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**The Quadric Model of Ethnic Relations:
The Hungarian Minorities in Slovakia and Romania**

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide a systematised and comprehensive model of ethnic relations in Eastern Europe. The paper briefly reviews the well-known models developed by two authorities on nationalism, Will Kymlicka and Rogers Brubaker, and argues that both models neglect the role of the international community in ethnic relations. I claim that the international forum constitutes an important actor and that it is time to move beyond the classical approaches to the study of nationalism. To this end, the 'triadic nexus' ought to be expanded into a 'quadric nexus,' encompassing the minority group, majority group, kin-state of the minority and the international forum.

The paper also proposes a new methodology based on strategic bargaining games to illuminate the dynamics of ethnic politics. Majority-minority relations in the proposed quadric nexus are not solely determined by inter-group dynamics; intra-group interaction, which can be characterised as strategic interactions between and within the groups, also plays a role. Important strategic dilemmas to be addressed here include information failure, the credible commitment dilemma (which occurs when at least one group cannot commit to an agreement) and the security dilemma.

Comparing the Hungarian minorities of post-1989 Romania and Slovakia, the paper argues that minority leaders play a limited role in ethnic mobilisation. A brief analysis of minority claim-making in the two cases demonstrates that contrary to general ethnic relations theory, ethnic groups do not rally against fears of discrimination or insecurity. What matters more for the radicalisation of minority demands is the perceived external support (from a powerful home-state or a lobby actor) for minority claims. At the same time, if external support is lacking, minorities will accommodate state policies, even those that are detrimental to them. Based on both the theoretical arguments and the empirical findings, the paper demonstrates the superior explanatory power of the quadric model of ethnic relations compared to traditional theories of nationalism.

Looking at the available literature for explanations of ethnicity and ethnic conflict, one is disappointed by the absence of any consensus regarding “most, if not all, aspects of ethnicity and politics: the nature of ethnicity; the universe of cases; conceptualizing ethno-political mobilization; the relevant factors in the process; and the relevant appropriate timescale for analysis.”¹ The main goal of this paper is to provide a systematised and comprehensive model of ethnic relations. I shall proceed as follows: first, I shall construct my model of ethnic relations, and second, I shall examine the relevance of the constructed model against the empirical reality experienced by the Hungarian minorities of Eastern Europe.

Two authorities on nationalism, Kymlicka and Brubaker, propose different concepts of ethnic relations. Kymlicka envisions the politics of ethnic relations as comprising two sub-state actors, minority groups and the ‘nationalising’ majority,² whereas Brubaker argues that there is an antagonistic and dynamic interplay in the form of a triadic nexus “linking national minorities, the newly nationalizing states ... and the external national ‘homelands.’”³ Although both models of ethnic relations offer important insights, I claim that both theories remain incomplete by failing to systematically account for the importance of international actors in both the theory and practise of ethnic relations.

I argue that a theoretical model of the study of ethnic relations must also include the international forum as an important actor, thus expanding Brubaker’s ‘triadic nexus’ into a ‘quadric nexus’ formed by the ‘nationalising state’, the ‘home-state’ of the majority, the minority, the lobby actor of the minority and the international actors. I propose that we need to move beyond Brubaker’s theoretical claim – which is not predictive or even causal, but rather an empirically observed relationship – stating that majority-minority relations are to be understood as an aspect of the history of nationalism, approached as a comparative study of the attitudes different communities exhibit towards each other.

Excluding the role of international intervention in ethnic relations ignores reality: international actors have already chosen to get involved in inter-ethnic accommodation, and there is no turning back anymore. History has also proven that international pressure is constructive for the settlement of ethnic issues: just consider Aaland Island, or the pressure on Germany to settle with Denmark before joining NATO, or the 1972 arrangements for autonomy for South Tyrol in Italy⁴ or the more recent example of OSCE intervention in Estonian nation-building.⁵ The growing interconnectedness of today’s world also strongly supports incorporating the international domain. Both liberal and institutionalist theories argue that membership in international organisations promotes conflict resolution by fostering enhanced mutual trust and shared norms.⁶ On the other hand, one can also expect the number and intensity of ethnic conflicts to increase, because globalisation results in increased contact among different groups and migration increases the diversity of existing groups.⁷ Finally, yet just as importantly, in many ethnic conflicts of the world, there is no ‘external homeland’ available as envisioned by Brubaker. When kin-states are not part of the equation, minority groups often lobby other third-party actors to gain support for their claims. These “surrogate

1 Britt Cartrite, “Complexity and Ethnopolitical Mobilization” (paper presented at the IPSA Research Committee on Politics and Ethnicity, Ottawa, Sept. 30–Oct. 2, 2004), 2.; Donald L. Horowitz, “Structure and Strategy in Ethnic Conflict” (paper presented at the Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics, Washington DC, April 20–21, 1998), 1–4.

2 Will Kymlicka, “Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe,” in *Managing Diversity in Plural Societies: Minorities, Migration and Nation-Building in Post-Communist Europe*, ed. Magda Opalski (Ottawa: Forum Eastern Europe, 1998), 8–11.

3 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 10.

4 Will Kymlicka, “Cultural Rights and Minority Rights: A European Experiment (Manuscript),” 10.

5 Claus Neukirch, “Russia and the OSCE – the Influence of Interested Third and Disinterested Fourth Parties on the Conflicts in Estonia and Moldova,” *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (July 2001): 12–4.

6 Douglas Woodwell, “Unwelcome Neighbors: Shared Ethnicity and International Conflict During the Cold War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2004): 209.

7 Tatu Vanhanen, “Domestic Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Nepotism: A Comparative Analysis,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 1 (1999): 67.

lobby states”⁸ or lobby actors take various forms, ranging from intergovernmental organisations to major international powers, or even domestic groups, such as powerful militias.

In my quadric model, ‘international’ refers to the nature of the involvement rather than the nature of the outside actor. The international actors in our model can be any entity that is actively seeking to internationalise the solution to the ethnic conflict. For the purposes of the model, the only limitation on the international actor is that it has to be impartial, that is, not a party in the conflict. Any such third party that is accepted or at least seen as impartial by both the majority and minority players may be included under the umbrella term of ‘international actor’.⁹

Although the conceptualisation might suggest otherwise, none of the model’s four elements is unitary in nature. In fact, all of the elements are very complex. For instance, with respect to international bodies, their internal structure is elaborate and multi-layered. To complicate matters, there is a plethora of international organisations and third parties, all having various territorial coverage and different functions. Finally, although the elements of host and lobby governments and minority groups might seem unitary, in reality, they are anything but. These three entities instead represent the various ethnic interest groups, leaders or parties present in each of the categories, because within “both the titular nation and national minorities [and the kin-state] there is no unified stance on the policies to adopt, or the reactions to take, against them.”¹⁰ These different interests regularly compete for representation within each of the three categories of actors. Although the model treats actors as unitary, the actors only “serve as short-hand descriptions to indicate the *dominant* action, and preferences, of each player.”¹¹

I envision the framework of ethnic identity-based politics as being characterised by a *strategic interaction between and within groups*, since “whether finite or not, all resources are scarce”¹² and are thus objects of competition. When states and ethnic groups fail to reach a compromise, ethnic violence may erupt, and when it does, it is because groups must face three strategic dilemmas that often occur together.¹³ The first dilemma affecting interaction between the groups is an ‘information failure’, which arises from an information asymmetry regarding intra- vs. inter-group interactions: whereas one side can assume complete information for intra-group relations, cross-group relations are often atomistic and marked by incomplete information. In the course of inter-group bargaining, groups can simultaneously possess private information and have incentive to misrepresent their true intentions. Because information is costly, groups economise, with the result that they are always short of full information and therefore tend to compensate by relying on prior beliefs and precedents. Ideally, effective states arbitrate between the groups and ensure that private information is not abused. However, the state itself is sometimes party to the conflict or too weak to perform its functions, in which case only outside mediation can provide public information. The traditional way of compensating for an information deficit – relying on signals and past behaviour – is a recipe for misunderstanding.

Credible commitment dilemmas occur when at least one group cannot commit to an agreement. For example, the majority might refuse to honour the minority’s rights, in which case the minority might anticipate

8 Erin Jenne, “A Bargaining Theory of Minority Demands: Explaining the Dog That Didn’t Bite in 1990s Yugoslavia,” *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2004 December): 748.

9 Ulrich Schneckener, *International Involvement in Resolving Self-Determination Disputes* (European Centre for Minority Issues) (The Cambridge Carnegie Project on Resolving Self-Determination Disputes Using Complex Power-Sharing, 2002 [cited]; available from <http://www.intstudies.cam.ac.uk/centre/cps/documents.html>).

10 Taras Kuzio, “‘Nationalising States’ or Nation-Building? A Critical Review of the Theoretical Literature and Empirical Evidence,” *Nations and Nationalism* 7, no. 2 (2001): 6.

11 Jenne, “A Bargaining Theory of Minority Demands,” 732.

12 David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, “Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Ethnic Conflict,” in *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation*, ed. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 9.

13 *Ibid.*, 9–10, 13.

subjugation and decide to fight back pre-emptively.¹⁴ Stable ethnic relations can be characterised as ethnic contracts with safeguards to induce reciprocal trust. These safeguards must reflect the balance of power (power equals raw capabilities, such as demography, and the capacity to mobilise) and beliefs about mutual intentions in order to work. The problem is that the balance of power is always in flux; the safeguards should therefore constantly be renegotiated, or the contract will fail. Furthermore, mutual distrust can also generate commitment problems independent of changes in the balance of power, and the mere suspicion of potential future vulnerability on either side is enough to trigger violent conflict.¹⁵

The security dilemma, first applied to ethnic groups by Barry Posen in 1993, is the third strategic dilemma faced by ethnic groups. In a sense, as Posen himself argues, the security dilemma itself encompasses all the strategic dilemmas presented above. The driving force of security dilemmas is the fear of a pre-emptive attack. As such, the ethnic security dilemma is equal in its general formulation to information failures and commitment problems, because in order for one to occur, there is a need for a 'first mover' advantage and mutual uncertainty vis-à-vis the other side's intentions.¹⁶ In such situations, even external actors can do little as the use of military force is a dominant strategy, and international actors can only address this by raising the costs of using force.

It is equally important to understand that ethnic relations are not solely dependent on inter-group dynamics; intra-group interaction is also part of the equation. Intra-actions can be modelled as follows: the existing patterns of ethnic domination or deprivation will result in grievances; grievances translate into imperatives for the mobilisation of the ethnic group, whose actions in turn combine with the state's to produce political outcomes. This way, one single continuous process can be constructed as a tool for understanding the dynamics of group definition, ethnic mobilisation, strategic bargaining and political action.¹⁷ I see the transition from ethnic mobilisation to collective action taking place as follows: grievances are necessary for mobilisation, and the aggregation of grievances to the collective level depends on a common identity. In other words, it is politically motivated ethnic outbidding that will destabilise society or raise the political salience of ethnicity by stimulating ethnic fears, which are based on memories, myths and emotions that can be distorted or exaggerated to fuel the emotional pull cultivated by the elites.¹⁸

Let me now turn to presenting my concept of ethnic relations. My informal model of ethnic relations relies on Jenne's concept of ethnic bargaining as a sequential game among the groups.¹⁹ Accordingly, each player has to ascertain the intentions of all the other players before making a move. One player moves first, and only then can the other players react (game theory assumes that players can anticipate reactions to their moves based on knowledge of other players' preferences or beliefs about these preferences).²⁰ Since the players cannot know each other's real intentions, uncertainty results, which further underlines the importance of signals of intentions (such as official statements, historical precedents or policy guarantees) for credible commitments. This also reflects one of the basic premises of this model, that "managing ethnic

14 James Fearon, "Rationalist Explanation for War," *International Organization* 49, (1995 Summer): 379–414.

15 Lake and Rothchild, "Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Ethnic Conflict," 11–4.; Fearon, "Rationalist Explanation for War," 379–414.

16 Erik Melander, "Fearful, but Not Mad – Modeling the Security Dilemma of Conventional Conflict" (paper presented at the 31st North American Meeting of the Peace Science Society, Indianapolis, November 20-23 1997), 1-2.; Lake and Rothchild, "Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Ethnic Conflict," 14-5.

17 Ashley J. Tellis, Thomas S. Szanya, and James A. Winnefeld, "The Process Model for Anticipating Ethnic Conflict," in *Identifying Potential Ethnic Conflict: Application of a Process Model*, ed. Thomas S. Szanya (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), 30.

18 Lake and Rothchild, "Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Ethnic Conflict," 15-8.

19 Jenne, "A Bargaining Theory of Minority Demands," 748.

20 Magnus Oberg, "Modeling Interethnic Relations: Sketching an Alternative to Fearon and Laitin's Model of Interethnic Cooperation" (paper presented at the Joint Meeting of the ECPR Standing Group on International Relations and the International Studies Association, Vienna, Sept. 16-19 1998), 17-9.

conflicts is a process with no end point or final resolution,"²¹ which demands continuous inter-group dialogue and negotiation in order to be viable.

I will borrow from economics a very close approximation of this conception, namely Rubenstein's sequential bargaining model,²² which shows that the Nash bargaining solution is the unique outcome of a reasonable bargaining process. Rubenstein's game can most easily be conceived as splitting a pie.²³ Let this pie be the amalgam of political and cultural rights, recognition policies and economic resources to be split between the ethnic groups. Bargaining takes place over time, and time is costly; therefore, the pie remaining to be split shrinks with each round of negotiations.

To make the game more realistic, I also argue that both the majority and the minority group have a threshold or a reservation point,²⁴ and any arrangement below this threshold will result in the breakdown of bargaining and the outbreak of violence. Faced with the sequential bargaining setup and using backward induction, the players can calculate which offer to accept, and if we keep multiplying the rounds, we eventually end up with an equitable division of the pie, an egalitarian solution that would fit well with normative theory. Let us now turn the game upside down and assume that bargaining would start at a disagreement point (a 'zero-zero' point, but not necessarily a nil-nil – it is merely meant to symbolise an inequitable agreement between majority and minority groups). The players follow the path of backward induction, but in the reverse direction.

Now, to make Rubenstein's model more pragmatic, let us assume that waiting is more costly for the minority than for the majority group. This assumption can be easily justified by minority fears that unless they secure some sort of protection for their distinct identity, it will be eradicated by assimilationist pressure from the majority. Following Rubenstein's logic and the analogy of the pie, this urgency would mean that the minority's share of pie is shrinking faster. This is why the minority would turn to its lobby actor (kin-state) to try to compensate for the cost of time, which also makes postponing the decision more costly for the majority. Notice that the lobby actor can over-compensate and thus make the delayed decision more costly for the majority than for the minority (e.g., instituting sanctions against the government, loss of international prestige, condemnations of state practises, etc.). In the real world, this would mean that unconditional support from a lobby actor could also end in a position that exceeds the threshold of majority, whereby the majority would choose violence, because co-operation would be considered too costly.

Assuming it is impartial, the international player does not have a discount rate regarding the payoffs (shares of the pie) and is therefore interested in – and can signal its commitment to the others – maintaining the bargaining process. Although this suggests an interest in the process rather than in the distribution per se, the international actor could also contribute to increasing the size of the pie to be split in each consecutive round by generating more and more political/ cultural rights, recognition or economic resources for both the majority and minority to divide in increasingly more egalitarian ways. This would help offset the losses incurred in the negotiation rounds. Maintaining the bargaining process would require balancing many components, including both parties' degree of leverage, and possibly extra support from lobby actors on both sides.

Let us now examine how our quadric model of ethnic bargaining would explain real-world scenarios. In the following pages, due to time and space limits, I will concentrate on ethnic relations between the Hungarian minority and the majority states in Slovakia and Romania. Hungarians have constituted one of the most important minority groups in Eastern Europe since 1920, when Hungary effectively lost two-thirds

21 Lake and Rothchild, "Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Ethnic Conflict," 6.

22 Ariel Rubenstein, "Perfect Equilibrium in a Bargaining Model," *Econometrica* 50, no. 1 (1982): 99-109.

23 James Fearon also uses the pie analogy; see James Fearon, "Ethnic War as a Commitment Problem" (paper presented at the 1993 APSA Annual Meetings, New York, 1995), 7.

24 Patrick M. Regan and Ayssegul Aydin, "Diplomacy and Other Forms of Intervention: Combined Strategies and the Duration of Civil War," (Binghamton University, 2004), 12.

of its population and territory to Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Italy, Austria and Ukraine due to the provisions of the Treaty of Trianon. While Hungary's contact with its diaspora remained limited under communism, the protection of kin abroad has been high on Hungary's foreign policy agenda ever since 1989. Hungarian minorities abroad have often mobilised around autonomy and language rights, which has created anxieties on the part of Hungary's neighbours. I will concentrate on Slovakia and Romania, because they are ideal comparative cases – the two countries share a number of important similarities in their history and ethnic composition: Hungarians constitute the largest minority groups in both countries (and the Hungarian minorities there happen to be the largest two Hungarian communities abroad). For the purposes of this paper, I will concentrate on the period between the regime change (1989) and 2004, when both Hungary and Slovakia entered the European Union.

I will show in the following pages that the main factors leading to the radicalisation of minority claims are the minority's perception of power vis-à-vis the host state and the minority's expectations regarding the behaviour of the kin-state. I will also pay close attention to intergovernmental organisations (such as NATO, the OSCE, the CoE and the EU) and their role in influencing the policies of these governments toward their minorities. I shall use the similarities between the two chosen case studies to control for alternative explanations of ethnic behaviour, which will enable us to assess the explanatory power of our suggested model.

In the immediate aftermath of the regime change, up until 1992, Slovakia enjoyed relative ethnic peace. Hungarian demands remained moderate at this time, because the entire political spectrum was preoccupied with establishing the new state. In Romania, while the interim head of government Ion Iliescu actively sought ethnic Hungarian support by promising minority protection, clashes broke out in the Transylvanian town of Tirgu-Mures in March 1990, when supporters of the nationalist party *Vatra Romaneasca* (Romanian Cradle) attacked Hungarians. Hungarian retaliations followed and the army finally intervened, but eight people were killed and more than three hundred injured – mostly Hungarians – before order was restored.²⁵

Inter-ethnic peace in the region rapidly deteriorated; Hungarians opposed the break-up of Czechoslovakia, because they saw the federal state as the most important guarantor of their rights. The split between Slovakia and the Czech Republic was completed in 1993, and the new Slovak constitution confirmed earlier Hungarian fears by granting the Slovak nation a pre-eminent position from its very first slogan – “We the Slovak People.”²⁶ Similarly, by late 1991, the Romanian parliament ratified a constitution that pronounced the country a “sovereign and independent, unitary and indivisible Romanian national state” [Article 1(1)], founded on “the unity of the Romanian people” [Article 1(4)].²⁷ The constitution also declared autonomy for (Hungarian) regions unconstitutional.

One would have expected a strong radicalisation of the Hungarian minorities in the face of these detrimental developments, yet such a transformation did not occur. This cannot be explained unless we consider the role Hungary played during this time. Amidst a regime change, Hungary exhibited a non-interventionist stance towards the plight of its expatriates; the Hungarian public was more interested in the accession to NATO, the CoE and the EC. The government tried to resolve disputes over minority issues through bilateral diplomacy and by avoiding controversial policies; it therefore curtailed its support for kin abroad.

The strong link between partisan support from the kin-state and minority radicalisation is further underscored by a brief examination of the period in which the Hungarian position of non-intervention was reversed. This was signalled by the institution of the Antall government, which openly declared the protection of Hungarians abroad as its top foreign policy aim. Hungary began to lobby aggressively on behalf of its kin starting in 1992, and as predicted by our quadric model, the declaration of unconditional support in turn led to the radicalisation of local Hungarian minority organisations. For example, in Romania, although

25 Vladimir Socor, “Forces of Old Resurface in Romania: The Ethnic Clashes in Tîrgu-Mures,” *Report on Eastern Europe I*, no. 6 (1990); Erin Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment* (Cornell University Press, 2007) 111.

26 *The Constitution of the Slovak Republic* <http://www.slovensko.com/docs/const/>

27 *The Constitution of Romania* <http://domino.kappa.ro/guvern/constitutia-e.html>

the newly established Party of Social Democracy in Romania (PDSR) won the 1992 elections, it had to establish a minority government with the support of the nationalist parties, which resulted in more assimilationist policies. Antall refused to normalise relations with his neighbours until they secured the rights of their Hungarian minorities,²⁸ and openly lobbied for his kinfolk during the ongoing bilateral talks. To signal its intentions, Hungary invited its co-ethnic minority leaders to Budapest, where they were promised that Hungary would consult with them about any bilateral agreement and would not sign the treaty unless it included protection policies for the ethnic Hungarians.²⁹ Talks on the bilateral treaty dragged on until 1996,³⁰ and ethnic tensions ran high during this period, due in part to the continued pressure for territorial autonomy exerted by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) (although it was in opposition between 1990-96).³¹

In Slovakia, ethnic Hungarians had moved from their moderate claims for the restoration of Hungarian faculties and the expansion of minority-language media to unanimous support for local autonomy by the end of 1993. The standoff lasted until the spring of 1994, and as a member of the Council of Europe (CoE), Hungary threatened to veto Slovakia's admission if it did not institute measures for the protection of minorities immediately.³² The 1993 Copenhagen European Council declared that one of the requirements for membership in the Union was respect for human rights, including minority rights. This only served to bolster Hungarian claims, as it meant that Slovakia and Romania would be barred from joining the EU until they accommodated their Hungarian minorities.³³

The Meciar government was ousted from office in the spring of 1994, and the new Slovak government initiated legislation to comply with CoE and EU recommendations. The local Hungarian minority took this development as a further window of opportunity, interpreting the international demands put on Slovakia as indirect support for their claims. The new Slovak government also included the Hungarian coalition parties, and the need for their support to pass legislation meant additional leverage for minority claims.³⁴ This only contributed to the further radicalisation of minority demands, which in turn led to growing mistrust between Hungarian and Slovakian co-nationals. To make matters worse, when Meciar won the 1994 elections, he immediately introduced policies that were even more detrimental to the Hungarian community.

Nevertheless, ethnic conflict did not escalate, because Hungary also began to curtail its support for Hungarians abroad. This shift was due to the introduction of the new socialist-liberal government in 1994 under the leadership of Gyula Horn. Horn, unlike Antall, was interested in establishing good relations with Hungary's neighbouring countries and concentrated on Hungary's admission to NATO and the EU. Experiencing diminished bargaining leverage, and consistent with our quadric model, ethnic Hungarian leaders in both Slovakia and Romania soon abandoned their call for territorial autonomy. Having a more limited expectation of Hungary's intervention on their behalf, the leaders moderated their demands and focused more on countering specific policies detrimental to ethnic Hungarians.

28 Robert J. Patkai, "Hungarian Minorities in Europe: A Case Study – Ethnicity and Nationalism: A Challenge to the Churches," *The Ecumenical Review* 4, no. 1 (1995 April): 218, Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment* 100-01.

29 Zoltán Kántor, "Nationalizing Minorities and Homeland Politics: The Case of the Hungarians in Romania," in *Nation-Building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi, et al. (Budapest: Regio Books, 2001), 261.

30 Elizabeth Warner, "Unilateral Preferences Granted to Foreign National Minorities by a Kin-State: A Case Study of Hungary's "Status Law"," *Georgetown Journal of International Law* 35, no. 2 (2004 Winter): 387-8.

31 Kántor, "Nationalizing Minorities and Homeland Politics: The Case of the Hungarians in Romania," 260.

32 Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment* 101.

33 Max van der Stoel, "The European Architecture of Minority Rights," *CROSSROADS The Macedonian Foreign Policy Journal* 1, no. 2 (2007 April): 110-1.

34 Lynn M. Tesser, "The Geopolitics of Tolerance: Minority Rights under Eu Expansion in East-Central Europe," *East European Politics and Societies* 17, no. 3 (2003): 515.

Yet again, the region saw a major change in ethnic politics with the election of Viktor Orbán's nationalist Fidesz (Alliance of Young Democrats) in Hungary. Although Orbán declared himself the political heir to Antall, his policies towards ethnic kin abroad were significantly different – whereas Antall refused to normalise relations with Slovakia and Romania due to their shabby treatment of Hungarian minorities, Orbán's government supported Slovakia's accession to the EU and NATO. It was also ready to negotiate with Romania and maintained a dialogue with its neighbours throughout its term.³⁵

Orbán campaigned on the promise to provide for Hungarians abroad. In 2001, the Hungarian parliament delivered on the promise by adopting the so-called status law, which extended benefits to co-nationals in Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Croatia and Slovenia.³⁶ The law was severely criticised by international bodies, including the CoE, which argued that the law violated European principles of non-discrimination.³⁷ Facing this criticism, Hungary stressed its conciliatory intentions toward its neighbours and promised to negotiate with Romania and Slovakia – the most vocal critics³⁸ – on the implementation of the law. Indeed, the status law was primarily intended for a domestic audience (just before the 2002 elections),³⁹ and the Hungarian government soon curtailed most of the law's benefits. As a result, by 2002, the law had been reduced to little more than a symbolic act, which clearly signalled that Hungary had chosen to champion EU integration over its diaspora's interests.

International actors also undeniably affected the bargaining process between Hungary and its neighbours over minority issues. Two of the most influential players, the CoE and the EU, were presented earlier, but one should not forget NATO. It was the US and NATO that insisted, starting in 1995, that Hungary settle all its differences with Slovakia and Romania as a prerequisite for membership.⁴⁰ The OSCE principles were also commonly cited as standards to be followed by all parties; therefore, their importance cannot be over-emphasised either.

In light of the fact that both Slovakian and Romanian ethnic Hungarian leaders had lost strong backing from Hungary but were part of the ruling government coalitions by 2002, our quadric model predicts that Hungarians minorities should have moderated their claims and continued to co-operate and negotiate with majority groups. This prediction is confirmed in the brief period of 2002-2004, which was characterised by ethnic peace, inter-ethnic government coalitions and the adoption of additional minority protection policies in both Romania and Slovakia.

Our brief – albeit non-exhaustive – comparative review of minority claims in Slovakia and Romania demonstrates the explanatory power of our quadric model of ethnic bargaining. We have seen that minority claims fluctuated intensively between 1989 and 2004, and that periods of minority claim radicalisations always coincided with intensive international pressure from the minority's kin (lobby) state and international actors. When Hungarian minorities lost Hungary's support, local groups assumed a more accommodative strategy, even in the face of assimilationist policies. Last but not least, the important role played by various international actors in promoting inter-ethnic dialogue and accommodation has also been presented here. One can even argue that the resurgent nationalism in both Slovakia and Romania of the early 1990s could have easily deteriorated into violent conflicts without the international pressure exerted by the EU, NATO,

35 Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment* 118.

36 Kántor, "Nationalizing Minorities and Homeland Politics: The Case of the Hungarians in Romania," 265-9.

37 See European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) Preferential Treatment of National Minorities by their Kin-State adopted by the Venice Commission at its 48th Plenary Meeting, (Venice, 19-20 October 2001) [http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2001/CDL-INF\(2001\)019-e.asp](http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2001/CDL-INF(2001)019-e.asp)

38 It is ironic to note that the Slovak parliament adopted a similar benefit law for the "Slovaks living abroad," offering educational, employment and transportation benefits, based on an ethnic Slovak identification card back in 1997. In 1998, a benefit law adopted in Romania established a budget to grant free higher education in Romania for ethnic Romanians living abroad. See Csergo, 3.

39 Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment* 102.

40 Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment* 116.

the CoE and the OSCE. Third-party actors also managed to convince Hungary to abandon its controversial status law on ethnic Hungarians as early as 2002.

What is important is that the EU, NATO, the CoE, the OSCE and various other international actors did not act on behalf of the Hungarian minorities, and therefore, we cannot include them as potential lobby players in the model. At the same time, they certainly influenced minority behaviour both directly and indirectly, in a manner consistent with the prescriptions of our quadric model. This underlines the importance of having a more sophisticated theoretical approach to ethnic relations, one that allows for the inclusion of the international actor, which can alter the preferences and strategies of both the minority group's host and lobby state – the primary players in ethnic relations. I hope to have shown that the inclusion of the international or third-party actor in the model of ethnic relations can contribute not only to a better understanding of ethnic relations, but to the effective resolution of ethnic issues, and thus increases the likelihood of peaceful ethnic relations.

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