-Conservative Platform, which later merged to form the dominant platform of the MKP (Grigorij Mesežnikov, "Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán," (The development of domestic politics and the system of political parties) in *Slovensko 1997: Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 1998* ( Slovakia 1997: A global report on the state of society and trends for the year 1998), ed. Martin Bútorá and Michal Ivantyšyn, (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1998), p. 158).

<sup>162</sup> Hungarian Coalition Party web site, [http://www.hhrf.org/mkp/right\\_uk.htm](http://www.hhrf.org/mkp/right_uk.htm).

<sup>163</sup> Hungarian Coalition Party, Civic-Liberal Platform web site, [http://www.hhrf.org/mkp/mkplib/index\\_uk.htm](http://www.hhrf.org/mkp/mkplib/index_uk.htm).

<sup>164</sup> Grigorij Mesežnikov, "The Domestic Politics," in *Slovakia 1996-1997 A Global Report on the State of Society*, ed. Martin Bútorá and Thomas W. Skladony, (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1998), <http://www.ivo.sk/books/GlobalReport97/domestic.html>.

<sup>165</sup> *Slovensky dennik*, 1 June 1994, in Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 68.

Even after the unification, the platforms keep their identity and enjoy a considerable independence within the MKP. The Civic-Liberal Platform keeps “its own organisational structure, administration and membership files, and it can handle its foreign affairs on its own.”<sup>166</sup> Although legally and formally a single ethnopolitical party, the structure of the MKP suggests that politically it has been more a coalition of ethnopolitical parties than a single ethnopolitical party. The name of the party itself reveals this feature of the MKP.

### **INTERNAL FACTORS**

The leadership question is crucial for the further development of the ethnopolitical parties, because without the “emergence of political leaders acting like national and/or ethnic entrepreneurs, the existence of ethnic identity would hardly result in political organisations.”<sup>167</sup> The internal factors affecting the separate evolution of the three principal Hungarian ethnopolitical parties in Slovakia are related to the distinct nature and roots of the leadership of these parties. Ishiyama and Breuning state that “there were several identifiable leaders of the Hungarian movement, each of which has his own political base.”<sup>168</sup>

The leaders of the Hungarian parties Duray (Coexistence), Bugár (MKDM) and Nagy (MPP) differed not only on the main issue dimension of the Hungarian ethnopolitics – the safeguarding of the rights of Hungarians in Slovakia - but also on “various subethnic political cleavages represented by separate political parties.”<sup>169</sup> Thus, Duray became associated with radical demands for rights of Hungarians in Slovakia, while Bugár and Nagy, representing respectively Christian democratic and civic liberal political orientations, held more moderate and conciliatory positions.

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<sup>166</sup> Hungarian Coalition Party, Civic-Liberal Platform web site, [http://www.hhrf.org/mkp/mkplib/index\\_uk.htm](http://www.hhrf.org/mkp/mkplib/index_uk.htm).

<sup>167</sup> Malová, p. 201.

<sup>168</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 64.

Moreover, the three Hungarian leaders in Slovakia are very different types of personalities. Duray is a ‘fighter,’ a type of the politician whose provocative or controversial statements often stirred up the political debate in Slovakia. Coexistence was dominated by its founder, who shaped its policies and determined its style. His prestige was based also on his anti-Communist and dissident past. Nagy is an ‘intellectual,’ who has never been able to articulate political programme in an attractive way and whose party has been accused for being an intellectual club rather than a party even by its co-founder and supporter Grendel.<sup>170</sup> Bugár, presently the most popular Hungarian politician in Slovakia, is a ‘pragmatist.’ His ability to accept pragmatic, even if difficult compromises has been confirmed at several occasions. In 1992, Bugár was pressured by his party to pursue closer ties with Coexistence, which might have endangered the separate identity of the MKDM. In 1998, Bugár accepted the unification of the three Hungarian parties into the MKP, although this was initially refused by the MKDM. Finally, Bugár’s MKDM has increasingly supported the co-operation with the Slovak political parties. This policy resulted in the MKP joining the governing coalition after the 1998 elections.

Initially, the Coexistence leadership was able to gain highest support among the electorate with its rhetoric of radical demands, but recently opinion polls have been indicating that the MKDM has shown an ever growing popularity in the past two years.<sup>171</sup> Trends within the Hungarian minority electorate show an increasing support for the MKDM had an impact on the internal configuration of powers within the Hungarian Coalition and led to the election of Bugár to the president of the united MKP.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 175.

<sup>170</sup> Grendel, p. 85.

<sup>171</sup> *Report on the Situation of Hungarians in Slovakia*, <http://www.htmh.hu/rep-frame.htm>.

<sup>172</sup> Mesežnikov, “Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán,” p. 84.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

The SVP in South Tyrol and the Hungarian parties in Slovakia are examples of successful ethnopolitical parties that are able to gain an overwhelming majority of the minority electorate. Despite significant similarities determining the situation of both minorities and respective parties, the ethnopolitical representation in the two countries has developed in a different way. The SVP developed from the very beginning as a hegemonic ethnopolitical party, whereas the three Hungarian parties in Slovakia competed for the votes of the Hungarian electorate.

The application of the theoretical framework developed by Ishiyama and Breuning reveals the reasons of the different development. However, the two cases disprove their main hypothesis about ethnopolitical party coherence, which claims that the most compelling set of factors explaining the evolution of the ethnopolitical parties relates to the form of representation.<sup>173</sup> The proportional representation system in decentralised Italy makes it relatively easy for a new party to enter the political system, yet this did not threaten the hegemonic position of the SVP within South Tyrol. In addition, the five per cent electoral threshold in the Slovak electoral system did not lead to a single, united Hungarian party.

Thus, the political factors do not explain the different evolution of these ethnopolitical parties, although, the case of the MKP to certain extent confirms the model presented by Ishiyama and Breuning. The main factor leading to the decision of the Hungarian parties to merge was external pressure of the new electoral law, rather than natural convergence. This forced merger resulted into a highly heterogeneous party with institutionalised platforms, instead of a single united ethnopolitical party.

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<sup>173</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, p. 178.

Other factors included in the theoretical framework explain the different evolution of the ethnopolitical representation of Germans in South Tyrol and Hungarians in Slovakia. It appears that the kin state factors, almost neglected by Ishiyama and Breuning, play a decisive role in the evolution of the ethnopolitical parties with an ethnic kin state across the border with respect to the ethnopolitical party coherence.

In both cases, the domestic political scene of the kin state has been very sensitive about the minority issue in the neighbouring country. However, the consensual character of Austrian politics and the common approach of the main parties to the South Tyrol issue promoted a united ethnopolitical party representing the minority. On the contrary, the fragmented nature of the Hungarian political scene after the regime change and the high level of confrontation among political parties over the nature of relations to the minorities and neighbouring states fostered a fragmented Hungarian ethnopolitical representation in Slovakia.

The economic and sociocultural factors help to explain the different evolution of the ethnopolitical representation of Germans in South Tyrol and Hungarians in Slovakia too. The economic and sociocultural factors support the different pattern of evolution, because different levels of socioeconomic, sociocultural and religious homogeneity of the minority population have partly been reflected by the different level of coherence of its ethnopolitical representation. The level of homogeneity of the German population of South Tyrol was considerably higher than that of the Hungarians in Slovakia, which has been reflected by the appeal of the Hungarian parties to different constituencies.

The regime change factors explain the different developments to a certain degree too, because both minorities faced a different situation at the moment of the appearance of a new political opportunity. There was a high level of antagonism between Italians and Germans in South Tyrol after the regime change in Italy. Germans were not considered loyal to the Italian

state and they feared an expulsion like other German minorities in Central Europe. Moreover, there was a problem of options connected to the voluntary transfer of the German population to Germany. High resentments and the perception of threat on both sides promoted an increased intra-ethnic solidarity and the formation of the SVP as “an ethnic grouping, as a united front against external threat.”<sup>174</sup> During the regime change in Slovakia, Hungarians were part of the forces supporting the regime change and their loyalty to the state was not questioned. The perception of threat was insufficient to force the ethnopolitical representation of Hungarians to form a united party struggling the oppression.

Internal factors, especially the emergence of different leaders in both cases might partly explain the different developments too. Magnago, the chairman of the SVP for thirty-four years, was a charismatic leader that personified the success of the South Tyrolean struggle for autonomy and self-government. Moreover, during his chairmanship, South Tyrol became one of the most prosperous Italian provinces. A pragmatic policy of realistic demands characterised Magnago, who was widely respected and became the father of South Tyrol’s autonomy. On the other hand, in Slovakia, a different kind of ethnopolitical leaders emerged, with different backgrounds and different appeals to Hungarian voters. Duray has been too nationalistic for many moderate Hungarians and Nagy has been too intellectual and liberal for many nationally oriented voters. It seems that Bugár will become a widely accepted leader of the Hungarians in Slovakia thanks to his reasonable policies and pragmatism.

The impact of international factors on the evolution of the ethnopolitical representation with respect to its coherence has its place in a comprehensive explanation too. The fact that the South Tyrol issue was an international affair due to the Paris Agreement fostered a united representation of South Tyrol vis-à-vis the United Nations, Council of

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<sup>174</sup> Pallaver (1990), p. 73.

Europe, and Austrian government. Although the issue of Hungarians in Slovakia has been dealt with internationally, formally, it has mostly been at the level of the Slovak government vis-à-vis international organisations or foreign governments. Thus, there was no international pressure on the ethnopolitical representation of Hungarians in Slovakia to unite. Moreover, the Hungarian parties became members of different international party organisations, which emphasised their ideological differences.

The application of the theoretical framework of factors affecting the evolution of ethnopolitical parties to the case of the SVP in Italy and Hungarian parties in Slovakia suggests that the kin state factors have an important impact on the evolution of the ethnopolitical parties with respect to their coherence and unity, while the influence of the political factors is of much lesser importance than claimed by Ishiyama and Breuning. However, it is not only the kin state factors that help us to understand the different development, but economic and sociocultural factors, together with regime change factors, internal factors and international factors have an important role too.

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