

Juraj MARUŠIAK – Ivan HALÁSZ

Mateusz GNIAZDOWSKI (eds.)

**(Dez)integračná sila stredoeurópskeho  
nacionalizmu. Prípady štátov Vyšehradskej  
skupiny**

**[The (dis)integration power of Central  
European nationalism: A study of the Visegrad  
Group countries]**

Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave 2015, 220 pages  
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In 2015, the publishing house of Comenius University in Bratislava released an interesting book on contemporary nationalism entitled “(Dez)integračná sila stredoeurópskeho nacionalizmu. Prípady štátov Vyšehradskej skupiny” [The (Dis)Integration Power of Central European Nationalism: A Study of the Visegrad Group Countries] by Juraj Marušiak, Ivan Halász and Mateusz Gniazdowski. The monograph was published within Visegrad University Studies Grant co-financed by International Visegrad Fund (grant No. 60900014 – Visegrad Group – Politics and Society).

The book constitutes a holistic attempt to present the issues of contemporary nationalism in Central European states. The introduction of the publication emphasizes that after 1989 politicians and societies expected the victory of “the spirit of social solidarity and the ideals of civil equality” which would weaken the nationalism. The fall of communism and the systemic transformation, however, did not confirm the thesis of the end of nationalism in this part of Europe. On the one hand, nationalism, or its lack, have become a significant factor of the fall of multinational federal states of Central and Eastern Europe, like the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, it showed its integration function in newly established countries. The authors of the publications emphasize that the issue of Central European nationalism is analysed in a broader context of Central and Eastern Europe, including the territories of former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Kingdoms of Bohemia, Hungary and Austria, and the Balkan states.

The book consists of an introduction, 5 chapters and a conclusion. The structure of the publication is problem-based which allows to recognize several fundamental research areas: the right of nations to self-determination; national and state symbols in the region; former and current status of national minorities in the region; position of Central Europe in Polish foreign policy. The publication was released in Slovakian.

The starting point of the monograph is the most extensive chapter entitled “Central

Europe and the Issue of the Right of Nations for Self-Determination" by Juraj Marušiak, from the Institute of Political Science of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava. In this chapter, he focuses on the interpretation of the right of nations to self-determination in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In the beginning, the author presents theoretical aspects of nationalism. Subsequently, the stages of the forming of nationalisms in Central Europe are described. What deserves a particular attention is the analysis of previously undertaken attempts to create political nations in multinational countries. It is pictured with not fully successful example of introducing czechoslovakism and yugoslavism in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Marušiak made a comparative analysis of both ideologies and, among others, he concluded that their emergence was connected, to a large extent, with aggressive policies conducted by more powerful neighbours, such as Hungary, Italy and Germany, and their fall resulted from democracies eventually introduced in both countries and an economic crisis. Next part presents a historic analysis of the right to self-determination from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to nowadays. A detailed description is given to application of the law after the end of the Cold War, when multinational federations of Central and Eastern Europe have collapsed, for example the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. In the end, the author analyses the case study of Kosovo and its influence on the discourse on the right to self-determination. In his opinion, the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008, which was recognized by some EU countries and the United States, was, to a large extent, a political decision and it established a precedent later used by Russia in the case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Next two chapters are written by Ivan Halász from the Centre for Social Science of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest. In chapter 2, entitled "National and State Symbols in Countries of Central Europe after 1989", he analyses the role of national and state symbols in the process of consolidation of societies and the growth of nationalism. He makes a comparative analysis of the role of the above mentioned categories of symbols in the integration processes of Central European societies. Ideological disputes and the influence of the historical memory on the national symbols are presented afterwards. The chapter also consist of an analysis of the revival of nationalism in the region after 1989 illustrated with the development of national and state symbolism. Extremely noteworthy is the description of the legal solutions regarding the coronation jewels, and symbolic cities, events and personalities.

In chapter 3, entitled "The Issue of the Right of Minorities in Central Europe. Comments on the History and Current Status of the Minority Issue in the Region", Halász focuses on the issue of integration and political activities of ethnic minorities in Central European societies. The author characterizes ethnic minorities and their legal statuses, mainly in terms of language rights, in different countries of Central Europe. He postulates that after the transitions of 1989, none of the countries demonstrated special creativity in the field of minority rights. None of them introduced any territorial autonomy. However, the author indicates an exception to this rule which is the model of non-territorial self-government of the minorities in Hungary. According to Halász, the legislation regarding the rights of minorities in Central Europe do not keep pace with internal and external changes, such as growing wave of migration, problems regarding the integration of migration, as well as issues of the Roma community. He emphasizes that the laws of Central European states

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demonstrate certain common features.

Last two chapters were prepared by Mateusz Gniazdowski from the Centre for Eastern Studies in Warsaw. In chapter 4, entitled "Historical Memory and Polish Foreign Political Thought after 1989", the author analyses the influence of historical memory on planning priorities of Polish foreign policy. Gniazdowski reckons that historical experiences of Poland from 1939 and 1945 affected the decision about its integration and active participation in Euro-Atlantic structures. Then the author defines one of the most fundamental principle of Polish foreign policy – Nothing about us without us – which means that Poland should not be treated as a matter of foreign policy, but instead as an active participant of international relations. According to Gniazdowski, "the historical policy", which is pursued by Poland, is a subject of an internal political debate, and historical experiences of this country have a great impact on formulating "Polish Eastern policy".

In the last chapter entitled "Central Europe in Polish Foreign Policy", the expert of the Centre for Eastern Studies analyses Polish foreign policy towards Central Europe after 1989. Interestingly, he presents nationalism in a completely different light. In his view, not only is it a destructive power, but also it can positively influence the deepening of cooperation within the Visegrad Group and strengthening European integration. The author pays attention to the increasing role of the Visegrad collaboration in Polish foreign policy during the rule of Law and Justice Party and Donald Tusk. It plays, to his mind, a more and more important role in terms of energy safety and common policy towards Eastern Europe. No less important seems the cooperation in the field of defense and security. Gniazdowski observes the differences in this matter among other countries of V4. For instance, a large difference of opinions appeared during the Ukrainian crisis in 2013. Earlier the Visegrad Group was divided because of, among others, a project of placing elements of the US missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as the attitude towards the Russo-Georgian war in 2008. In the conclusion the author underlines that V4 is "the most effective regional platform of articulation of Polish interests in and outside the EU."

Undoubtedly, addressing the issue of nationalism in Central Europe was a reasonable undertaking by the authors. It seems to be particularly significant on current stage of development of international relations, where a specific renaissance of the idea of nationalism takes place, which is connected with, *inter alia*, internal problems of the European Union, the increasing migration crisis, separatist tendencies and minority rights violations. What distinguishes this publication is that it address the issue of "historical policy" and the role of Poland in Central Europe, especially now, when after the Law and Justice Party has won the election, the idea of Intermarium is promoted in the foreign policy. Taking up the subject of "symbolic policy" also seems very important. An essential advantage of this book is a thorough use of literature on the subject, including English-, Polish-, Slovak-, Czech-, and Hungarian-language publications, which give a possibility of profound and in-depth analysis of the discussed issues.

The book is supplemented by biographical notes of the authors, abstracts in English and index of names, which makes the publication more transparent and attractive to readers. The monograph is worth recommending to either academics and researchers or students of political sciences, lawyers and sociologists. It should also be in the scope of interest of experts, journalists, NGO activists dealing with the issue of nationalism, national minorities

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and sub-regional cooperation in Central Europe. It makes a contribution to further research on the mentioned such important issues in terms of current migration crisis. Clearly, the authors themselves evidence the high value of the publication, as they are well-known researchers and experts dealing with international problems. I believe that this book could have a wider range of recipients, if it was published in English.

**Łukasz LEWKOWICZ**

Faculty of Political Science  
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin  
Poland