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The Case of Twentieth-Century Hungary

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Summary

The twentieth century was a period of frequent regime changes in Hungary. From 1918 to 1947, territorial changes were also common. Within the short twentieth century, the international environment changed significantly, from the age of territoriality to the age of globalization. The paper examines whether and how Hungary was territorialized or globalized during political transformation periods. After discussing the theoretical background, the study examines the drivers of territorialization. According to the scholarly literature, formation of new states and the presence of minorities in the borderland area always go hand in hand with territorialization. This claim is supported by events in twentieth-century Hungary. At the same time, the paper also examines whether regime and/or border changes have the same effect or not. Finally, another important question is whether the liberalization of the border regime will soften the political system and contribute to political regime change.

Keywords

transformation, regime change, territorial change, globalization, territorialization, borderland minorities, border regime, Hungary

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Introduction and theoretical background

Hungary went through several political transformations in the 20th century. These were characterized by two factors, that is, regime and territorial changes. The most important periods when these changes took place are the following: from 1918 to 1920, from 1938 to 1948 (with multiple territorial and regime changes in both periods), from 1953 to 1963 and from 1987 to 1990 (regime changes only—in case of the former period, attempted and/or partial regime changes). As we can see, territorial changes had always been accompanied by regime changes. Therefore, in the first half of the 20th century it is not easy to distinguish the effects of the two factors, but in the second half, changes of the political regime can be studied independently of the effects of territorial changes. (Major border changes which affected larger territories are often referred to as "change of imperium" in the Hungarian literature.[1]) Of course, economic and social transformations were only triggered by these events and lasted much longer, typically for decades.

The century before 1960 was, according to Charles Maier, the period of territoriality or, rather, territorialization, challenging the concept of Giovanni Arrighi, who argued for a long 20th century, from the middle of the 19th century until today, with globalization as its main characteristics.[2] Globalization, territoriality and territorial-ization are defined so differently that I should explain what I mean

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[1] Simon Attila, *Az átmenet bizonytalansága: Az 1918/1919-es impériumváltás Pozsonytól Kassáig* [The Uncertainty of Transition: Change of Imperium from Bratislava to Kosice in 1918/1919] (Somorja–Budapest: Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet – ELKH BTK Történettudományi Intézet, 2021); *Impériumváltás Erdélyben 1918–1920* [Change of Imperium in Transylvania 1918–1920], ed. Kovács Kiss, Gyöngy (Kolozsvár: Korunk – Komp-Press Kiadó, 2020); Murber, Ibolya, "A burgenlandi impériumváltás 1918–1924: kikényszerített identitásképzés és politikai erőszak" [Change of Imperium in Burgenland 1918–1924: Forced Identity Formation and Political Violence] *Múltunk* 64, no. 2 (2019): 181–214.; A. Sajti, Enikő, *Impériumváltások, revízió, kisebbség: Magyarok a Délvidéken 1918–1947* [Changes of Imperium, Revision, Minority: Hungarians in the Southern Territories] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2004).

[2] Charles Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era", *American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (2000): 807–81., https://doi.org/10.2307/2651811; Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1994).

under these terms. Beyond everyday interpretations like western-ization or the worldwide spread of ideas and certain other phenomena, globalization has three important characteristics according to Béla Tomka: 1. intensifying links/interactions between different parts of the world; 2. growing interdependence between different parts of the world; 3. and the widespread awareness of these processes. Scholarly discourse on globalization often lacks a historical perspective, although globalization can be traced back to at least the end of the 19th century. The process of globalization did not follow a straight line but came in waves. The deepening of interactions has been interrupted by opposing processes during which the borders of states have once again become more difficult to cross, that is, territorialization took place.[3] Instead of this term, however, scholars mostly focused on the definition of territoriality.

Territoriality is the ambition of individuals, of communities of various sizes, and of states to maintain control over persons and resources within a space enclosed by borders, and especially along those borders, and to create and enforce rules to defend and maintain the separation between the space within the demarcated borders and the outside world. The major weakness of this term is that it is essentially a spatial–geographical concept and therefore a static one. In historical studies, we need to use a more dynamic term that encompasses change. Increasing territoriality is expressed by territorialization, decreasing territoriality is characterized by deterri-torialization. Andrea Komlosy regards territoriality as delimitation *(Abgrenzung)* of (nation) states, while Charles Maier believes that the exploitation of a region's economic, transport and other assets is also part of this concept, that is, scholars should research the borders and also the bordered territory.[4]

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[3] Tomka, Béla, Keller, Márkus and Baráth, Katalin, "Bevezetés a globalizációtörténetbe" [An Introduction to the History of Globalization] GlobCast (podcast), July 14, 2020, accessed Oktober 16, 2022. https://anchor.fm/globtort/episodes/Bevezets-a-globalizcitrtnetbe-egnn4s (especially from 26:10 to 28:04); see more on the webpage of the History of Globalization Research Group: https://globtort.bibl.u-szeged.hu/en/about/.

[4] Bencsik, Péter, "Territorializálódás és globalizáció: Historiográfiai áttekintés" [Territorialization and Globalization: A Historiographical Overview] *Korall* no. 85

It is also important to clarify the relationship between globalization and territorialization. Political science literature considers that globalization has shaken up the state-centred international system. In this view, globalization restricts (or undermines) territorial sovereignty by loosening the territorial constraints of power, that is, globalization causes deterritorialization. Others point out that the relation of the two phenomena is more complex. According to Saskia Sassen, territoriality only transforms during globalization, e.g. nation-states themselves have actively contributed to economic globalization, so the existence of territorial states and globalization cannot be seen as mutually exclusive phenomena. Several scholars think that globalization in fact reshapes territoriality, resulting in reterritorialization.[5]

Another key concept of my paper is border regime, under which I mean all those measures that persons crossing state borders could encounter through the actions of the authorities (including the case of illegal border crossing and its consequences). This definition encompasses all the elements of border surveillance, but also goes beyond it as it also incorporates certain elements of passport administration as well as the implementation of other legal stipulations not forming part of border surveillance (such as, for example, passports issuance, customs regulations and their practical implementation, and procedures applicable in case of petty offences and court cases).

There were two distinct border regimes in the 20th century, the Eastern and the Western ones. However, the geographical border between the Eastern and Western border regimes creates a unique contact zone that has the ability to adapt both to the Western and

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(2021): 5–25.; Komlosy, Andrea, *Grenzen: Räumliche und soziale Trennlinien im Zeitenlauf* [Borders: Spatial and Social Dividing Lines in the Course of Time] (Wien: Promedia, 2018), 13.; Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History," 808, 814–22.

[5] Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1–32.; Neil Brenner, "Globalization as Reterritorialization: The Re-scaling of Urban Governance in the European Union," *Urban Studies* 36, no. 3 (1999): 431–41, https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098993466.

to the Eastern systems. Previously, Mark Salter also described two "worlds of travel" (that is, border regimes), but his focus was the 19th century, and distinguished between the European and colonial regimes, while Eastern Europe was left out from his analysis completely.[6]

The Western model is permissive under the given circumstances, whereas the Eastern model is always restrictive in nature. States adopting the Western model are open societies whose interests lie in maintaining open borders. They do not limit their own citizens either in their temporary or more permanent foreign travels or in their migrations; in fact, they are even willing to forgo passport requirements. Up until the very recent past, an important feature of the Western border surveillance regime was that it was of a law enforcement nature and not of a military nature. This is also an expression of the idea that the main function of the border regime is identification, registration and control, and not (state) security. Therefore, states belonging to the Western regime recognize human rights in general along with such included specific rights as the right to free movement, the right of free settlement and, consequently, the right to emigrate.

The primary aim of the Eastern model—although it also recognizes the challenge of external threats and does want to protect itself against them—is controlling its own population. This is where its restrictive nature originates from. Accordingly, its fundamental intention is not to restrict or block immigration, but to maintain its own population and labour force, that is, to prevent emigration. This often leads to the result that the system does not trust its own citizens and it rather restricts their foreign travel even as tourists than to risk losing them because they fail to return. Moreover, if this mistrust is even greater, the system may go as far as restricting and strictly controlling the movement of its population even within the country (with internal passports). This way people will be unable to

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6 Mark B. Salter, *Rights of Passage: The Passport in International Relations* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), https://doi.org/10.1515/9781626370128, 20.

even approach the border, let alone attempt an escape. Hence, Eastern regimes of course do not recognize the right to free movement, but it is safe to say that they fail to respect the entire system of human rights in general. The societies that so emerge are closed and of an authoritarian or dictatorial nature. They see the movement of both their own population and of foreign populations as a threat, thus treating the issue as a (state) security issue of primary importance. This is the reason why they guard their borders heavily and why they implement border surveillance regimes of a military nature.[7]

The process of territorialization can be interpreted as a tightening of a country's border regime. According to Andrea Chandler, border regimes can become more rigorous on account of four primary reasons. First, the emergence of new states inevitably leads to higher levels of internal violence until the population gradually becomes loyal to the new state. Taking Hirschman's Exit, Voice and Loyalty Model[8] further, before loyalty to the (new) state is reached, stricter border control is maintained to prevent 'exit', that is, emigration. Chandler's second reason is the influence of the inter-national environment, that is, external threats. Of course, the level of international influence varies significantly over time; to put it simply, it increases during wars and decreases in peacetime. Besides external threats, however, we should note that a territorialising international environment also influences border regimes, making them stricter, while during globalization, border regimes often become more open. Third, the ethnic composition of the state; a state is more likely to maintain a more closed border system if it has many different nationalities, especially if these minorities live near the border. If this minority is also engaged in a secessionist movement, that is, want to (re)join its mother nation across the border, the border may be closed with exceptional rigour. The fourth

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7 Bencsik, Péter, *Border Regimes in Twentieth Century Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 34–42, 50–61, 74–86, 112–15, 120–22, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003295259

8 For the original theory, see Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States* (Cambridge, MA – London: Harvard University Press, 1970).

factor, the development of bureaucracy is not important in regard of my topic.[9]

In this paper, I would like to examine how the above factors have influenced each other, that is, whether and how Hungary was territorialized or globalized during these political transformations. My second aim is to examine to what extent the reasons for territorialization listed by Chandler are applicable in Hungary. In this context, I am also interested in whether regime and border changes also contribute to the territorialization process—in addition to the emergence of new states. Thirdly, I wonder if there is an inverse correlation, that is, whether the reforms of the border regime have an impact on the functioning of a dictatorial political regime. In other words: do they contribute to the transformation to a democratic system?

Although this paper relies heavily on archival sources, I will not cite any primary sources here. Instead, my previous books and studies will be referenced, where the original sources can be found.

Hungarian transformation periods in the first half of the 20th century

Before the First World War, Hungary belonged to the Western border regime. However, the first major transformation period (between 1918 and 1920), with three regime changes and a significant loss of territory, resulted in a shift towards the Eastern system, developing intermediate traits.

Of course, even the Western border regime became more rigorous due to the Great War. This war temporarily put an end to the wave of globalization and the interwar period can be characterized by territorialization. Still, other factors had of limited significance: no new states were created, no minorities were along their borders, international tension was present only between

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[9] Andrea Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation: Border Controls in the Soviet Union and its Successor States, 1917–1993* (Montreal & Kingston – London – Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 20–24.

France and Germany. No wonder that war-time restrictions were fading away during the 1920s.

The situation was quite different in Hungary. New states appeared as neighbours. Many scholars think that even Hungary was a new state, regaining her independence after almost four centuries. It is certain, however, that the political system changed completely, not even once. First in October 1918 (the so-called Aster Revolution, with the intention of creating a democratic system), then in March 1919 (Hungarian Council of Republic, a short-lived communist dictatorship) and finally in the Autumn of 1919 (counterrevolution and foundation of the Horthy regime). The third regime change had the aim to restore the pre-1918 political system (including the previous borders). In fact, this restauration attempt failed, and the emerging political system was a new one. What is maybe more important, the international environment was unfavourable for easing border controls, not only because of the general territorialization in the interwar period, but also due to special interstate relations in East Central Europe. Neighbouring countries, especially those which formed the "Little Entente" were hostile to post-Trianon Hungary, fearing Hungarian attempts of territorial revision. These fears were boosted by the fact that their borderland had a predominantly Hungarian population. These states sought to assimilate their Hungarian minorities, especially in the border regions. Yugoslavia, Romania and Czechoslovakia were interested in closed borders, with as less transborder activity as possible. They wanted to isolate their territory and block the contact among Hungarians separated by the Trianon borders. Borders were regularly closed due to political conflicts, epidemics or border incidents. More direct actions for assimilation were carried out by successor states in the borderland through land distribution and by settling new population. Their aim was to reduce the size of Hungarian-owned lands and to create Serb, Romanian or Slovak settler villages to dilute the Hungarian majority. Many of these settlers were forced to leave the borderland when it was reannexed

to Hungary during the Second World War. This time, Hungarian settlers arrived instead of them.[10]

Hungary's intention was to return to the border surveillance system that existed before the war, that is, to the Western border regime. It was not possible because of the above reasons, and, finally, based on the principle of reciprocity, even the Budapest government introduced strict passport rules and visa measures. At the same time, the borderland was also militarized. Border surveillance forces were under military control. This way, Hungary could circumvent the military restrictions of the Trianon peace treaty, which limited the size of the Hungarian army to 35,000 people. Border surveillance systems of the neighbours also started to be of military character.

The stricter border control in fact means territorialization because this way states have a stronger grip over their territories. The new borders also caused other problems, for example many estates and holdings were cut into two parts and their owners and tenants became dual landowners. New rules and international agreements were born to grant them the possibility of crossing the border without passport. Even so, these owners were forced to apply for borderland certificates, use designated roads making time-consuming detours. The so-called "small border traffic" made border control more difficult and caused significant bureaucratization as well. This kind of traffic was the prime interest of Hungary, as most dual landowners were Hungarian speaking.[11] The very same reason lies behind the fact that local Hungarian authorities treated illegal border crossers mildly, at least in the first years after the peace treaty;

[10] Simon, Attila, *Telepesek és telepes falvak Dél-Szlovákiában a két világháború között* [Settlers and Settler Villages in Southern Slovakia between the Two World Wars] (Somorja: Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2009), 81–123.; Simon, Attila, *Magyar idők a Felvidéken 1938–1945* [Hungarian Times in the Uplands] (Budapest: Jaffa, 2014), 111–25.; A. Sajti, Enikő, *Székely telepítés és nemzetiségpolitika a Bácskában – 1941* [Szekler Settlement and Nationality Policy in the Bácska Region in 1941] (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1984).

[11] Bencsik, Péter, "The (re)establishment of Small Border Traffic in Hungary after the Treaty of Trianon," in *Geography and the Nation after Trianon*, ed. Győri, Róbert and Jobbitt, Steven (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

strong transborder connections were Hungarian national interest. However, neighbouring countries harshly penalized illegal crossing, forcing Hungary to do so some years later. Another new phenomenon was contraband, launched by the price differences between neighbouring countries. The Hungarian state treasury suffered significant losses because of the activity of smugglers, and strict legal measures were taken against them. No wonder that Hungarian industrial and trade circles were campaigning for the complete closure of the borders. They demanded that the border be blocked by physical obstacles, e.g. "Spanish riders". Although their wish for this precursor of the later iron curtain was not fulfilled, it is a nice example for an internal drive for territorialization. What is more, military leaders also wanted a closer supervision of the border, as they were terrified by (real and alleged) foreign spies, especially Romanian ones.[12]

In sum, new borders and new political regimes in East Central Europe contributed to a significant territorialization. Although Hungarian national interests were favouring deterritorialization, the deglobalising international environment and even the military, fiscal and other Hungarian state interests resulted in a shift in the opposite direction, that is, a move towards the Eastern border regime, with increasing level of violence.[13]

The situation was similar in the years between 1938 and 1948. Several regime changes took place also in this decade. There was a continuous drift from authoritarianism to the radical right,

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[12] Bencsik, Péter, "The New Borders as Local Economic Possibility? The Case of Post-1920 Hungary," *European Review of History / Revue européenne d'histoire* 27, no. 6 (2020): 763–84, https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2020.1753661; Bencsik, Péter, "After Trianon: Life near the Hungarian–Czechoslovak Border during the 1920s," *Chronica* [Szeged], no. 20 (2021): 47–63.

[13] Bencsik, Péter, "*Állami érdek vs. nemzeti érdek: Territorializálódás Magyarországon a 20. század első negyedében*" [State Interest vs. National Interest: Territorialization in Hungary During the First Quarter of the 20th Century] HistGlob Working Paper 1. (Szeged: MTA–SZTE–ELTE Globalizációtörténeti Kutatócsoport, 2020), 3–25.; Bencsik, Péter, "Az erőszak és az államhatárok: elméleti megfontolások" [Violence and State Borders: Theoretical Considerations] in *Történelem és erőszak* [History and Violence], ed. Margittai, Linda and Tomka, Béla (Szeged: Hajnal István Kör Társadalomtörténeti Egyesület, 2021), 338–51.

and with the Arrow Cross Party taking power in October 1944, a full-fledged Nazi-type dictatorship followed in the western part of the country. At the same time, the Red Army started to liberate the eastern part, and, on Stalin's initiative, a people's democratic regime was founded in December 1944. This semi-democratic regime was transformed to a full Stalinist dictatorship between 1947 and 1949. This decade also brought many territorial changes: Hungary reannexed large parts of her former territory lost after WWI in four steps (the Czechoslovak borderland in 1938, Subcarpathia in 1939, Northern Transylvania in 1940 and parts of Yugoslavia in 1941). At the end of the war, Hungary lost all of these territories again due to the armistice (January 1945), which was confirmed in the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty (with three more villages annexed to Czecho-slovakia).

As Leslie Waters has put it in her case study, the two-time movement of the Hungarian–Czechoslovak border (in 1938 and in 1945) initiated a "state-sponsored violence", that is, continuous ethnic cleansing and forced migration took place during this decade.[14] Chandler's theory is applicable during this decade: new states (or new political regimes), ethnic tensions and the international climate in general contributed to a more rigorous border regime, that is, territorialization. My research also proves that this transformation period again went along with territorialization. The new borders forced neighbouring states to sign new agree-ments on small border traffic, but in some cases, hostile countries denied doing so. Contraband activities grew, as in every crisis period. Militarization of the border continued as well. Passport and visa restrictions had started since as early as 1936 (the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War), but this process was continuous during the second World War. Special discrimination was introduced against Jews.[15]

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[14] Leslie Waters, *Borders on the Move: Territorial Change and Ethnic Cleansing in the Hungarian–Slovak Borderlands, 1938–1948* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv10vm063, 212.

[15] Bencsik, Péter, *A magyar úti okmányok története 1867–1945* [History of Hungarian Travel Documents 1867–1945] (Budapest: Tipico Design, 2003), 56–61, 69–74, 84–88.

When the war ended, territorialization received another boost. Borders were again on the move, this time backwards. Although Hungary and most of her neighbours, the only exception being Austria, underwent a similar kind of regime change, these new people's democratic regimes were rather hostile to each other, especially in the borderland. Romanian and Yugoslav border guards did not hesitate to shoot on any illegal crosser. The Czechoslovak–Hungarian relations had hit rock bottom. Ethnic cleansing of the borderland, and, in the case of Romania, even territories far away from Hungary had continued. According to Jan Rychlík, economic and financial conditions pushed Czechoslovaks to restrict free travel, that is, to close the borders for almost everyone.[16] The Hungarian situation was similar, although state authorities still advocated for more open borders, at least in the case of small border traffic. In this sense, we can view a continuous effort to maintain cross-border connection between Hungarians, regardless of any territorial and regime changes. This practice ended soon, however.

From 1948, with the "success" of the Stalinization process, Hungary and her neighbours, partly including Soviet-occupied Eastern Austria, had adopted (imported) the Eastern border regime from the Soviet Union. Borders were closed, this time almost hermetically. The main advocate for applying this system was Romania, whose leaders issued the slogan: "Not a fly shall cross our borders". Territorialization process had reached its peak. Iron curtains were built along the "Western" borders, including Austria and Yugoslavia, as the latter state was expelled from the Soviet bloc. The iron curtain contained minefields, two or three barbed wire fences with carefully raked ploughed strips right along the internal fence, watchtowers, etc. Similar fence was built by the Soviets themselves at the Western border of the USSR, that is, between "fraternal states". Besides, a virtual iron curtain was set up between

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[16] Jan Rychlík, *Cestování do ciziny v habsburské monarchii a v Československu: Pasová, vízová a vystěhovalecká politika 1848–1989* [Foreign Travel in the Habsburg Empire and in Czechoslovakia: Passport, Visa and Emigration Policy 1848–1989] (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2007), 26–29.

Romania and Hungary.[17] Along the East–West border between Cold War blocs we see the emergence of the border zone system, first along the border with Yugoslavia in 1950 and two years later along the Austrian border. The border zone was fifteen-kilometre deep; its system is in fact a reversal of the small border traffic regime because the special permit issued here is required not for crossing the external boundary of the border zone (that is, the state border) but for crossing the internal boundary of that zone (that is, the line that separates the border zone from the rest of the country). In other words, a special travel permit was needed even inside the country, on more than ten percent of the country's territory. At the same time, real small border traffic was halted (except with Czecho-slovakia), dual holdings were exchanged everywhere. Nonetheless, the internal passport regime used in the Soviet Union was never implemented in Hungary. Foreign travel was available only for business trips, mostly for the members of the political elite and some privileged sportsmen. Passport issuance was centralized: in fact, every application was evaluated first by the political police and second by a special committee made up of members of the narrowest political elite. Foreign travel was a matter of state security, and every applicant was strictly screened. Passports were valid for one or two states and for a short time; travel was only possible with exit permit and visa. Cold War hysteria and the adoption of the Soviet political and border regime made perfect conditions for the most severe border surveillance system ever existed in Hungary.[18]

[17] Fülöp, Mihály, and Vincze, Gábor. *Vasfüggöny Keleten: Iratok a magyar–román kapcsolatokról (1948–1955)* [Iron Curtain in the East: Papers on the Hungarian–Romanian Relations 1948–1955] (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2007), 31–37.

[18] Bencsik, Péter, *Kelet és Nyugat között: Államhatárok, úti okmányok, határátlépés Magyarországon és Csehszlovákiában (1945–1989)* [Between East and West: State Borders, Travel Documents and Border Crossing in Hungary and Czechoslovakia 1945–1989] (Budapest: MTA BTK Történettudományi Intézet, 2019), 133–35, 139–42, 229–35, 277–86, 383–86.

Hungarian transformation periods in the second half of the 20th century

The period starting in 1953 is interesting because transformations after that were only linked to political regime changes, that is, without any change of the borders. In fact, there was a slow but continuous regime change between 1953 and 1963, with the 1956 revolution as its peak. During this decade, the country oscillated between de-, and re-stalinization. A second, and more important, transformation started around 1987, ending with a complete regime change.

In case of the first transformation period, reforms of the political system preceded the easing of the border regime, which did not start immediately in 1953, at the beginning of the New Course (*új szakasz*) under the premiership of Imre Nagy, but only in 1955. It is obvious that all changes, both in 1953 and in 1955 were pushed by the Soviet leaders themselves. Political reforms were halted with the fall of Imre Nagy in 1955,[19] but exactly after that, border regime was relaxed on Soviet initiative—simultaneously with the changes in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Passport issuance was decentralized, and foreign travel was again possible, at least to Eastern bloc countries, and preferably in organized group package tours. There were plans to facilitate even Western travels from Hungary. Negotiations were held with several socialist countries on the abolition of visas. Although the exact rules of foreign travel remained unpublished, people were aware of these changes from reports of the press. The Southern border zone was eliminated in the spring of 1956. The iron curtain was dismantled along the Yugoslav and the Austrian border, and the minefields were cleared in the summer of 1956—this process was again regularly reported in the press. Some of the reforms were only planned but not implemented, including visa waivers, liberalization of emigration and reintroduction of small border traffic (even with Austria).[20] After the fall of Mátyás Rákosi,

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[19] For political reforms under Nagy's first premiership, see Rainer M., János, *Imre Nagy: A Biography* (New York–London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755620500, 57–84.

[20] Bencsik, *Kelet és Nyugat között*, 142–48, 235–37, 254–55, 286–87.

first secretary of the communist party, new political reforms were introduced under Ernő Gerő, named as 'clear sheet policy'. Although these reforms do not seem to be half-hearted, they were ignored by the Hungarian public. Gerő was rather unpopular, and he was associated with the old Stalinist leadership. The communist political elite lost confidence, public debates began, and a broader opposition emerged, especially around Nagy, who had not been reinstated.[21] In short, border regime reforms initiated by the Soviets gradually evolved into a new wave of political reforms that threatened the foundations of the whole system. Relaxation of the border regime was one of the causes of the revolution of 1956.

After the revolution, when two hundred thousand people left the country through the open Western borders, all reforms were revoked. The neo-Stalinist turn spearheaded by János Kádár (once again) made the Hungarian border regime significantly stricter. Authorization of foreign travels was recentralized, and applications were assessed on a class basis. Negotiations on small border traffic and visa-free travel were halted. Private travels were severely restricted, and applications for Western passports were rejected at a staggeringly high rate (38%). A second generation of the iron curtain (again with minefields) was built, but only along the Austrian border. The Southern border zone was re-established—as we have seen, the Western one had not been abolished. The depth of either border zone was not reduced until 1960, and the Western one included Sopron, a major city, which had been marginalized completely.[22] As a result of an extremely severe territorialization, a large part of the country—more than ten percent of the whole territory—was excluded from the economic life of the country

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[21] The assessment of Gerő's reforms is controversial in Hungarian historiography. See Baráth, Magdolna, "Gerő Ernő és a »tiszta lap« politikája" [Ernő Gerő and the "Clear Sheet" Policy], *Múltunk* 46, no. 1 (2001): 3–58.; Bencsik, Péter, "Az MDP értelmiségi határozata és az 1956. őszi »funkcionárius-vita«" [Resolution of the Hungarian Working People's Party on the Intelligentsia and the "Functionary Debate" of the Autumn of 1956] *Aetas* 24, no. 2 (2009): 87–103.

[22] Bencsik, *Kelet és Nyugat között*, 148–51, 237–38, 285–89.

without any investment and development. Besides, the border surveillance system was costly to build.

To conclude, the decade between 1953 and 1963 was very turbulent. At first, political reforms coming from Moscow left the border regime unchanged. A second Soviet reformist intervention, now directly in the field of the border regime, however, undermined the previously restored Stalinist regime. Deterritorialization— relaxation of the border regime—started earlier than the revolution, but the too rapid changes (not only within the border regime, of course) had shaken the whole political system. After suppressing the revolution, restalinization and—logically—reterritorialization followed suit, although 1956 was an attempted regime change only. 1956 was the first case when a successful change of the political regime would have caused further liberalization of the border regime—a shift back to the direction of the Western system.

Reforms started again when the regime became a soft dictator-ship in the early 1960s. In 1961, the whole passport regime was reshaped, with partially secret regulations: rules on who was not eligible for a passport or for an exit visa remained unpublished until 1970—but to some extent were relaxed. The sixties were a period of careful treading and cautious exploration: each and every element of the border regime was frequently reregulated. Obviously, the Kádár leadership feared that rapid reforms of the border regime would again cause political instability—and these fears were not unfounded, as the events of the 1980s prove. Travel to Eastern bloc countries became easy, first with a special insert attached to the traveller's personal identity document, and later, from 1972, with the 'red passport' (valid only to socialist countries, with whom visa waivers were introduced in the 1960s). The number of intra-bloc travels sky-rocketed in 1964, but Western travel was also growing. Therefore, some restrictions were reintroduced in 1966. Small border traffic was re-established except with Austria. In actual practice, this kind of travel was not working with the Soviet Union either. The iron curtain was transformed again. Its third generation, this time without mines was built from 1965 to 1971; it was a low-voltage electrical alarm system known by its abbreviation as EJR

(*elektromos jelzőrendszer*). The Southern and the Western border zones were abolished in 1965 and 1969, respectively, but a narrower border strip remained in place along the Austrian border. Its depth was two kilometres, and still contained inhabited settlements.[23]

Finally, at the end of the 1980s, the communist system collapsed. This time, political reforms were introduced gradually—even from the 1960s—at the same time with border regime liberalization. The international environment also changed. A new wave of globalization started in the 1970s. This did not affect the Eastern bloc countries to the same extent, but Hungary was one of the more open regimes, partly because of the so-called "growing apart" of the Soviet bloc.[24] Globalization affected Hungary both politically (the Hungarian question in the UN, the Helsinki conference and other human rights issues, alleged Western subversion tactics to "loosen up" the Eastern bloc), and economically (growing trade with the West, loans, technological dependence), forcing Hungary to operate a more open border regime. Passport issuance was further decentralized, and its rules (including reasons for denial) were made public in 1970. Travel was liberalized even to Western states, although restrictions had not been fully eliminated (either on financial, or state security grounds). Visa waivers were introduced between Hungary and Finland, and—more importantly—Hungary and Austria, that is, with Western, albeit neutral states, of whom the latter one was a neighbour. Even emigration rules were relaxed to a certain grade.[25]

1987 brought about a decisive turn. The reformist party leadership was contemplating to reintroduce small border traffic with Austria, but instead, they took a bold step and made Western travel possible

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[23] Ibid. 153–69, 174–78, 183–85, 238–45, 257–66, 292–94.

[24] Janos, Andrew C, *East Central Europe in the Modern World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 257–324.; Bencsik, Péter, "Hidegháborúk a kelet-közép-európai államszocialista államok között" [Cold Wars among East Central European Communist States], *Múltunk* 62, no. 3 (2017): 152–89.

[25] Bencsik, *Kelet és Nyugat között*, 174–78, 188–99, 272–74.; Bencsik, Péter, "A kivándorlás és a magyar állampolgárság, 1948–1978" [Emigration and Hungarian Citizenship, 1948–1978] *Századok* 156, no. 4 (2022): 811–34.

for every Hungarian citizen. A package of decrees entering into effect at the beginning of 1988 introduced the "world passport". The exit visa was abolished, and travel was only restricted on the grounds of not having sufficient amounts of foreign currency available. However, anyone who had their own resources in hard currencies could travel west without restrictions. Passports were issued by the district and city police headquarters, completing the process of decentralization. Consequently, hundreds of thousands travelled to Vienna and other parts of Austria, and spent a large amount of money, sacrificing on the altars of consumer society. Global capitalism attracted Hungarian shopping tourists, and their experiences totally destroyed the communist propaganda image of the West, giving new impetus to the collapse of the communist regime. In the autumn of 1989, a new legislation was passed to regulate the right to travel abroad and the right to emigrate. The politically motivated preconditions for obtaining a passport were permanently eliminated. The several decades long process of liberalization brought about a qualitative change: once again, Hungary became a part of the Western border regime. This was reflected, among other things, in the fact that the border guard was demilitarized and the third generation of the iron curtain, the electrical alarm system (EJR) was dismantled. The opening of the Western border to the East German refugees (September 11, 1989) was another milestone. The collapse of the communist regime of East Germany followed suit. This way, easing of the Hungarian border regime largely contributed to the end of communism and the Cold War.[26]

Kádár tried to silence the issue of Hungarian minorities, fearing of a new wave of Hungarian nationalism. However, opposition forces had become increasingly vocal on behalf of Hungarian minorities living across the border. The situation was worst in Romania which tried to isolate itself completely (including border closure) and launched an extremely chauvinistic policy. Finally, even a part of the leadership reassessed its position on Hungarians beyond the borders,

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[26] Bencsik, *Kelet és Nyugat között*, 199–204.; Oplatka, András, *Egy döntés története: Magyar határnyitás – 1989. szeptember 11. nulla óra* [History of a Decision: Border Opening in Hungary, at Midnight, September 11, 1989] (Budapest: Helikon, 2008).

among others, campaigning for more open borders and intensified cross-border contacts. The influx of refugees from Transylvania intensified in the mid-1980s, with more and more of them arriving in Hungary illegally.[27]

Conclusion

Hungary's 20th century proves that the period between 1918 and 1970 was marked by territorialization. However, before and after that, globalization was more characteristic. Therefore, both Maier and Arrighi were right: two thirds of the *short* 20th century (1914–1990) was an age of territoriality, yet much of the *long* 20th century was a period of globalization. Hungarian events of (especially the first half of) the short 20th century also justify Chandler's theory about the reasons for the tightening of the border regime. Among all of these reasons, the international environment plays the most important role. In times of deglobalization and with significant international tensions—both global and regional ones, and regardless of whether these were armed conflicts or only "cold wars"—Hungary's border regime became stricter. This process was virtually continuous from 1914 to 1953. However, with the recent wave of globalization and/or the détente of inter-bloc relations, the border regime was liberalized, first (and temporarily) in the middle of the 1950s. From the 1970s when, alongside with détente, a new wave of globalization was already underway, the relaxation of the Hungarian border regime has become more stable.

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[27] Bárdi, Nándor, "Magyarország és a határon túli magyarok (1948–1989)" [Hungary and the Hungarians beyond the Border 1948–1989] in *Kisebbségi magyar közösségek a 20. században* [Minority Hungarian Communities in the 20th century], eds. Bárdi, Nándor, Fedinec, Csilla, and Szarka, László (Budapest: Gondolat, 2008), 296–305.; Pintér M, Lajos, *Ellenzékben: A Kádár-rendszer népi-nemzeti ellenzéke 1968–1987* [In Opposition. The Popular-National Opposition of the Kádár Regime] (Lakitelek: Antológia, 2007), 19–21, 99–107.; Horbulák, Zsolt, "Határforgalom Csehszlovákia és Magyarország között Csehszlovákia pártdokumentumai alapján" [Cross-Border Traffic Between Czechoslovakia and Hungary Based on the Documents of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], *Polgári Szemle* 13, no. 1–3 (2017): 232–42, https://doi.org/10.24307/psz.2017.0920; Kaszás, Veronika, *Erdélyi menekültek Magyarországon 1988–89* [Transylvanian Refugees in Hungary 1988–89] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2015), 46–105.

Although the emergence of new states does indeed imply stricter border regimes, at least in principle, this is not necessarily true in the era of globalization—see the example of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. In this sense, it is not surprising that regime changes and border changes are not always accompanied by territorialization. In the case of 20th-century Hungary, however, most regime and/or territorial changes resulted in a more stringent border regime. But there are exceptions which are always linked to the fall of the communist regime both in 1956, when the regime only fell temporarily, and in 1989.

We get closer to reality if we try to apply a holistic view. Instead of talking about individual factors, we need to look at the effects of the international environment and regime changes together. And international environment has other elements: First, Hungary and other East Central European states shifted from the Western to the Eastern border regime in the first two thirds of the short 20th century and shifted back to the Western system in the last third of the century. Therefore, when a political regime change takes place in an era of globalization and/or shifting towards the Western border regime, it will not result in territorialization. Second, the outcome will be different during a wave of democratization and under a reverse wave. In other words, anti-democratic regime changes result in stricter border regimes, but democratic regime changes do not cause territorialization. The few attempts at democratic regime change that took place in the first half of the century (1918, 1945) were both characterized by hostile international environment and did not last long. More importantly, they were immediately followed by authoritarian or dictatorial reversals.

Although it is an oversimplification, the Western border regime has a lot in common with globalization and democratic political systems, while the Eastern border regime goes along with territorialization and dictatorships. However, in periods of globalization (prior to 1914 and post-1970), even the Eastern regime undergoes some degree of liberalization. From the outbreak of World War I, all the world deglobalized and territorialized, although not to the same extent (the Western regime changed less).

Hungarian transformations had rather unfavourable conditions in the period between 1914 and 1948: territorial losses and shifts from democratic to dictatorial regimes, together with wars and hostile international environment, resulted in an accelerating territorialization and shifting to the Eastern border regime. After this drift reached its peak, the country gradually shifted back towards the Western structures. This process has coincided with the restarting globalization. One of the reasons that sent the Eastern border regimes into their collapse was globalization along with transnational processes gaining ever more prominence. The state-based territorial system that had existed since the 17th century acquired a transnational character during the final third of the 19th century, and while that change seemed to be temporary at the time, it may have become permanent at around the turn of the millennium. Viewed from this angle, the Cold War era may have been the last time history saw territoriality flare up.

As far as Chandler's third point—the role of borderland nationalities—is concerned, there is no doubt that it is a significant factor among reasons for a more stringent border regime, that is, for territorialization. At the same time, I believe that two different types of borderland nationalism can be distinguished. One of them is "offensive" nationalism, typical in countries like post-Trianon Hungary—characterized by a relatively homogeneous ethnic composition, significant previous territorial losses and, therefore, large parts of the nation living across the border. Offensive nationalism aims for deterritorialization, wants to maintain contact with parts of the nation living beyond the border and therefore campaigns for a higher level of cross-border traffic. The adjective "offensive" does not imply that they necessarily seek a territorial revision. Instead, they tried to use diplomatic methods to facilitate contacts with their frontier communities and to support the protection of minorities. The second type, "defensive" nationalism, is common for states with no significant diaspora living across the border and with substantial minorities inside the country. Romania—and, maybe only in the interwar period, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia—are good examples. These states tend to maintain

closed borders and do not refrain from the use of violence. In other words, they have an interest in territorialization.

In the case of Cold War Hungary, the relaxation of the border regime was immediately followed by (attempted) regime changes, both in 1956 and 1989. All rapid changes inside communist border regimes destabilized not only the country in question but also the entire bloc (although mapping the exact chain of causes and effects will require further research). No wonder that after the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in November 1956 the process of border regime reform slowed down across the entire Eastern Bloc. The more radical the changes were, the stronger the backlash was. Could it be a mere coincidence that the rapid and unexpected softening of the border regime brought about revolutionary changes again at the end of the 1980s? What is certainly clear to see is that within just two years of the introduction of the world passport, the communist system collapsed in Hungary, and, soon after, in all the communist countries of the region, along with their eastern border regimes. Further research is needed, but one thing is for sure: border regime liberalization had contributed to the fall of the communist regime. It was obviously not the only reason, but one of the reasons.