



Transylvanian Minorities Viewpoints Outside of Hungary Post-Treaty of Trianon 1920

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INTRODUCTION

The Treaty of Trianon (1920) left millions of ethnic Hungarians outside the borders of Hungary, particularly in Transylvania. This project examines how Hungarian minorities have understood and expressed their identity while living outside their historical nation-state. By analyzing Hungarian-language newspapers from 1920 to contemporary times, this study explores how perspectives on belonging, culture, and political rights have evolved.

Rather than focusing solely on historical events, this research emphasizes how identity is continuously constructed through language and public discourse. It considers how political contexts shape the ways minority communities express their sense of belonging. In doing so, the study connects historical territorial changes to modern debates surrounding nationalism, minority rights, and European integration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

As this is a niche topic that is often overlooked in history, this study adopts a qualitative, research-based approach that prioritizes primary-source analysis. This project uses qualitative discourse analysis of Hungarian-language newspapers published in and about Transylvania through Hungaricana. Building on Benedict Anderson’s theory of “imagined communities,” the study examines how newspapers preserved Hungarian identity through shared language, media, and memory after Trianon. Sources across the interwar, World War II, Communist, and modern EU eras were coded using three categories: minority rights, cultural autonomy, and language use. AI tools, including ChatGPT (GPT-5.5) and Gemini (1.5 Flash), assisted with OCR, translation support, organization, and preliminary theme identification, while final coding and interpretation were completed independently, as I am fluent in the Hungarian language.

DATA AND FINDINGS

My findings suggest that Hungarian-language newspapers functioned as a “portable homeland,” preserving national identity beyond the borders created by Trianon. In the interwar era, *Magyar Külpolitika* (1932) framed Trianon through emotionally charged language such as “Maimed Hungary” and “Hungarian Truth,” presenting border revision as moral justice. By the Communist and modern EU eras, discourse shifted from territorial revision toward cultural preservation, historical memory, minority rights, and legal advocacy. This supports Benedict Anderson’s theory of “imagined communities” by showing how print media sustained Hungarian identity even when political borders separated Hungarians from the Hungarian state.

DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION



1920-30's: Interwar Period

Hungarian discourse reflects strong themes of national loss and displacement following the Treaty of Trianon, with continued attachment to Hungary and limited signs of assimilation into Romanian society.

Minority rights	Cultural Autonomy	Language use
• 1932 Interwar Period Frames Trianon borders as the rights violation itself. • "Revizio nélkül nincs béke" makes revision the condition for justice. • Hungarians outside Hungary are presented as displaced nationals, not permanent minorities.	The discourse rejects cultural autonomy as a permanent solution because true "integritás" ("integrity") is imagined through reunification with Hungary. The newspaper presents minority existence outside Hungary as temporary rather than acceptable.	Hungarian-language publishing functions as a "szellemi birodalom" ("intellectual empire"), preserving Hungarian historical memory and national belonging despite political separation from Hungary.



1940-1945: WWII

During WWII, as members of the Axis powers, Hungary regained control of their territory from Romania with the Second Vienna Award

Minority rights	Cultural Autonomy	Language use
• 1943 WWII Minority-rights language fades after the Second Vienna Award. • Northern Transylvania is framed as restored to Hungary, not as a minority region. • Hungarians are portrayed as returned members of the state.	• Miklós Horthy, Hungary's regent from 1920–1944, is portrayed as restoring Hungarian authority after Trianon. • Schools, administration, and institutions are presented as signs of restored national order. • Reintegration replaces autonomy.	• Language shifts from grievance to restoration. • Hungarian rhetoric presents return as national rebirth. • Print legitimizes Hungarian rule as historical correction.



1945-1989: Cold War Communism Era

Post WWII, Transylvania Romania under the postwar settlements, leaving all of Transylvania under Communist rule (Ceaușescu regime)

Minority rights	Cultural Autonomy	Language use
Late Communist (1988) <i>Tolna Megyei Népszav</i> The discourse shifts from territorial revisionist claims, as the borders are back to the post-WWI era, which discusses Transylvanian Hungarian issues through c	"Human Rights & Survival": The paper focuses on "emberi jogok" (human rights) to combat the "falurombolás" (village destruction). The argument is that the right to one's home and heritage is universal, making it harder for the Romanian state to dismiss.	The Village as a Fortress: Because political autonomy was impossible under Communism, the paper focuses on the Village as the unit of autonomy. Protecting the local church and school becomes a "mini-autonomy" that preserves the "imagined community" against state pressure.



2000-Present: European Integration

After the fall of Communism, Hungary and Romania moved toward European integration, with Hungary joining the European Union in 2004 and Romania joining in 2007. Cross-border identity.

Minority rights	Cultural Autonomy	Language use
(2004) Minority identity is framed through EU legal protections, education rights, and institutional recognition rather than territorial revision.	Cultural autonomy shifts toward preserving Hungarian schools, media, and community institutions within existing European borders instead of pursuing reintegration with Hungary.	Hungarian-language media and cross-border news networks function as modern forms of the "portable homeland," allowing Hungarian communities across Europe to remain culturally connected despite political borders.



CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

The findings of this study suggest that the legacy of the Treaty of Trianon continues to shape Hungarian minority identity in Transylvania through a persistent sense of historical and national belonging. Across all time periods, Hungarian-language discourse reflects a continued identification with Hungary not only as a cultural homeland, but also as a historically legitimate national space, indicating that full assimilation into a Romanian national identity has remained incomplete.

While the expression of this identity evolves over time from territorial grievance in the interwar period, to cultural preservation under communism, to rights-based advocacy in the modern era the underlying sense of national affiliation remains consistent. In many cases, Transylvania is not framed simply as a region within Romania, but as a historically Hungarian space, reinforcing the idea that identity is shaped as much by memory and narrative as by political borders.

These findings suggest that border changes alone are insufficient to redefine national identity, particularly when language, media, and cultural institutions continue to reinforce a shared sense of belonging. This has broader implications for understanding minority identity in Europe, where historical claims, collective memory, and political realities continue to intersect in shaping contemporary debates over nationalism and minority rights.

Future research will expand the dataset to include additional primary sources, allowing for more precise analysis of how these perspectives vary across time and context, and how they compare to other minority populations affected by historical border changes.

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