

Chapter 7

Kin Citizenship in Eastern Europe¹

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Abstract

As opposed to Western and North American immigration countries, where dual citizenship has been discussed in relation to migrant's integration, Eastern European states used external dual citizenship policies as part of post-communist nation-building projects. In Eastern Europe, newly restored states as well as countries whose international borders have not been involved in recent territorial changes offered citizenship for their ethnic kin living beyond the borders in order to strengthen the claims of the titular majorities over the state, thereby creating ethnocracies. This chapter gives a short overview of kin-citizenship policies in Eastern Europe and argues that the inclusion of non-resident populations in the *demos* as part of fast-track nation-building generates internal democratic deficits and diplomatic skirmishes but rarely results in outright interstate conflict. The chapter also points out that individuals often regard kin citizenship very differently from governments that offer it as part of transborder nationalist projects.

1. Introduction

In past decades, dual citizenship has received ample political as well as scholarly attention. These debates, however, focused mostly on the question of whether immigrants naturalising in their new home states should have the right to retain their citizenship in their countries of origin. In the immigration context, the main dilemma has been whether and how the retention of citizenship in the country of origin impacts on social and political integration in the countries of immigration. Not surprisingly, right-wing nationalist governments in immigration countries are more likely to oppose dual citizenship, assuming that having formal membership in two states could weaken immigrants' political allegiance and make it more difficult for them to integrate while, at the same time, dual citizenship may also weaken national sovereignty (Pogonyi 2011). Left-wing and liberal parties, on the other hand, often claim that the toleration of dual citizenship will incentivise immigrant naturalisation and facilitate the social integration of newcomers, while also recognising multicultural diversity.

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Despite the diametrically opposing views, both sides take it for granted that formal citizenship status has important implications for the allegiance of individuals as well as “an expression of a state’s identity” (Džankić 2015, 183). Indeed, it would be hard to deny that citizenship, the legal bond between a state and an individual, determines the life prospects of the individual (Shachar 2009). On the other hand, citizenship policies that decide who is in and who is out in terms of membership also shape the state. In international relations, sovereign states are marked as territories as well as bounded populations. States are not only territorial units but also a “body politic” constituted by individuals who are, in democracies at least, considered equal members of the political community. While Westphalian sovereignty implies that no external powers may interfere with the internal issues of states, popular sovereignty means that state power should be used democratically – that is, in the name and interests of the people. The creation of a bounded population, therefore, is at least as essential for states as maintaining territorial sovereignty. As we know from Rogers Brubaker’s seminal work, formal citizenship attribution rules define the nation that the territorial state is supposed to represent and serve. The way the *demos* is demarcated at state independence has long-term implications for statehood (Brubaker 1992). Citizenship attribution policies determine who belongs to the people who legitimately exercise power through the state. The struggle for membership is also a struggle for power: those who become citizens will have the right to shape the nation that the state stands for. In contemporary politics, struggles over membership surface the most often in relation to immigration. Even those countries that are relatively open in territorial terms restrict access to citizenship and regulate who can become a full and legally equal member of the national *demos*, how and when. Thus, citizenship policies are one of the most salient means of nation- as well as state-building in countries of immigration.

Since 1989, citizenship attribution policies in Eastern Europe have become fields of contestation not because of immigration but due to state succession and democratic transition. Despite the divergent paths to democratisation and regardless of whether newly regained freedom involved border changes, national sovereignty became intertwined with democratic transition in the whole post-communist region. Histories of fragile statehood and legacies of foreign occupation resulted not only in “state-reinforcing overcompensation” (Liebich 2009, 22) but also feverish nation-building. For most Eastern European countries, democratic transition and the restoration of sovereignty were parallel and intertwined processes. In the newly independent states, internal self-determination was conditional on regaining external self-determination and thus it is less than surprising that the maintenance of sovereignty has become a central political concern in the newly restored states. Ironically, as the Iron Curtain fell, sovereignty-related anxieties intensified not only in the Yugoslav and Soviet successor states where new international borders were erected but also in those countries whose borders became more permeable. The end of communism was perceived as “a process of national liberation” throughout Eastern

Europe (Bunce 1995, 120). The formation of the *demos* was portrayed as the completion of the freedom struggles, framed as ethnocultural and/or ethnoreligious projects (Verdery 1998). Independent statehood was meant to achieve the sovereignty of core national groups. “Stories of peoplehood” (Smith 2003) were told as stories of nationhood. As part of the transition to democracy, all post-communist Eastern European parliaments rewrote or significantly amended their constitutions. The new basic laws in the post-communist region were designed not only to entrench basic democratic rights and the rule of law but also to secure the core national group’s claims on the state (Elster 1991). Despite the differences in economic development, paths to democratisation, ethnic composition, the volume of prior ethnic violence and state continuity, most Eastern European countries reached back to pre-communist times in order to underline the continuity of the nation (*ibid.*, 476). The constitutional identities of Eastern European states (with the notable exception of the Czech Republic (Přibáň 2004, 426–427) were defined in ethnocultural and/or ethnoreligious idioms. As Kissane and Sitter – using Gellner’s four time periods of nationalism (Gellner 1983) – argue, in Eastern European states, latecomers to liberal democracy, “a marriage between state and nation has emerged” (Kissane and Sitter 2010, 60). Most preambles to Eastern European constitutions claim that national self-determination is an inalienable right of the nation and sovereignty is necessary in order to protect and secure the survival of the majority nation’s language and culture.

2. Citizenship and nation-building in Eastern Europe

In order to strengthen the domination of the core nation, newly independent states tried to marginalise internal minorities. The redrawing of state borders along putatively national lines transfigured rather than resolved ethnic conflicts in the region. Elections in ethnically divided democratic transition states often entrench ethnic cleavages (Snyder 2000). When independent statehood was achieved, state-seeking nationalisms were transformed into nationalising nationalisms, while new minorities that had opposed secessionist movements embraced pro-independence minority nationalism. The logic of divergent nationalist projects after the dissolution of former Socialist federations resulted in competing and conflicting nationalisms that intensified one another (Brubaker 2011). In Eastern Europe, minority nation-building became a highly securitised issue as ethnic minorities (particularly those with kin states) were widely considered “fifth columns” for foreign powers and a potential threat to national security as well as national culture (Džankić 2015; Kymlicka 2004; Skulte-Ouais 2015).

Citizenship attribution policies became a major nation-building tool after the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. In the two Eastern European federations, internal migration was not strictly controlled. In the Soviet Union internal relocation was even facilitated and forced displacement was sometimes also applied, which resulted in the creation of large internal diasporas. As a consequence of the historical mixing of ethnic groups, after the break-up of the socialist federations, large ethnic minorities were created

in the newly independent states. While, during federal times, republic-level citizenship status (citizenship in one of the constituent entities within the federation) had little practical importance and was, in most cases, very poorly administered (Stiks 2010, 12), at the creation of the new sovereign states the question of citizenship became highly relevant. Republic-level membership status was often the primary determining factor of subsequent citizenship in the successor states. When the former Socialist Republics dissolved, the mostly administrative internal borders became international borders and, consequently, internal diasporas became ethnic minorities in the new states. Quite often, the new nationalising states used selective citizenship policies to exclude ethnic minorities from the *demos*. Russian populations were denied citizenship after independence in Estonia and Latvia, which downgraded them to the status of newly arrived immigrants (Jarve and Poleshchuk 2013; Kruma 2010; Pettai and Hallik 2002; Smith 2003). Similarly to the Baltic countries, citizenship attribution was used with the purpose of ethnic engineering in South-East Europe after the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation.² National independence in the post-Yugoslav states was proclaimed and glorified in the name of the nation and defined in ethnocultural or ethnoreligious (Radović 2013) terms. In the post-Yugoslav citizenship struggles, democracy was meant to be practiced within the titular national group (Stiks 2010). A good illustration of “ethnic engineering” (Stiks 2010) through citizenship is the Croatian law on citizenship, enacted in 1991, which made it very difficult, if not impossible, for ethnic Serbs without republic-level citizenship to naturalise in Croatia (Koska, Ragazzi and Stiks 2013). To a lesser extent, ethnocentric nation-building through selective citizenship policies was practiced even in ethnically relatively homogenous Slovenia, where 18,305 mostly ethnically non-Slovene individuals lost their citizenship and became stateless after being erased from all public registries (Medved 2013). Restrictive naturalisation measures were in place, even in Montenegro, in order to deprive ethnic Serbs who had fled from Croatia and Bosnia, so that Serbs who were more likely to be pro-union would not have the chance to vote (Džankić 2012). Although large-scale ethnic engineering was not present in the negotiated Czechoslovak break-up, citizenship attribution here, too, was used for the exclusion of the unwanted Roma minority (Summers 2014).

The use of citizenship for nation-building purposes was not confined to new and newly restored states that used internally restrictive citizenship policy to exclude members of ethnic minorities from the *demos*. In order to strengthen the titular majority’s claim over the state and to strengthen their national/nationalist image, governments considered it as a priority to help their ethnic kin in the neighbouring states. The help

² For detailed comprehensive reports, comparative analyses and case studies of citizenship regimes, see the working papers of the University of Edinburgh’s project The Europeanisation of Citizenship in the Successor States of the Former Yugoslavia (CITSEE) at <http://www.citsee.ed.ac.uk/>.

of transborder kin minorities was also used to symbolically distance the democratically elected governments from the past communist regimes that had not paid much attention to these groups. Transborder engagement in the form of symbolic engagement, political activism and the preferential treatment of ethnic kin populations not only fit well with the nationalist narratives but were used as a tool to deconstruct the symbolic boundaries that divided Europe during the Cold War.

After 1989, however, most countries of the region – including Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Croatia, Macedonia, Poland, Ukraine and Russia – adopted amendments to their constitutions, assuming special responsibility for the protection of kin minorities living in foreign countries. Albania, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Serbia and Slovenia introduced additional benefits laws or external quasi citizenship rules (Bauböck 2007) that grant special privileges to co-ethnic minorities in neighbouring countries who do not possess formal citizenship.

In some cases, post-communist governments facilitated the repatriation or the formal inclusion of external kin populations in the *demos* through external citizenship. As part of the consolidation process, it seemed reasonable that émigrés, who had often helped the independence movements (by sending money and/or lobbying for the recognition of the new states), should be offered full citizenship. Many of the former socialist countries allowed external dual citizenship so that migrants could re-establish former legal ties with their democratising home countries. Others introduced preferential citizenship policies or facilitated the resettlement of expatriates and diasporas (Liebich 2009).

All EU-13 new member states give privileged access to their citizenship to descendants of emigrants or persons with close cultural affinity – or have at least done so for a certain period after 1989. A number of states in the region have introduced preferential access to citizenship for ethnic kin, while others have adopted external citizenship policies which, by removing residence requirements, have significantly expanded the size of the potential or actual citizenry of the homeland state and created an ethnically defined population in transborder areas. One special feature of kin citizenship policies in Eastern European states relates to the relative demographic weight of external kin populations compared to the size of homeland populations. Under Bulgaria's rules on ethnic Bulgarians, around two-thirds of Macedonia's population of 2 million are eligible for Bulgarian citizenship on a preferential basis, though the number of Macedonian citizens who have acquired Bulgarian citizenship remained relatively low until 2010 (Hristova 2010). Between 2002 and 2011, a total of 44,211 Macedonian citizens were granted Bulgarian citizenship on the grounds of Bulgarian origin, while another 20,668 individuals from Moldova were naturalised in the same period (Jileva and Smilov 2013). It is quite telling that 40 per cent of those naturalised in 2012 had no permanent residence in Bulgaria (Jileva and Smilov 2013). Under Romanian rules, 2.5 million Moldovans out of 4 million are eligible for Romanian external citizenship and, under Hungarian rules, over 2.5 million ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring states are eligible for Hungarian kin citizenship.

While, in the case of Romania, the number of those Moldovans who have already acquired the status of external citizens remains less than one third of all those eligible, the majority of Croats in Bosnia possess external citizenship in Croatia (Koska, Ragazzi and Stiks 2013). Those eligible for Serbian external citizenship amount to over 2 million compared to the 6.2 million population of the Republic of Serbia: almost the entire population of the Bosnian Serb Republic and a third of the population of Montenegro are eligible for external Serb citizenship (Rava 2013). According to Moldovan estimates, applications by Moldovan citizens for Romanian citizenship are between 800,000 and 1.5 million. The number of those Moldovan citizens who had already acquired Romanian citizenship by 2010 is over 300,000, while another 120,000 Moldovans had Russian citizenship (Gasca 2012). At least in some states of the region, for instance in Moldova, the eligible target groups of external citizenship policies may comprise the numerical majority of the population of the state in which the target group resides. In other cases, such as the Bosnian Serb Republic, the numerical majority of an autonomous sub-state unit is eligible for the external citizenship of another state.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia also instituted generous external citizenship policies towards former citizens of the Soviet Union who found themselves minorities in states outside Russia. Russian laws on citizenship allowed residents of former Soviet republics to apply for citizenship if they had not become citizens of their newly independent states, regardless of their ethnic affiliation (Traunmüller and Agarin 2015). However, until 2002, the procedure was very complicated and involved several trips to Russian consular offices or moving to Russia. From 2002, an amendment to the law on citizenship introduced a simplified procedure of citizenship acquisition for former citizens of the Soviet Union if they resided in any of the former Soviet republics and were not able to acquire citizenship from them – and thus remained stateless. After 2002, such individuals were admitted to Russian citizenship upon submission of a written petition to a Russian consular office in the republic of their permanent residency, where they received Russian passports as a proof of their Russian citizenship. At the same time, however, the 2002 reform introduced a restriction according to which those taking up Russian external citizenship had to renounce their former citizenship (Zelev 2008). Until 2002, an estimated 1 million former Soviet citizens received external Russian citizenship, among them around 200,000 in the Ukraine, 200,000 in Abkhazia, 50,000 in South Ossetia, 135,000 in Transnistria and close to 100,000 in Estonia. More recently, like the trend observed in Romania, the Russian Duma adopted legislation in July 2010 that narrows down eligibility for the status of Russian “compatriot living abroad” to ethnic Russians, thus excluding those non-Russians who held citizenship of the Soviet Union in the past.

Transborder nation-building through citizenship was absent in Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. This, however, should not be taken as an indication of ethnically less-biased citizenship regimes. These newly independent and restored post-communist countries feared that the introduction of external kin citizenship would

propel their own internal minorities to become more vocal in demanding external citizenship from neighbouring kin states (Džankić 2015; King and Melvin 2000). Thus, even in these cases, the absence of expansive kin-citizenship policies is explained by strategic ethnocultural nation-building efforts rather than the recognition of ethnically neutral citizenship norms.

Quite remarkably, kin citizenship has been used as a nation-building tool well beyond the early years of democratic transition, even in countries that were not impacted on by the recent redrawing of international borders. In 2010, less than a week after the inaugural session of the new House, the newly elected right-wing nationalist Fidesz government led by Viktor Orbán introduced kin citizenship for Hungarians living outside the country in the name of “national reunification beyond the borders” (Pogonyi 2017). Subsequently, the new Hungarian Constitution enacted in 2011 defined non-resident Hungarians as full and equal members of the Hungarian nation. The new Act on the Election of Members of the Parliament of Hungary, adopted by parliament in late 2011, offered passive and active voting rights for Hungarians living outside the borders of the country. In the government’s rhetoric, the primary aim of this scheme was to redress past injustices suffered by Hungarians who lost their citizenship due to the redrawing of the borders in the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty after World War I. The formal inclusion of ethnic Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries and overseas territories was also intended to establish a legal bond and institutionalise solidarity among members of the Hungarian “transnation”. The Fidesz government claimed that it is a moral duty for Hungary to help Hungarians living outside the country even at the price of exerting pressure on the governments of the neighbouring states. By 2018, more than 1 million Hungarians living outside the country had acquired non-resident citizenship. In the April 2014 parliamentary elections, Fidesz received more than 95 per cent of the non-resident votes, which secured one additional seat for the right-wing party. As Fidesz won exactly the number of seats necessary for an absolute majority, the luminaries of the party, including Orbán, could claim that non-resident Hungarians helped his government to reach a two-thirds majority in parliament, making it possible for the Orbán government to rewrite the constitution.

3. Kin citizenship: geopolitical implications

As I have argued elsewhere, kin citizenship creates serious normative dilemmas (Pogonyi 2017). Most importantly, the enfranchisement of external kin minorities has, in a number of homeland states, literally become an instrument of domestic political competition, with political parties recruiting supporters through external electoral engineering. Consequently, the enfranchisement of external kin minorities who have been granted kin citizenship has raised questions with regards to the functioning of electoral institutions within the homeland states. In the past few years, serious concerns have emerged in

relation to the possible effects of extraterritorial citizenship on electoral processes and results (Bauböck 2007). External dual citizens with voting rights, who do not bear the cost of political decisions, may determine the result of elections and thereby outvote certain parts of the domestic constituencies. In countries with large external kin minorities, such as Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria, the enfranchisement of external kin minorities has already led to the serious consequence that external voters acquire an unduly large influence on domestic electoral outcomes without actually being exposed to most of the political consequences of their votes.

In addition to compromising democratic self-rule, kin citizenship is often seen as a grave challenge to the international system. As Kymlicka points out, the securitisation of ethnic relations is more likely in the historically contested regions of post-communist Eastern Europe, where fears over the rise of irredentist kin politics are still present (Kymlicka 2007). These threats are often exaggerated by nationalist parties in order to stir up securitised anxieties and incite hatred against minorities with kin states. However, fears that the passportisation of external populations is a precursor to territorial revisionism have gained salience in the aftermath of Russia's intervention in Georgia in 2008. The Kremlin claimed that Russia had a duty to protect ethnic Ossetians with Russian citizenship who were living in Georgia. As the Russian passportisation project shows, the naturalisation of transborder communities (including ethnic kin and other populations) can be used as a "foreign policy weapon" (Mühlfried 2010; Simon 2013).

From 1989, when Romania offered citizenship to ethnic kin groups in Moldova and the Ukraine, it did so in the expectation of a gradual and negotiated process of unification between Moldova and Romania (Iordachi 2004). The topic of the future unification of Romania and Moldova has again emerged on the public agenda, promoted, among others, by former Romanian President Traian Băsescu, whose electoral victory in December 2009 was partly secured by external voters from Moldova. More recently, former Romanian President Băsescu urged the reunification of Romania and Moldova, claiming that the "nation [...] lives artificially in two states" as a lasting result of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact (Băsescu 2016). In order to further strengthen the symbolic unity of the supposedly divided nation, Băsescu and his wife applied for Moldovan citizenship (Chiriac 2016; Vlas 2016). In an interview, Băsescu said that "Romania is obliged to unite with the Republic of Moldova, to let the latter continue its European path" (Băsescu 2016) which was criticised by Russia as well as pro-Russian opposition politicians in Moldova (Bird 2015). In 2015, 41 Romanian MPs formed the Friends of the Union group to increase cooperation between Romania and Moldova and to pave the way for re-unification (Bird 2015). In the same year, Romania offered EUR 100 million in aid to Moldova (Bird 2015). According to a 2013 poll, 76 per cent of Moldovans support unification with Romania and only 6 per cent oppose it. In another survey from 2015, 68 per cent agreed with the suggestion that the two countries should be united by 2018, the centenary of the establishment of Greater Romania (Mihalache 2015). Despite the overwhelming support, it cannot be

taken for granted that the reunification of Romania and Moldova would be as peaceful as the reunification of Germany. Russians in Moldova do not want their country to unite with Romania but, rather, with Russia. In 2014, after the annexation of Crimea by Russia, Transnistrian politicians asked the Russian parliament to extend Russian citizenship to the residents of Transnistria and draft a new law so that the breakaway region could join Russia (*BBC News* 2014). According to different estimates, around 200,000 individuals in Transnistria have Russian citizenship and another 150,000 possess a Ukrainian passport (Kolsto 2014). Interestingly, Yevgeny Shevchuk, the elected President of the breakaway region, has Russian citizenship rather than Moldovan (*Euronews* 2014). In 2009, President Bănescu initiated the simplification of naturalisation procedures in order to speed up and broaden the scope of naturalisation of Moldovans so that they could become full members of the “European family” (*EurActiv.Com* 2009).

Regulations on Serbian kin citizenship put Serbian–Montenegrin relations under strain (Džankić 2012). While Serbia extended citizenship to the Serbs of Montenegro, Montenegro insisted that its citizenship will be terminated for those residents in the country who acquire Serbian kin citizenship (Džankić 2010). Given the expansive thrust of Serbian citizenship legislation, one can interpret the text of the law in a way that allows “almost the whole population of the Republic of Srpska and more than a third of the Montenegrin population to become citizens of Serbia” (Rava 2013, 23). Serbian citizenship policy clashes with the restrictive regulations of Montenegro, making it impossible to reach a consensus on (possible) dual citizens of the two states. Serbia does not grant access to the list of Serbian–Montenegrin dual citizens while, at the same time, Montenegro insists that the Montenegrin citizenship of those who have external Serbian citizenship will be terminated (Rava 2013, 23).

With regards to external Serbs in Kosovo, the problem is even more complicated. Although Serbia does not recognise Kosovo’s statehood and regards all citizens of Kosovo as citizens of Serbia, it has bowed to European pressure to exclude Serbs in Kosovo from the Schengen visa agreement with Serbia (Rava 2013, 25).

Kin citizenship may also be used in order to contest sovereign statehood. Bulgaria’s kin citizenship offered to Macedonians who declare that they have “Bulgarian consciousness” is intended to delegitimise the existence of a separate Macedonian nation which Bulgaria does not recognise (Jileva and Smilov 2013, 16; Koneska 2015; Özgür Baklacioğlu 2004, 336). In Russia, non-resident citizenship was introduced partly as a reaction to the growing popularity of the far-right. The legal inclusion of former Soviet citizens, however, also served “neo-imperialist” Russia in projecting geopolitical influence in its near-abroad (King and Melvin 2000, 121).

It should, however, be noted that, in all the above cases, the source of interstate tension is not kin citizenship *per se*. In the study of nationalism and ethnic relations, violent conflicts dominate the scientific discourse even if they are relatively rare (Brubaker 1998) and only scant attention is given to the banal (Billig 1995) but more regular “weak”

forms of nationalism that do not lead to ethnic conflict (Todorova 2015). As King and Melvin point out, in post-communist Europe, “diaspora politics may be more a result of conflict than its cause” (King and Melvin 2000, 137). Heated interstate disputes over the status of kin minorities are part of normal politics not only in Eastern Europe but in many other parts of the world as well. Diplomatic friction between the kin state and the country of residence of kin minorities occurs even in the absence of kin citizenship. While kin-state support may radicalise kin-minority demands (Jenne 2007; Wolff 2003), externally supported claim-making does not necessarily lead to any kind of violent conflict as states are rational actors and thus are unlikely to support kin minorities if doing so would be contrary to their own interests (Saideman and Ayres 2012). The only case so far in which non-resident citizenship can be associated with severe interstate tension – that is, armed conflict and territorial adjustments – is the 2008 Russian intervention in the South Ossetian territories in Georgia. However, again, the Ossetian external citizens whom Russia allegedly aimed to protect were not ethnic Russians. Moreover, the 2014 annexation of Crimea as well as the secessionist war in Eastern Ukraine show that Russia does not need the pretext of protecting its external citizens in order to violate the territorial integrity of a neighbouring country. Russia occupied and annexed by military force the Crimea, claiming that it had a duty to protect ethnic Russians regardless of whether they have citizenship in Russia or not – most of them were naturalised by Russia after the annexation of Crimea.

The expansion of citizenship beyond the borders may, indeed, be associated with irredentism or even be a catalyst of transborder nationalism in some cases. In 2020, Russia offered fast-track citizenship for residents of Ukraine and Belarus, with obvious geopolitical aims that may extend from exerting pressure on its neighbours to preparing annexation or an intervention similar to the 2008 attack on Georgia (Ganohariti 2020; Klimkin and Umland 2020). Nevertheless, irredentist politics may well be intense even in the absence of kin citizenship and, conversely, extraterritorial citizenship offered for kin minorities may not necessarily intensify the appeal of irredentist claims. Eventually, non-resident citizenship may also reduce internal political pressure, even if kin citizenship is issued with normatively problematic geopolitical intentions. As I explained above, Macedonian politicians have good reasons to be concerned about the increasing number of Bulgarian dual citizens in the country. However, at the same time, many Macedonians without jobs have the opportunity for employment in the EU through Bulgarian passports (Koneska 2015) issued with the intention of delegitimising the Macedonian state. Despite the inevitably provocative intentions of Bulgaria, the implications of transborder citizenship may well be far less frightening, since the individual targets of kin citizenship can use foreign passports for very different purposes than the kin state hoped.

We should not exaggerate the potential threat of all the saber-rattling and other political stunts in relation to kin citizenship. For example, in 2011, Konstantin Zatulin, Chairman of the Duma’s committee overseeing Russia’s relations with external Russian

citizens, suggested that the Kremlin would consider offering fast-track citizenship for Kosovo Serbs in the name of Panslavic solidarity (Zatulin 2011) after more than 21,000 (Krasniqi 2011; *RT International* 2011a) – according to other sources, 50,000 (*Moscow Times* 2011) – Serbs petitioned the Russian Embassy in Belgrade. Ljubisa Vucic, president of the Association of Citizens from Kosovo and Metohija, claimed that Russian citizenship would guarantee the security of Kosovo Serbs as “Russia is a friendly country that is constitutionally obligated to protect its citizens wherever they are” (Barlovac 2011a). Zatulin argued for extending citizenship to Kosovo Serbs by noting that Russians and Serbs are connected by their religious traditions and joint battles against the Ottoman Empire. He added that, through granting kin citizenship for Serbs in Kosovo, Russia could prevent the Western integration of Kosovo. Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, responded that he would support the proposal of the Kosovo Serbs and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov promised that the Kremlin would give thorough consideration to the request of the Kosovo Serbs (Barlovac 2011b). In the end, the Russian government backed off and promised humanitarian aid only, rather than citizenship for ethnic Serbs in Kosovo (*RT International* 2011b). Taken together, the past 25 years show that Eastern European kin states are rational actors who, despite their often loud fire-brand transborder rhetoric, rarely engage in costly and risky interstate conflicts in defence of the transborder nation (King and Melvin 2000).

4. Conclusion

This chapter has offered an overview of non-resident citizenship in post-communist Europe. I have shown that, after the break-up of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, new and restored states used citizenship policies for the purpose of ethnic engineering. Through denying membership to resident minorities and the parallel inclusion of non-resident co-ethnics, the governments of the successor states of multinational federations wanted to secure the political dominance of the core ethnic groups which, in many cases, formed only in a slim majority. These preferential citizenship and quasi-citizenship policies were in line with the rhetoric of most post-communist Eastern European states, where mainstream parties framed democratic transition and independence as a nation-building project. In some cases, the kinship-based preferential treatment of non-resident kin minorities served geopolitical purposes. In others, non-resident ethnic kin were offered membership that included voting rights as part of a special gerrymandering project – the inclusion and enfranchisement of non-resident populations changed electoral balances.

I have also shown that kin citizenship is often the source of diplomatic disputes and interstate friction. In extreme cases, claims over non-resident citizens may even lead to armed conflict, as the 2008 Russian invasion of South Ossetian territories in Georgia showed. In other cases, however, non-resident citizenship and the kin state’s transborder

engagement in support of their kin minorities did not result in violent conflict. Disputes over non-resident citizenship rarely goes beyond minor diplomatic friction and violent conflict may occur even in the absence of kin citizenship. Despite their frequently harsh rhetoric, even nationalising Eastern European state actors do not often risk their rational interests for the sake of helping their transborder kin groups. If they do get involved in interstate conflict over them, they may do so without the pretence of fulfilling their duties as protecting powers for their citizens abroad.

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