The Politics of Border Walls in Hungary, Georgia and Israel

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ABSTRACT

Politicians justify border walls by arguing that it would protect the nation from outside threats, such as immigration or terrorism. The literature on border walls has identified xenophobic nationalism's centrality in framing border walls as a security measure. Yet, alternative geographic visions of nationhood in Hungary, Georgia and Israel define the fenced perimeters in these countries as the lines that divide the nation and its territory. These cases illustrate the contradiction between the geography of security, marked by the border wall, and the geography of nationhood, which extends beyond the fenced boundary. These cases allow us to problematize the link between "security" and "nationalism" and their relationship with borders. Therefore, this dissertation is a study of the politics of reconciling distinct geopolitical visions of security and nationhood in the making of border walls.

Justification of border walls requires the reframing of the national territory in line with the geography articulated by border security and away from the spatially expanded vision of nationhood. A successful reframing of the nation's geography is a matter of politicians' skills to craft a convincing geopolitical storyline in favor of the border wall that would combine security and nationalist arguments (Hungary). However, even the most skillful rhetoricians will find it hard to create such a discursive story if the hegemonic geography of nationhood has firmly fixed the meaning of the fenced line not as a border but as a dividing line across the nation's geo-body (Georgia). Where such hegemonic geography of nationhood is absent and the society disagrees over the meaning, shape and location of borders and territory, a security discourse in favor of the border wall would sway the public opinion towards that type of territorial conception of nationhood, which overlaps with the promise of protection (Israel).

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Politicians justify border walls by arguing that it would protect the nation from outside threats, such as immigration or terrorism. This study shows that the new border walls do not necessarily mean the rise of nationalism. Instead, the nationalism associated with border walls has sidelined and replaced other forms of nationalism that aim to keep the border open and expand the state's reach beyond the sovereign boundaries. In Hungary, Georgia and Israel, new border walls serve the purpose of security. Simultaneously, they separate the country from the areas beyond the fenced line but are considered part of the national territory. This study accounts for the political process that aims to reconcile these territorial contradictions between the quest for border security and the nationalist desire to maintain power beyond the border wall. The study has found that such a dual functioning of the borders has been possible in Hungary and Israel. In contrast, in Georgia, the fence remains a deeply negative symbol of the nation's territorial division.

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1. Introduction

The literature on border walls defines these physical structures as markers of nationhood and security. The research underscores the entanglement of security and nationalist considerations in the making of border walls. Politicians justify border walls as protective measures against external dangers that threaten the physical safety and cultural identity of the nation and its members. With border walls, border security has become more than a routine, politically unremarkable policy of boundary control. Border security has come to define nationhood spatially. It has territorialized national identity visually and affectively.

The alignment of the discourses of nationhood and security is not necessarily automatic. In some instances, the hegemonic geographies of security and nationhood contradict each other. I have identified three cases of new border walls – in Hungary, Georgia and Israel – that do not fit with the theoretical assumption. In each of the three cases, the fenced territorial line divides a dominant asserted imagined nation's space rather than marks its outer limits. In each case, the area that the fence defines and demarcates differs from the hegemonic spatial vision of nationhood, which extends beyond the fenced territory. This difference creates a contradiction between the geography of security, articulated by the border wall, and the geography of nationhood, challenged by the physical barrier.

In Hungary, the government has built a fence along the border with Serbia to limit informal immigration from the Middle East through the Balkans into Hungary and the European Union. By doing so, it has also demarcated the border which divides almost a quarter-million Hungarians in northern Serbia from Hungary. The Hungarian government and the Hungarian society at large consider this Hungarian community in Serbia as part of the transborder Hungarian nation, which extends beyond the borders of Hungary and includes ethnic kin in the neighboring countries.

In Georgia, the geopolitical opponents of the state – Russia and the de facto Republic of South Ossetia – have built fences along the latter's perimeter to demarcate its territorial sovereignty from

Georgia. Georgians generally understand the barrier to mark the occupation line, which divides the occupied territory (South Ossetia) from the government-controlled area (the rest of Georgia). Although the Georgian government has secured the fenced perimeter with its police forces, it strongly opposes the presence of the physical barriers because it contradicts the hegemonic geography of Georgia within the post-Soviet borders, which includes South Ossetia.

In Israel, the government has built an anti-terrorist security fence to prevent suicide bombing in Israeli cities by Palestinians from the West Bank. Although Israelis generally agree regarding the security function of the barrier, there exists a disagreement regarding its political purpose as a marker of the state's eastern border. The fence is particularly controversial among the religious-nationalists and settlers, who view the West Bank as a historical and biblical home of Jews and an integral part of Israel.

This dissertation studies the making and the functioning of these three theoretically puzzling border walls to investigate a theoretical question: *How do border walls resolve the contradiction between the geographies of nationhood and security?* In other words, how does border security become a marker of the nation's territory in the societies where the barrier's line does not constitute the territorial limit of the nationhood? In essence, this is a study of the politics of reconciling distinct geopolitical visions of security and nationhood in the making of border walls.

I approach the research question from a discourse-analytical perspective. Borders are not merely static lines on the map, but actively changing discursive entities and social processes. Their meaning and function are discursively produced (Newman & Paasi, 1998; Paasi, 1998). Political discourses also influence the physical properties of borders. Their materialization as walls and fences and dematerialization as control-free mobility regimes manifest politically produced meanings of the border (Newman, 2006).

The direct object of analysis is political discourses that define and contest the meaning of a fenced perimeter as a border with dual national and security implications, as a line where the nation would and should be protected. Border fences that emerged in each of the three cases are Janus-faced objects: they promise to solve a policy problem of security but create an additional obstacle to the spatial cohesiveness of the nation. These walls highlight the contradiction between the

geographies of security and nationhood. The central goal of each case study is to track the political contestation of and the changes in the borders' meaning and physical form.

While acknowledging the contextual factors and unforeseen events shaping the politics within each case, the comparative angle still allows us to draw a few general conclusions regarding conceptual similarities across the three selected cases. The substantive content of "security" and "nationhood" across the three cases may differ. Still, in all three cases, it is the discourses of security and nationhood that define political debates and arguments for or against the border fence. The goal of such generalization is to understand the co-constitutive relationship between the main concepts of the study: nationalism, security and borders.

The most general theoretical finding indicates that the justification of border walls requires the reframing of the national territory in line with the geography articulated by border security and away from the spatially expanded vision of nationhood. The geography of border security becomes a territorial template for political actors to articulate a new bounded, walled geography of nationhood. The content of security discourse, therefore, is entirely comprised of nationalist ideas and visions about ethno-cultural homogeneity, territorial integrity, sovereign statehood, etc.

A successful reframing of the nation's geography is a matter of politicians' skills to craft a convincing geopolitical storyline in favor of the border wall that would combine security and nationalist arguments (Hungary). However, even the most skillful rhetoricians will find it hard to create such a discursive story if the hegemonic geography of nationhood has firmly fixed the meaning of the fenced line not as a border but as a dividing line across the nation's geo-body (Georgia). Where such hegemonic geography of nationhood is absent and the society disagrees over the meaning, shape and location of borders and territory, a security discourse in favor of the border wall would sway the public opinion towards that type of territorial conception of nationhood, which overlaps with the promise of protection (Israel).

The resolution of the security-nationhood contradiction continues outside of political debates and becomes materialized in the physical infrastructure of the border. Walls do not encompass the full meaning and function of boundaries on which they stand. Walls visualize territorial security, but never fully enclose national territory. While the barriers prevent mobility across the borders, other

elements of the border infrastructure – highways, railways, crossing points – allow cross-border connection. These material elements together combine into a complex border regime, which designates ethnic kin beyond the border as a privileged group with unhindered access to the territory, while denying entry to those, whom the state's political elites define as dangerous foreigners, immigrants, terrorists. The task of maintaining national purity within sovereign territory and national unity across territorial borders requires from borders to function as filtration points rather than fully hermetically closed military lines, as symbolized by the image of the wall.

The study contributes to the border literature by making two inter-related theoretical arguments. First, the merger of nationalism and security in the making of the contemporary border is not always automatic and straightforward. Instead, it involves political contestation. This study corrects a dominant academic and popular media narrative that the modern proliferation of border walls is a direct result of resurgent nationalism in response to the decline of the nation-state in the face of globalization. The study rejects a uniform, fixed meaning "nationalism" and "security" and redefines them as politically flexible discourses that can change the substantive meaning. Politicians mobilize "nationalism" and "security" to argue for and against border walls.

Second, border regimes are a result of the contradiction between nationalism and security. The literature has described the border as a site of contradictions, paradoxes and oppositions between security and economy (Coleman, 2005), national sovereignty and globalization (Brown, 2010), territorial control and the de-territorialized world (Paasi, 2009). Yet, the border research does not contrast nationalism and security with each other. The two are usually coupled together as a single factor behind border walling. This dissertation addresses this gap by investigating how the contradiction turns into alignment of the geographies of security and nationhood.

The dissertation consists of six chapters. A section on theory and methods follows this brief introduction. The second chapter reviews the existing literature on border walls, defines key terms and concepts, discusses case selections and identifies methods that guide the research. The next three chapters, from three through five, represent the main body of the dissertation. These are three case studies of border walls in Hungary, Georgia and Israel. Each case study is further divided into three parts (sub-chapters), corresponding to distinct methodological perspectives:

1. Tracing historical emergence of the border illustrates what political discourses and governmental practices of security and nationhood had shaped the border;
2. In-depth study of the discursive making of the border wall shows to what extent the material barriers at the border produced the contradiction between security and nationalism, and how politics resolved this contradiction;
3. Everyday functioning of the border – material practices by the state and lived experience of residents – show how these political discourses of nationhood and security materialize on the ground and how does the contradiction gets solved in practice.

The final, sixth chapter concludes the dissertation and summarizes the main findings.

2. Theory & Methods

2.1 Theory

After the global decline in the number of border barriers at the end of the 1980s, they started to proliferate in the last two decades. Governments around the world have built more than fifty new border walls, fences and barriers in that period. There is a considerable consensus in the literature that these new border walls aim to prevent the mobility of humans and goods, defined as illegal, across sovereign borders. This purpose differs from other, more military functions to claim a disputed territory or deter a military attack from neighboring powers. However, there is also disagreement among the explanations for why the governments try to prevent such cross-border mobility.

Political science research has argued that a difference in economic wealth increases the probability of wall-building. The explanation is based on quantitative analysis that combines the presence of the border walls with other independent variables. Economic factors determine the increased 'illegal' mobility of people and goods and encourage the recipient governments to strengthen the border physically. David Carter and Paul Poast have found that cross-border economic inequality to be a more "robust predictor of border walls" than traditional security issues such as civil wars in neighboring countries or military threats of invasion from rival states (2017, p. 25). Ron Hassner and Jason Wittenberg have found "no evidence that states that build barriers have experienced a disproportionate number of terrorist attacks." They have similarly concluded that "differences in state wealth and migration rates are the best predictors of barrier construction" (2015, p. 159).

Those scholars, particularly political geographers, who study border walls from a discourse-analytical perspective, pay attention to subjective discourses of border walls, rather than objective facts, such as the number of terrorist attacks and GDP, to explain the recent proliferation of fortified boundaries. Elisabeth Vallet (2019) has found that the governments have, most commonly, justified the new border fortifications as security measures against terrorism and

migration. Often, these two justifications are used interchangeably or in an ensemble. Border-walling against migration, accordingly, does not merely derive from the objective reality of GDP/wealth difference but from the way the governments have come to perceive and frame immigration and cross-border mobility in general as a danger, as a security issue in and of itself.

By combining the two 'dangers', the discourse of border walls has securitized transnational mobility of humans as a danger to both the physical safety of citizens and the cultural identity of nations. Cross-border flows have become increasingly defined and identified as "a risk to local identities and economies" (Vallet, 2019, p. 158). As a result, border policy has become a default matter of national security. Border walls define the nation's territory and secure it from the dangers of the outside world.

According to an influential thesis by political theorist Wendy Brown (2010), contemporary border walls are theatricalized simulations of sovereign power. Faced with the weakening of state sovereignty against the transnational flows of people, money and violence, the walls "stage sovereign power of protection" and "generate reassuring world picture" (Brown, 2010, pp. 25; 26). The wall articulates a divide between a dangerous, disorderly and violent outside and a homogeneous, orderly and safe inside. By blending a migrant and a terrorist into a single image of danger, the wall discourse also equates national security with national purity. By identifying safety and security with a purity of the nation and inviolability of its territorial borders, such a theatralized performance of protection draws upon and intensifies xenophobic nationalism.

Political geographer Reece Jones (2012) complements Brown's thesis by focusing more specifically on the global effect of the post-9/11 anti-terrorism discourse on the proliferation of border walls. Jones illustrates how anti-terrorism has merged with the Huntingtonian vision of the clash of civilizations and redefined underdeveloped parts of the world as potential havens for terrorists. The governments around the globe consistently identified the threat of terrorism with the lesser-developed neighboring countries and societies. They promoted the construction of border walls to defend the country from the lawless and violent outsiders. In Jones's account, the discourse of terrorism is thoroughly intertwined with xenophobic nationalism, supporting and giving meaning to each other. Preventing terrorism required not only specific military operations to arrest or neutralize actual terrorist groups but more permanent border security policies to keep

the potential terrorists away. Restricting immigration of racially and culturally different people from less developed areas of the world became an anti-terrorist policy. Borders, thus, became both the markers of national identity and national territory and the mechanisms of security.

These prominent examples within the literature illustrate the entanglement and mutually co-constitutive relationship between territorial borders, nationhood and security. By functioning as a line where the government enacts national security, boundaries simultaneously reify and naturalize the link between territory, people and the state. Scholars of nationalism, security and borders have already observed such a productive and performative power of boundaries to give meaning to national identity by defining and separating the safety and purity of inside from the dangerous and violent outside (Anderson, 2016; Campbell, 1998; Houtum & Naerssen, 2002; Paasi, 1996; Sahlins, 1991).

Other authors, who have situated the border walls within broader border assemblages, show a more complicated picture of the relationship between security, nationhood and the border. Geographer Nick Megoran (2017) situates boundary fortifications within more extended border biographies. Such a long-term perspective defines border walls as temporally and politically contextual events. Geopolitical context and the changing discourses of nationalism influence whether borders materialize into physical barriers or dematerialize.

Megoran's study shows that fortifications at the border do indeed function as discursive practices through which the state reproduces the distinction with the outside spaces and people and constructs national identities. However, this process is neither temporally nor spatially uniform. Temporally, the political salience of border discourses increases and decreases from one period to another. Spatially, the government's nationalizing efforts via discursive practices of the border often meet challenges in the borderlands where residents find more in common with people on the other side of the border than with the political center of their country.

Political theorist Matthew Longo (2018) goes further in destabilizing the naturalizing link between the border walls, border security and national territory. He situates the border walls within the broader border security infrastructure and practice. Walls point to the linear conception of security and the binary territorial vision, which divides the space into the inside (safe and homogeneous

national space) and outside (dangerous and disorderly foreign area). The contemporary border security practice, on the other hand, follows a spectral form without clear-cut division between the neighboring countries' sovereign spaces. Counterintuitively, border security blurs the jurisdictional boundary line and erases the division of space into the inside and the outside. The border walls are part of spatially thick militarized frontiers. They extend the state's reach beyond the border wall that marks the boundary line.

Geographer Mat Coleman (2005) further broadens the scholarly perspective on borders by contrasting the contemporary drive towards the militarization of boundaries with the simultaneous process of border opening. He argues that the administration's policy at the U.S.-Mexico border combines two contradictory projects: "a rebordering national security territoriality and a debordering geography of participation in open markets and trade networks" (Coleman, 2005, p. 189). The border wall materializes the security policy that aims to prevent unwanted mobility of people and goods, but the ports of entry serve the trade interest. Political scientists Beth Simmons and Michael Kenwick (2019) have recently translated this dual function into a concept of "border orientation," which describes the degree to which the governments enforce border control via physical infrastructure to filter, rather than simply entirely prevent, cross-border mobility.

The concepts of security and nationhood can have a variety of meanings, spatial and cartographic forms and policy utilities, some of which are not in favor of the border wall. Security and nationhood can operate in broader or narrower spatial forms. Border security can take a form of external outsourcing of bordering (broader spatial vision) or internal checks (more restricted spatial vision). The imagined national space, similarly, can extend beyond sovereign political bo rders to encompass ethnic kin in neighboring countries. On the other hand, it can also exclude certain portions of the state territory from the nation, manifested in ghettos of various kinds in different historical periods and geographical contexts. Which of these geographies becomes hegemonic and materializes into a particular border regime, depends on a political context.

The literature does not explain how do these contradictory border discourses turn into a simplified geopolitical vision of the world divided into homogeneous national space and the dangerous foreign land. Although we know that security and nationhood are central discourses in the making of border walls, it is less clear how the two merge to become congruent and align with the

territorial line of the border. Essentially, the theoretical question driving this research is this: how does the border, with its ambiguous and contradictory meanings, become the defensive line of the nation against the external threat.

This dissertation study goes beyond a simple explanation that nationalist narratives securitize border and that border security policies reproduce the nationalist narratives of othering. In contrast to this accepted knowledge, the selected cases show that this is not always so. The Hungarian government views those just beyond the border as co-ethnics and grants them citizenship; Georgians refer to Ossetians and Abkhaz as "our brothers and sisters"; and in Israel, the fence separates not only Palestinians but also Jewish settlers.

These cases show that geographies of security and nationhood do not always align with each other and with the spatial extent of sovereign states. Therefore, they are particularly well-positioned to problematize the relationship between borders, nationhood and security. The cases of Hungary, Georgia and Israel provide a possibility to study how contradictions in competing geographies are resolved and narrowed down to become hegemonic in the politics of making the border wall.

2.2 Concepts

I introduce a conceptual framework that helps to unpack distinct analytical categories involved in the contradiction between the geographies of nationalism and security at the border. It aims to distinguish different meanings and corresponding spatial forms of the key concepts: border, territory and nationalism. Illustrating distinctions within different definitions and types of the same concept allows a more nuanced way of thinking about the entanglement and co-constitution of borders, nationhood and security. After mapping out this conceptual framework, it will become clearer which particular combination/configuration of nationhood-security nexus justifies border walls and which one opposes. Ultimately, this framework helps illustrate the political processes and relational dynamics within which specific meanings/forms of borders, territory and nationhood become salient and shape the policy-making of border walls.

Borders. I distinguish three meanings of borders: political, security and national. Political borders are identical to sovereign jurisdictional boundaries. These are internationally recognized borders represented on the world political map. Most of the new border walls follow political borders. In such cases, political borders overlap with security borders. The latter are territorial lines designated as a defense perimeter that needs to be secured and fortified via physical barriers.

The security border differs from the political border in two ways: location and meaning. First, border walls generally do not strictly follow jurisdictional boundaries. Often there is a considerable distance of hundreds and thousands of meters between the jurisdictional line and border barrier, which leaves parts of sovereign territory 'outside' of the wall's protection. Second, not all political borders become security borders. Most of the world's sovereign boundaries are unfenced. The fenced borders acquired the status of defensive lines within a specific period and context. For example, for most of the 20th century, the U.S.-Mexico border functioned without any systematic enforcement of border control. It became a security border only in the 1980s and 1990s and the meaning further crystallized after 9/11 (Coleman, 2005; Jones, 2012).

National borders refer to even less physically tangible and even more imagined spatial boundaries of the nation. Often national and political borders overlap. It is a result of social spatialization: when institutional, popular and everyday discourses over a long period institutionalize political sovereign borders as 'natural' limits of the nation's homeland (Paasi, 1996). Cartographic images of the state (logo-maps) where borders define the territorial contour (geo-body) of the country play a significant role in the transformation of political boundaries into national borders (Anderson, 2016). That is arguably the case with Georgia's internationally recognized borders (e.g. the border with Russia along the Caucasus Mountainous Range), which the Georgian public generally perceives as the boundary of national space.[1]

However, in many cases, national and political borders differ. In the case of Israel, the 1949 armistice line, known as the Green Line, functioned as the country's unofficial but internationally

[1] The presence of historical Christian churches and monasteries in the neighboring area of Turkey sometimes allows revisionist territorial discourses, especially within the religious groups, but during the three decades of independence this view has not become politically salient.

recognized border in the first decades of independence. Still, it has not acquired the hegemonic meaning of a national border within Israel (Kemp, 1998). In this case, social spatialization has been less than successful. In the case of Hungary as well, many people differentiate between political borders and national borders. The latter generally refers to a larger spatial unit, often defined in physical geographical terms as the Carpathian Basin. It corresponds to the territorial extent of the Kingdom of Hungary before the Trianon Treaty in 1920, which transferred large parts of the kingdom to Hungary's neighboring countries. During my research interviews in Hungary, I asked the respondents, where do they think are the national borders of Hungary. None of the answers referred to the internationally recognized post-Trianon borders. The respondents usually located the national borders inside the territories of neighboring countries.

Where there are no easily recognizable natural features associated with the nation's geo-body, such as mountain ranges or rivers, national borders often are understood to follow the areas populated by ethnic kin in the neighboring countries. Without an agreement within the country's geopolitical culture on where the boundaries of a nation are, or when there are multiple, competing ideas about political, security and national borders, territorial discourse and the practice of border security acquire a spatially 'thicker' rather than 'thinner' linear form. This suggests the existence of a frontier, which is an analytical category distinct from the three meanings of the border (political, security, national).

Frontier indicates the absence of a clear territorial boundary of national, security and political space. These spaces are more thoroughly intertwined and overlapping with the neighboring national, security and political areas. Matthew Longo defines the U.S.-Mexico border as a frontier because the U.S. security policies extend well beyond the jurisdictional line and blur the territorial division between the two countries' sovereign, political spaces. Some geographers have also defined Israel's eastern border as a frontier because the Green Line does not contain the Israeli military, administrative and civilian presence in the Palestinian territories (Kemp, 1999; Kimmerling, 1983; Shafir, 1984, 2017).

Territories. Borders do not exist in isolation. They acquire meaning in relation to the surrounding spaces which they define and divide. And these spaces become territories as they get bounded by borders. As a spatial manifestation of power, borders indicate the control of an area by a particular

kind of power and this relationship between power, space and borders creates territories (Elden, 2010). The modern states define such political territories, i.e. areas controlled and administered by political power, known as the state.

Much (but not all) of the state sovereignty is manifested via such territorial control, although state-territoriality is not the only modality/form of the political organization of space. With globalization, some of the taken-for-granted powers and competences of the state and the sovereign borders appear hollow and incapable of spatial enforcement (Agnew, 2009). However, despite the multi-vectoral operation of state power that extends beyond the sovereign borders and does not live up to the expectation of absolute sovereignty, political boundaries still allow qualitatively distinct possibilities of power exercise inside and outside them (Newman, 2006). Political borders, therefore, define political territories.

Territories, beyond their political definition, also have other meanings. Benedict Anderson (2016) has shown that colonial projects led not just to independent states but homelands. Educational, cultural, media and political institutions all play a role in the transformation of political territories into national territories. Border discourses play a particularly important role as they differentiate homeland from the foreign land both spatially and normatively (Megoran, 2017; Sahlins, 1991).

Such institutional discourses can be at odds with other prominent, notably historical discourses of nationhood that define the nation's space in a more expanded form to include places of historical and religious importance beyond the state's political borders. In such cases, political and national territories can be incongruent. The fence along a political border would then divide the national territory. It would separate a small part of the national land from the core, which is congruent with the political territory. In Hungary and Israel, distinct territorial discourses identify the space beyond the fence as a territory of a foreign political power (Serbia/Palestinian Authority) and as a historical homeland (Carpathian Basin/Land of Israel).

A further distinction is necessary within the meanings of the national territory. Not all spaces beyond the political border/fence but inside the national border are equal. Some historical lands do not prompt explicit, politically salient territorial claims. The mainstream Hungarian discourse of nationhood suggests such a relationship. In other cases, however, the state might actively dispute

the ownership of these transborder territories by the neighboring power or consider it occupied. The Israeli government regards the West Bank as a disputed territory, while Georgia claims that Abkhazia and South Ossetia, fenced out from the government-controlled area, are Russian-occupied regions.

Nationalism. Corresponding to the different meanings of border and territory, I also distinguish various forms of nationalism. Thus, rather a static ideology, this study understands nationalism as a territorial discourse, which is shaped and updated within a geopolitical context. The first is a border nationalism. It aims to reify existing political borders/territory and turn them into national borders/territory. Michael Billig's (1995) account of banal nationalism fits with this definition. Of the three case studies, Georgia's hegemonic nationalism, which is a political discourse of territorial integrity within the country's post-Soviet borders, can be described as a form of border nationalism. It does not challenge existing political boundaries but tries to assert them against alternatives.

The second is an extra-territorial or transborder nationalism. Two dimensions are important. First, it is a nationalist discourse that is oriented outside of political borders, outside of the state territory, hence, extra-territorial. Second, despite its spatial orientation beyond the political boundaries, it is not territorial as it does not claim sovereignty over an external land. Instead, its object is primarily people, usually understood as ethnic kin or a part of the transborder nation. Hungary is a prime example of such a form of nationalism. Rogers Brubaker and other scholars of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe have described such extra-territorial nationalist policies of ethnic kin (Brubaker, 1996; Csergo & Goldgeier, 2004; Pogonyi, 2017; Waterbury, 2010).

The third is a frontier nationalism. This is an unbounded territorial discourse, one that seeks territorial expansion and flexible lines rather than demarcated boundaries. Several scholars have described Israel's complex territorial entanglement with Palestine in the West Bank as a manifestation of frontier nationalism and unbounded territoriality (Hughes, 2020; Kemp, 1999; Shafir, 1984, 2017). Frontier nationalism can rely on a set of existing boundaries but does not mobilize an effort to approximate the different meanings (political, security, national) and fix them along one particular territorial line. Instead, the frontier politics reproduce flexibility and the blurring of clear territorial dividers.

Despite similarities between the frontier and the extra-territorial nationalisms, there is a crucial difference between them. Extra-territorial nationalism does not blur the boundary line. It seeks open borders rather than no borders. Frontier nationalism, in contrast, views borders as temporary and seeks to relocate them further away. The border walls, therefore, acquire two different meanings from these two nationalist perspectives. Extra-territorial nationalism views border walls as one element of a border which needs to be offset by efforts to allow cross-border mobility and connection between the inside and the outside. Frontier nationalism is less concerned about institutionalizing cross-border movement. It merely renders the border wall meaningless in terms of the state's territorial control beyond the fenced line, or defines the wall as a temporary measure, subject to relocation if/when necessary to further expand the state's territorial control.

These distinct meanings of border, territory and nationalism should not be understood as static, frozen in time and space. Instead, their definition and spatial form change over time and within a political context. What counts as a national border, for example, can be contested. The territorial visions of the homeland can be multiple and each can resonate with a particular group of people, political parties and institutions. The political salience of a specific meaning of a concept might decrease while other competing definitions acquire more prominence as the (geo)political context changes.

The contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood, the central object of this study, is therefore made up of other intra-concept inconsistencies and differences. Breaking the politics of border walls down to distinct meanings about borders, territories and nationhood helps a more nuanced understanding. These different meanings contribute to geopolitical storylines of border walls: those that articulate particular geographies of security and mandate border security; and those that articulate specific geographies of nationhood and mandate open borders. Each geopolitical storyline assembles a particular 'package' of conceptual meanings of border, territory and nationhood to frame the congruency of security and nationhood and to create a coherent narrative of the border wall. Simultaneously, the storyline marginalizes those alternative meanings that would illustrate inconsistencies. The research objective is to trace how politics changes geographies of security and nationhood in articulating particular definitions of borders, territories and nation.

2.3 Case Selection

I have selected three cases of border fences in Hungary, Georgia and Israel for three main reasons. First, from a theoretical point of view, they indicate a more complicated relationship between nationalism and security than the way the literature theorizes it. The distinctions between national borders/territories and political borders/territories in each case provide a convenient research puzzle to trace the discursive alignment of the geogrpahies of nationhood and security. Therefore, these cases promise to build on and enrich the existing theory of border walls.

Second, from a methodological point of view, they allow a perfect conceptual comparison of how nationalism and security 'work' in relation to borders and border walls, not *despite* but *because* of their distinct geopolitical context. The geopolitical contexts of the three border walls are very different. The locations are in different geographic areas, regional settings and geopolitical fields. The policy areas that define the meaning and context of the three fences are also different: migration, territorial conflict and terrorism. Despite such distinctiveness of these cases, the conceptual framework – centered around the co-constitutive relationship between security, nationalism and border walls – remains similar. Therefore, the three examples allow us to study these concepts in three different substantive/empirical configurations and draw generalizable theoretical findings.

Third, from a personal and practical point of view, these are the cases and places with which I am familiar and have developed an academic interest. I am a native of Georgia and I have lived in Hungary for almost a decade now. In both cases, I already have certain privileges (language proficiency, cultural familiarity) to conduct in-depth research. On the other hand, such embeddedness also involves various biases, some of which can be consciously acknowledged and addressed, but perhaps not all. I had a prior interest in the Israeli-Palestinian issue, but my knowledge and focus on the topic grew after taking a course by Professor Peters in Fall 2017. This class prompted me to include the Israeli security fence as a third case study to diversify the comparative perspective of this research thematically and geographically.

2.4 Methods

Discourse-Analytical Approach to the Study of Politics

Positivist studies of border walls tend to identify particular factors (independent variables), the presence of which leads to the construction of border walls – dependent variable. But there is no physical law that says that once such factors are present, walls appear on the border. Construction of border walls is a social and political phenomenon. Therefore, a comparison of physical facts is not enough to explain the phenomenon. It is necessary to understand how specific objective facts (GDP differences, number of people crossing the border informally, etc.) become the kind of problems that require a solution in the form of a border wall in one place. In contrast, the same issues might lead to a different solution (e.g. setting up refugee shelters) or simply remain outside of active political discussion in other places. Research has to take into account social and political motivations, understandings and justifications.

Politics is the central link between pre-existing events, conditions and factors and the resulting physical structures along the border. Furthermore, politics is what constitutes the meaning of pre-existing facts and circumstances as a type of problem that requires a solution in the form of a border wall. Events "become a political issue if they are constituted as such in discourse, if storylines are created around them that indicate the significance of the physical events" (Hajer, 1995, p. 21). Explanation, therefore, requires a discourse-analytical approach to understand how particular understandings come into being and shape the policy decision-making. The explanatory process of the discourse-analytical approach to the study of public policy is interpretive; "Empirical considerations come into play, but only as they are woven into the various narrative constructions" (Fischer, 2003, p. 45).

Securing borders, in general, and building border walls, more specifically, involves, as the literature has shown, a particular discourse of nationhood that aims to stress the division between the inside and the outside, between the nation and the foreign people and places. This discourse of nationhood further underscores external dangers and justifies protective measures at the territorial

borders. Through such discourses, the meaning of borders change. They become national and security borders that define the national territory from the dangerous outside spaces and people.

Often this geopolitical storyline, which combines nationhood, security and borders, has to compete with other discourses of the border. In such a competitive discursive field, the politics of border walls becomes a discursive struggle over the definition of the right meaning of borders. Discourse analysis should examine both the sources of these particular definitions of nationhood and security within the society's geopolitical culture and their application and competition in the process of policy-making of border walls.

Each of the three case-studies relies on three methods. All three methods are part of a broader discourse-analytical perspective: genealogy, discursive-argumentative analysis and discourse-material analysis.

Genealogy

The contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood is the central object of this study. In each of the three cases of border walls, this contradiction is a temporally specific event, something that occurred at a particular point in time. Genealogy traces the emergence of the inconsistency.

Genealogy is a discursive perspective that accounts for the sources of a particular discursive regime that makes explicit the contingency of the present by tracing its historical emergence. Genealogy, most briefly defined as a 'history of the present,' is a research perspective that seeks to denaturalize existing taken-for-granted knowledge and practice by detailing contingent factors and arbitrary, unjust, or violent events that were involved in the making of the present.

Border genealogy 'targets' existing hegemonic view of the border and focuses on the evolution and change in the understandings of the problem, meaning and function of the boundary (Shapiro et al., 1988). Border genealogy traces different discursive and policy contexts in which the border has appeared (e.g. trade policy, public health, migration). Each would have a particular discursive

scope and framing of the border as a policy problem.

The premise of this approach is that borders with walls have become security lines within the specific geopolitical context and discursive formation. Discourses of security and nationhood have constituted the border, have shaped its meaning over time in a way to create a boundary that requires fortifications with physical barriers. A genealogical account of the making of such a fortified border traces specific events and discourses that led to the construction of the fence. The aim is to show how has the discursive formation altered over time in a way to make the wall possible and desirable in a location which would spatially divide rather than secure the nation. Genealogy, therefore, illustrates a discursive change: how the discourse supporting border security started to dominate the competing discourses of nationhood that supported open, unfenced borders.

The goal is not to retell the events but to identify changing discursive formations that have structured the geopolitical reasoning of key decision-makers about the border, territory, security and nationhood. These territorial discourses of security and nationhood have, over decades, created particular forms of thinking about the society's place in the world and the border's role in it; fundamental territorial problems and potential solutions; and understandings on what counts as a danger to the nation and the state. A genealogical account would map out a discursive structure of the society's geopolitical culture, identifying main geopolitical visions and traditions, that have established shared understandings and definitions of key concepts and delimited the discursive bounds of political debates (Atkinson & Dodds, 2000; Dijkink, 1997).

At any moment, decision-makers' geopolitical reasoning involves the adaptation of discursive repertoires of the past to the geopolitical context of the present. Understanding a historically formed discursive structure provides a necessary background to analyze the politics of border walls: how politicians navigate through contradictory meanings of security and nationhood.

Discursive-Argumentative Analysis

Whereas genealogy provides a temporally extended view on the policy-making of the border, the discourse-argumentative approach offers a temporally limited, but analytically thicker account. The discursive-argumentative method defines politics as an argumentative struggle over the definition of problems. This method accounts for the competition between discursive practices and the emergence of the most appropriate, hegemonic understanding of the policy problem and solution (Hajer, 1995; Ó Tuathail, 2002). The discourse-argumentative approach allows analyzing the geopolitical reasoning of individual key leaders without relying on psychologist approaches to the study of personal decisions. Instead, the analysis draws on the wider cultural influences, established geopolitical visions and existing geopolitical storylines.

The discourse-analytical model identifies four stages in the policy-making process: problem definition, identification of geopolitical strategy, geopolitical accommodation and problem closure. Throughout the process, politics boils down to a discursive struggle between distinct political parties and interest groups. This struggle carries out via geopolitical storylines around which discursive coalitions form and influence the policy outcome (Hajer, 1995; Ó Tuathail, 2002).

Storylines are condensed accounts of a political event and the problem under discussion. They simplify a complex reality, allow a variety of stakeholders and actors to position themselves around it and create a discursive coalition. Storylines consist of historical analogies, metaphors and tropes, which enable it to represent the question in a way that it is familiar to and understandable by many. These are interpretative frames through which people view and make sense of the world.

Politicians construct stories to explain geopolitical events, crises and problems to a broader audience. These storylines are discursive practices through which certain understandings of (international) political affairs become dominant and common-sense and enable the policy-making process. For these storylines to become hegemonic, they have to be embedded in the familiar geopolitical culture of a society. It means using well-known genres of storytelling, categories, metaphors and analogies that would explain a present geopolitical situation convincingly and straightforwardly (Ó Tuathail, 2002).

Storylines evolve in relation to other, opposite storylines, absorb intervening events and adapt to the changing geopolitical context. As they absorb and accommodate opposition in the pursuit of discursive hegemony, they leave space for a new line of division and new opposing meanings to emerge. Storylines are arguments; they presuppose and define opposition. Storylines, therefore, structure the discursive field of politics. Individuals do not arrive at a new policy problem with the already formed position, but instead, they position themselves in the discursive structure built by the competing storylines (Hajer, 1995; Shapiro et al., 1988). Therefore, storylines are critical to the study of the practical geopolitical reasoning involved and manifested in the discourses of nationhood and security and the specific ways they define the border.

Discourse-Material Analysis

The discourse-material perspective incorporates the physical properties of the border wall into the analysis. A comprehensive study of policy-making of the border wall should respond to three additional questions: how the policy is implemented and practiced; how it evolves from the policy documents and materializes on the territorial edge of the state; and how the contradiction of the distinct geographies has been resolved on the ground and in practice. The discourse-material perspective offers an empirical account of how physical infrastructures, spaces and human bodies create border assemblages that manifest the discourses of security and nationhood.

This methodological perspective aims to illustrate how does a border wall materializes and reproduces those geopolitical visions that shaped the policy-making process. Territories are made not just via language and geopolitical storylines but via physical infrastructure and material practices that derive from political discourse but also give meaning, reproduce and possibly change, shift or subvert political discourse. As border fences come into relationship with other human or non-human elements, as it creates border assemblages, it also makes particular territories and creates territorial meanings. And crucially, there can be multiple, even contradictory, meanings and territorializations occurring simultaneously (Dittmer, 2013).

The discourse-material analysis rests on two assumptions. First, everyday practices that material infrastructure of the border has established bring particular meanings of the border and the territory into life. These border practices performatively constitute individuals, affecting both their physical mobility and shaping their behavior, in a classical Foucauldian operation of disciplinary power. Second, the material infrastructure (e.g. the physical fence) operates in a specific spatial context and enters into an assemblage with other human and non-human elements. Distinct configurations of such assemblages do not merely mirror pre-existing geopolitical discourses, but they reproduce them in their specific way. The materialization of the political discourses involves simultaneous deviations from them. As a result, material border assemblages change the border's intended meaning, expose existing contradictions or shed light on new ones. Rather than thinking of the border walls as outcomes of the political process, this methodological perspective defines them as agents of their own in remaking political discourses and meanings (Barry, 2013).

The two assumptions indicate that there is a 'dialogue' between the security architecture and the political ideas (Klinke, 2018). The discourse-material approach aims to identify this relational quality between the discourses and materiality of the border wall, territory and nationhood. The research can focus on three essential areas: how border fence enters in relation with other objects to implement a particular task (infrastructural assemblage); how routine material enactment of these connections produces meaning (performative nature); and how the effect of the fence changes in different contexts, events and 'constellations' (agency) (Aradau et al., 2014). These material dimensions and insights contribute to an understanding of the (b)ordering effect of the wall: what kind of territorial order of security and nationhood has the border wall established? (Houtum & Naerssen, 2002).

Such an analysis requires a visual understanding of the border's material infrastructure and the observation of border practices in action. In the case studies on Hungary and Georgia, much of discourse-material analysis relies on my fieldwork, travel and inspection of the border perimeter, villages and border crossing points. Part of the data comes from interviews with the residents, border security officials and local public officials. In Israel, where I did not do the fieldwork, most of the data come from reports by international human rights organizations and the conflict studies think-tanks. These reports cover everyday aspects of the border wall sufficiently enough to allow

such analysis, although it does not replace the value of fieldwork.

2.5 Data Collection

The research data for this study consists of four main parts. First, online newspaper articles that describe crucial political developments, events and debates regarding the border walls provide the primary source for discursive-argumentative analysis. Second, public speeches of the key decision -makers (e.g. Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban) that I retrieved from official websites. Third, secondary academic and non-academic literature on the histories and geographies of the borders. Fourth, thirty-five research interviews in Hungary/Serbia and Georgia with politicians and public officials in the capital and the border regions, police officers, experts and ordinary residents of the border area. Besides, I have also relied on a variety of data, such as maps, police statistics on border crossings, social media pages on specific events or aspects of life at the border, photos, videos and other visual representations of the border by political parties or individual politicians.

3. Hungary's Southern Border Fence

3.1 Introduction

In 2015, the government of Hungary built a border fence along the country's southern boundary with Serbia and Croatia. The physical barrier aimed to prevent migrants, who were arriving mostly from Asia and passing through Serbia, from entering Hungary. Prime Minister Viktor Orban claimed that the border fence would defend the nation and Europe from the 'invasion' by the broad masses of culturally incompatible people. The growing immigration throughout 2014 and 2015, known as 'Europe's migration crisis,' provides the immediate context for the southern border fence. The barrier is unremarkable within this context. Several other EU member states, such as Greece, Bulgaria and Slovenia, built similar border barriers in that period. The EU, as a whole, also stepped up the enforcement of border control along its outer edges.

However, Hungary's border fence stands out from others. It does not merely demarcate an international political border between two sovereign countries and create an obstacle to migrants from faraway places. The barrier physically separates Hungary from a quarter of a million 'Hungarians' in Serbia's northern region. The region – Vojvodina – was part of the Kingdom of Hungary until 1920. The Trianon Treaty allocated the area together with its population to Yugoslavia. The residents of Vojvodina, whether they identified as Hungarian, Serbian, or with any other nationality, became citizens of a new country without changing their address. Many of their descendants today still identify as Hungarian. Tens of thousands of them possess Hungarian citizenship and vote in Hungary's parliamentary elections.

According to a widely accepted understanding of nationhood in Hungary, the Hungarian nation extends beyond the state's territorial (Trianon) borders. In addition to the 10 million citizens of Hungary who live inside the state's borders, the nation includes 'Hungarians beyond the border' (*határon túli magyarok*). They live in the neighboring countries but within the areas once belonging to Hungary. Vojvodina's Hungarian community is part of the transborder Hungarian nation.

Since the change of the Communist regime in 1989-1990, successive Hungarian governments have developed the 'nationhood policy' (*nemzetpolitika*, or 'nation politics' if translated directly) to deepen links with Hungarians beyond the border. Under the framework of nemzetpolitika, a variety of economic, infrastructural, educational, cultural and other policies in the past three decades have sought to erase political borders functionally. Permeability of Hungary's existing territorial borders has been an essential condition for stronger links between Hungary and transborder Hungarians. For this reason, the opening of borders has long been a point of consensus among Hungary's political parties.

During the decade before 2015, Prime Minister Viktor Orban and his political party Fidesz had cultivated an image of the staunchest supporter of 'Hungarians beyond the border.' After the electoral victory in 2010, one of the first acts of Orban's government was to legally codify a widespread understanding of Hungary's transborder (cross-border) nationhood. Moreover, the Fidesz government wrote a new constitution, which underscores the existence of "one single Hungarian nation that belongs together" and promises that "Hungary shall bear responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders." Furthermore, Orban's government made transborder Hungarians eligible for Hungarian citizenship and granted them voting rights.

It is, therefore, puzzling that the Hungarian state, and even more counterintuitively Orban's government, has built a security fence with the promise to protect the nation which has spatially excluded the Vojvodina Hungarians from the demarcated safe space. Orban's border fence is a first significant border policy and an infrastructural project in decades that has emphasized and materialized Hungary's border with Serbia and done so in the name of the nation and national security. Until 2015, the discourse of nationhood had defined this border as an obstacle to the full realization of Hungarian nationhood. The border fence indicates the contradiction between the geography of transborder nationhood and the geography of security bounded by the Hungarian-Serbian border.

The case study will answer three central questions regarding the contradiction: How did this contradiction emerge and what are its sources? How was the contradiction resolved in the process of policy-making? And, how has the physical presence of the fence on the ground materialized and territorialized this contradiction in practice? Each question will be discussed in a separate chapter.

The first chapter traces a historical evolution of Hungary's southern border within the changing discursive field. It accounts for the fluctuating meaning of the boundary between the politics of nationhood, which defined it as an obstacle for national reunification, and the European Union's immigration policy, which stipulated a more restrictive border regime. This chapter will introduce the discourses of territory and nation in Hungary. This genealogical account of the border provides a necessary conceptual background to identify the contradictory meanings of Orban's border fence.

The second chapter is an in-depth account of the making of the border fence and the discursive resolution of the contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood. The chapter centers on Orban's geopolitical reasoning. Orban avoided the politicization of the contradiction by merging the competing geographies within a geopolitical narrative of the border. This narrative articulated a different contradiction/opposition. Orban placed security and nationhood on the same side. On the opposite side, he placed the immigrant 'invasion' threatening to end national and religious identities in Hungary and Europe. The continental scale and the civilizational discourse allowed Orban to 'paint' new geography of Hungarian nationhood with broad brushstrokes that easily hid local spatial inconsistencies of his border fence.

The third chapter concludes the case study by describing the material enactment of Orban's geopolitical storyline at the border. This chapter details how the border manages to resolve the contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood in its everyday practice. The border's material infrastructure and localized practices confirm the entanglement and co-existence of different contradictory meanings and geographies of Hungary's security and nationhood.

Photo 1. Trianon remembered. Author: Gela Merabishvili.

3.2 Genealogy of Border

Introduction

This chapter charts the evolving discourses and practices of Hungary's nationhood policy and border security. The account focuses on the changing and competing meanings of borders, and particularly Hungary's southern border with Serbia, within the discursive contexts of transborder nationalism and security. It identifies critical moments that shifted the dominant perspectives on the border and policy practices that further constituted the border's meaning.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first identifies and contextualizes the discourse of transborder nationalism until Hungary's entry into the EU in 2004. This is the moment of the clash

between the two spatial visions of Hungary: its transborder nationhood and its place in Europe. The EU membership dramatized and politicized the problem of Hungary's Trianon borders.

In response, the successive governments pursued the two distinct border policies: extra-territorial nationhood policy, which shifted more strongly towards a non-territorial, political rights-oriented format, and the practice of border security within the territorial structure of the EU and the Schengen Area. The second and third parts separately discuss each of the two post-2004 policy developments. Tracing these distinct policy perspectives on the southern border shows the gradual change in the meaning and function of the boundary.

I have relied on a variety of sources to write this chapter: academic literature on Hungary's borders, nationalism and security policies; think-tanks reports on the development of Hungary's immigration and border control practice; interviews with journalists, experts and public officials; the statistics by the Hungarian police regarding the irregular migration across the state borders and the reports by the European Union's border authority Frontex; Hungarian and EU legislative acts related to border control and the nationhood policy; public speeches by Prime Minister Viktor Orban during the year of 2014; and the debates on the topic of immigration in the Hungarian Parliament during the Summer and Fall sessions of 2014.

Transborder Nationhood from Trianon to Schengen

All of Hungary's current borders are the legacy of the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty, one of the peace treaties agreed by the victorious powers in Versailles after World War I. The Treaty transferred approximately two-thirds of the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary (itself part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) to neighboring countries. Pre-Trianon 'Great Hungary' roughly coincides with the geographic extent of what is known as the Carpathian Basin. The Hungarian delegation's environmentally deterministic discourse at the Versailles Treaty equated the 'natural borders' of the Carpathian Basin with the political borders of Hungary (Antonsich & Szalkai, 2014). In today's everyday and political vocabulary, the two geographical units – Great Hungary and Carpathian Basin – are practically synonymous.

As a result of Trianon, three million 'ethnic Hungarians' (based on the census of the period) found themselves beyond Hungary's new borders. The loss of territory and people after the imposed Treaty, following the defeat in the Great War, produced a strong sense of victimhood in Hungary's geopolitical culture. "Trianon Trauma" is a common term to describe the geopolitical affect. In the wake of Trianon, Hungarians expressed the shared affective condition in the image of *Csonka-Magyarország* (mutilated, dismembered Hungary). The term was prevalent during the interwar period and directly implied the policy of territorial revisionism. The Communist regime banned the phrase, but it regained publicity after the regime change in 1990.

Territorial revisionism was a dominant geopolitical vision in the interwar period (Pap & Reményi, 2017). Admiral Horthy's revanchism, who led the country during this period and into an alliance with Nazi Germany, sought to return the 'lost territories' to the 'rightful owner.' For a brief period during World War Two, Hungary recaptured some of these areas from Czechoslovakia and Romania. However, following the defeat of Nazi Germany, what returned was not the lost territories but the borders created by Trianon. The location of the 175 km long Hungarian-Serbian border has not changed since Trianon.

Territorial revisionism lost its appeal in the subsequent decades among Hungary's political elites. Instead, politicians and intellectuals of the Socialist regime de-emphasized a territorial conception of the Hungarian nation at the expense of a culturalist conception. The latter differs from a Gellnerian definition of nationalism as a quest for the congruence of political and cultural boundaries. Gellner's definition better suits the discarded territorial revisionism of the interwar period. This new culturalist vision had a complex understanding of political and cultural borders. It recognized the "division between states, but no longer the division between the Hungarian nation" (Waterbury, 2010, 47).

In the 1970s and '80s, Hungarians 're-discovered' ethnic kin and their folk culture in the neighboring countries. Minority rights of these Hungarian communities against the nationalizing programs of their countries of residence acquired a political salience in Hungary (Brubaker et al., 2006; Waterbury, 2010). In 1989, after the regime change, the new democratic Parliament amended the 1949 constitution to codify Hungary's transborder nationalism. The amendment stated: "The Republic of Hungary bears responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living outside its

borders and shall promote and foster their relations with Hungary." Prime Minister Jozsef Antall announced himself to be the "Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians in spirit".[2] The policy of protecting ethnic Hungarians beyond the border became one of the three most central foreign policy directions ever since (Tóth, 2002; Waterbury, 2010).[3]

In the following decade, the successive governments of Hungary institutionalized the vision of transborder nationalism under the policy of nationhood (*nemzetpolitika*). Since 1990, the governments have established numerous agencies and institutions to develop economic, cultural and political links with transborder Hungarians. The Office for Hungarians Beyond the Border, set up in 1990, coordinated these governmental efforts and directed *nemzetpolitika*. Zsuzsa Csergo and James Goldgeier (2004) identify Hungary's institutionalization of transborder ethnic links as a primary example of trans-sovereign nationalism. The authors define 'trans-sovereign nationalism' as a form of political organization, which instead of forming a nation-state, reproduces the nation across existing state borders. This nationalist program aims to "virtualize" sovereign territorial borders.

At the Hungarian-Serbian border, the Hungarian government updated and developed border infrastructure, connecting cities with the border area and allowing larger traffic across the border. Cross-border commute became common among the Vojvodina Hungarians. Among frequent crossers were students from Vojvodina who studied at Hungarian universities, immigrants from Serbia who visited their family and relatives, and guest workers in Western Europe. Besides, the difference in prices in essential products made cross-border trade a lucrative activity and became a defining economic feature of the Hungarian-Serbian border (Gabrić-Molnar & Slavić, 2014; Nagy, 2001). Thus, economy and education were two key areas through which border communities of Vojvodina Hungarians integrated into Hungary's social field.

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[2] Hungary's population is about 10 million and it was thought that about 5 million ethnically Hungarians live in neighboring states. According to the latest official statistics, their number is at least half of that. However, "15 million Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin" has become a political commonplace despite different demographic figures. In a 2017 article on the Hungarian government's website, Prime Minister's international spokesman wrote that "About one-third of the 15 million-strong, ethnic Hungarian community, lives outside the borders of Hungary, mostly in the Carpathian Basin". http://abouthungary.hu/blog/ethnic-hungarians-a-nation-in-a-united-europe/

[3] The other two foreign policy priorities were Euro-Atlantic integration and stable, friendly relations with neighbors.

These dynamics at the southern border are indicative of Hungary's larger trans-sovereign project of nationhood, which aimed to redefine boundaries and territoriality in Central Europe: "Hungarians abroad should be able to claim Budapest as their national cultural center; Bratislava, Bucharest, or Belgrade as their state capital; Cluj, Novi Sad, or other cities as their regional centers" (Csergo & Goldgeier, 2004, p.27).

In parallel to this national project, at the turn of the century, Hungary was involved in a broader project of territorial reframing across the European continent, described by George H.W. Bush as "Europe whole and free." The eastern expansion of NATO and the European Union would create a new territorial order on the continent. Hungary's political elite sought Euro-Atlantic integration for two main reasons. First, after half a century in the Eastern (Communist) bloc, membership in these institutions would finalize Hungary's "return to Europe" and would "erase Eastness" (Kuus, 2007). Second, membership in these institutions together with neighboring countries would transform their inter-state borders into intra-European boundaries. It would mean weakened sovereign power of these borders and higher permeability. Therefore, membership seemed conducive to Hungary's trans-sovereign nationhood.

In reality, the Euro-Atlantic project did not align with Hungary's national project. After NATO's first post-Cold War round of enlargement in 1999, when Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary joined the alliance, Hungary's southern border became NATO's external frontier and a territorial edge of Euro-Atlantic security space.[4] The NATO airstrikes in Serbia in 1999 further accentuated the meaning of this boundary as a line separating civilized Europe from the chaotic and dangerous Balkans, the narrative that was already well established due to multiple conflicts in the aftermath of Yugoslavia's dissolution (Ó Tuathail, 2002; Hansen, 2006).

Integration into the EU created a more substantial problem. Starting in 2000, Hungary began to harmonize its border and immigration policy in line with the EU requirements. These legal

[4] Between 1999 and 2004, all of Hungary's borders functioned as NATO's external borders. During this period, Hungary did not have a common border with any other NATO member and represented a landlocked island outside of the Alliance mainland. In 2004, its three neighbors – Slovenia, Slovakia and Romania – also joined the military alliance.

changes introduced more restrictive rules for border crossings, asylum, foreign citizens' employment and residency, and increased the state's capacity to surveil, police, sanction and restrict human mobility across Hungary's borders. With Hungary's eventual accession into the EU and the Schengen Area in 2004, the final element of this legal and technological assemblage entered into force: the EU visa regime.

Until 2004, citizens of Hungary's neighboring countries did not need a visa to visit Hungary. But with Hungary in the Schengen area, its borders with non-Schengen states would turn into a highly restrictive boundary to ensure free movement within internal Schengen borders. Hungary's borders with Austria, Slovenia and Slovakia would become virtually non-existent. In contrast, the boundaries with Ukraine, Romania, Serbia and Croatia, i.e. those still outside of the EU, would be subjected to the EU visa regime. The new system would not differentiate between non-Schengen citizens on the ethnic ground. The same restrictive rules would apply to Hungarian minorities and others. This changing legal-geopolitical environment led to what some journalists dubbed "Schengen panic" in Hungary and among transborder Hungarians (Tóth, 2002).

Hungary's borders with the non-EU member states, including the section with Serbia, emerged as a policy problem that needed a solution. This policy conflict is the central topic of Hungary's first-ever National Security Strategy, published by the Ministry of Defense a month before the country's accession in the EU in 2004. The document states multiple times that immigration and border security policies have to take transborder Hungarian communities into account to "prevent the emergence of new dividing lines" in Europe (MoD Hungary, 2004).

The question of the border led to a heated political debate between the two main political parties. The right-wing Fidesz party and its leader Viktor Orban, in government between 1998 and 2002, advocated for granting dual citizenship to transborder Hungarians to guarantee that their unrestricted mobility across the border and their work and residency in Hungary. Dual citizenship meant to reconcile the EU border and immigration policy and Hungary's national interests. Yet, Orban and Hungary's right-wing understood this proposal as more than a technical solution to a border problem. The discourse of national reunification and overcoming of the Trianon divisions dominated the rhetoric of Fidesz politicians. Fidesz embraced the narrative of a territorially divided transborder nation (*Csonka-Magyarország*) and proclaimed it to be the moral

responsibility of Hungary's government and society to protect its compatriots in neighboring states (Csergo & Goldgeier, 2013; Waterbury 2010).

Fidesz politicians framed the issue as a chance to finally correct the injustice done to Hungary at Trianon and unite the nation not just in spirit but in legal terms of citizenship. Although the problem was territorial, the solution did not imply changes in territorial boundaries, but only in the demarcation of the citizenry, the people. In this way, Fidesz presented the step as an expansion of the state's sovereignty to match and contain the transborder nation, while leaving the territorial element of people-state-territory ensemble intact. Dual citizenship was a significant step towards affirming and institutionalizing Hungary's sovereignty in ethnocultural terms and away from its territorial conception.

The left-wing Socialist Party (MSZP), which replaced the Fidesz government in 2002, saw a solution to the problem of transborder Hungarians in the multilateral framework in which Hungary would develop stronger links with its ethnic kin when all neighboring countries join the EU (Barta, 2006). MSZP fiercely opposed dual citizenship and emphasized the economic and social costs of a potential wave of Hungarian migrants from neighboring countries. In this argument, Hungarian residents would have to compete for employment and healthcare against newly arrived Hungarians from beyond the border. In exchange, MSZP proposed the 'national visa' for transborder Hungarians, which would facilitate their stay in Hungary, but would not grant them the same economic and political rights as citizenship (Csergo & Goldgeier, 2013). In essence, the left-wing government resorted to "populist anti-immigration rhetoric" and reified the existing territorial boundaries of the Hungarian political nation (Pogonyi, 2017, 101). Effectively, MSZP weaved the discourse of 'protectionist nationalism' into the hegemonic vision of transborder nationhood (Csergo & Goldgeier, 2004). Such framing of transborder nationhood maintained a territorial hierarchy between the core part of the nation (citizens) and outside insiders, culturally and socially in but politically and economically out.

Eventually, a referendum in December 2004 decided the question of dual citizenship. The initiative failed due to low turnout. Only 18.9% of eligible voters supported dual citizenship instead of the legally required 25%. Almost as many, 17.75%, rejected. The outcome was a bitter disappointment to many Hungarians beyond the border (Pogonyi, 2017; Csergo & Goldgeier,

2013).

The debate is crucial in the genealogy of Orban's border wall because it marks the emergence of the contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood. The debate politicized the hegemonic transborder nationhood but simultaneously reframed and complicated the meaning of the country's borders. The critical element of the debate for this border genealogy is not the disagreement between the parties but the point on which both agreed: Hungary's membership in the EU despite partially adverse effect on the trans-sovereign project of nationhood. Bipartisan agreement on the question of EU integration normalized a new layer of meaning for Hungary's southern border. From now on, the Trianon border would additionally become a Schengen border. Consequently, the Hungarian transborder nation would become divided by an interstate border *and* the EU's external boundary.

Accepting this new meaning of the border had two interconnected policy implications. First, it pushed Hungary's nemzetpolitika toward prioritizing 'virtual,' non- or extra-territorial integration of transborder Hungarians into Hungary and the EU. Territorial forms of achieving national unification, either via further EU enlargement or local, territorial autonomy advocacy, remained in the nationhood policy but as supplementary bilateral or multilateral dimensions which depended on the goodwill of foreign actors. Until then, Hungary had to try all available means and act unilaterally to offset the EU-mandated border restrictions. Dual citizenship and the 'national visas' are the primary example of such a unilateral and extra-territorial approach to the problem.

Second, the overlap between Hungary's southern and Schengen's external borders meant that Hungary would adopt mandatory EU legislation on immigration and border control. 'Fortress EU' with its militarizing frontiers against immigrants would shape the physical and legislative form of the Hungarian-Serbian border (De Genova, 2017). Security would become a default policy discourse to think about the border. It would, subsequently, challenge the hegemony of the Trianon Trauma and the discourse of divided nationhood.

The next two sections detail the development of each of the two policies separately: nemzetpolitika and border security. These policy accounts will illustrate the widening gap between the security and nationhood discourses of the border, which culminated in 2015 as a contradiction between the

geographies of security and nationhood.

Transborder Political Community

During the debates on the contradiction between Hungary's European integration and transnational nationhood, Orban declared the proposal for dual citizenship was part of his broader vision of a "Europe of national communities" (Cited in Csergo & Goldgeier, 2004, p.28). National communities, not nation-states, were the most important constituent elements of Europe, in Orban's vision. Orban's statement aimed to offer an alternative territorial (i.e. extra-territorial) concept of the political organization of the European space. In Orban's Europe, national boundaries, rather than territorial-political ones, would define the space of member states' political power.

MSZP refrained from such a radical revision of territoriality. The Socialist government (2002-2010) channeled nemzetpolitika towards cross-border cooperation, instead of radical steps such as citizenship and political rights. MSZP replaced Fidesz's discourse of national reunification by the discourse of modernization and economic development. At the center of the new policy were cross-border development projects that fostered regional trade, sponsored job training and modernized transport infrastructure (National Development Agency, 2007). These were financed both by the government through its newly created Homeland Fund, and by the EU through its regional development funds, and often implemented jointly with neighboring states (Waterbury, 2010, pp.136-137).

After the failed referendum on dual citizenship, and in response to the requirement of the Schengen visa for Vojvodina Hungarians (and Hungarians in other non-Schengen countries), the Socialist government introduced the "national visa." It allowed transborder Hungarians to stay in Hungary for five years, but it did not grant them a right to work (Pogonyi, 2017; Barta, 2006). As a result of these unilateral measures, cross-border mobility did not decline after Hungary's membership in the EU (KSH, 2018).

When Orban returned to power in 2010, he immediately elevated nemzetpolitika to an extra-territorial sovereignty project. This was not territorial revisionism of the interwar period, but it was a revisionist program. It aimed to redefine Hungary's sovereignty from the territorial to the popular/citizenry basis. Hungarian political theorist Szabolcs Pogonyi (2017), in his book about the making of Hungary's extra-territorial citizenship, makes a distinction between territorial/Westphalian and popular/demos-based types of sovereignty. The former presupposes states as bounded territorial units. The latter disregards territory as a definitive category and identifies demos, people, generally defined as "nation," as the source of state power, regardless of their territorial distribution. In Orban's vision, therefore, Hungary's transborder nation would become a transborder political community. If Hungary could not reclaim the territory taken at Trianon, it would at least reclaim the people.

Towards this end, the Fidesz-led Parliament adopted a series of laws and legal changes in 2010-2011. First, the Act of National Belonging codified Hungary's transborder nationhood into law by declaring that "all members and communities of the Hungarian nation, subjected to the jurisdiction of other states, belong to the single Hungarian nation" (Parliament of Hungary 2010, p.12). The new constitution further affirmed transborder nationhood.

Second, Hungarians beyond the border, with a six-year delay, finally acquired dual citizenship. This time Fidesz avoided holding a referendum. The Parliament approved the law on dual, non-resident citizenship overwhelmingly. Only three Socialist MPs voted against. A six-year-long experience of membership in the EU and the reality of the EU/Schengen border had elevated both the practical and symbolic value of citizenship. Citizenship became a marker of national identity and a necessary condition for Hungarians beyond the border to easily travel and stay in Hungary and, therefore, acquire personal experience of being a member of the nation. To deny citizenship in 2010 would have entailed a more explicit position against Hungary's transborder nationhood than in 2004, before the existence of an EU border. And in reverse, with a Hungarian passport, the crossing of the border became a performative affirmation of membership in the nation when the border officer would no longer put a stamp in the passport to mark the owner as an insider and not a foreigner anymore (Pogonyi, 2017).

Third, the Parliament granted voting rights to non-resident citizens of Hungary. The new elections law explicitly defines "Hungarian citizens living beyond the borders" as "a part of the political community" (Parliament of Hungary, 2011). Since then 1.1 million foreign citizens have acquired a Hungarian passport (NPKI, 2020). A few hundred thousand of them have voted in the 2014 and 2018 general elections.[5] Fidesz received more than 95% of the votes cast among non-resident voters in neighboring countries.

Besides these legal changes, the shift towards extra-territorial sovereignty required an institutional makeover. Until 2010, the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) was responsible for the practice of naturalization, besides other tasks related to immigration, asylum and foreign citizens in general. The Fidesz government separated immigration and citizenship from each other as distinct policy areas. OIN became the Office of Immigration and Asylum, while the task to carry out the naturalization of ethnic Hungarians was given to the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration (Tóth, 2010). These minor institutional changes are indicative of a broader paradigm shift. The matters of nationhood would no longer be associated with the territorial division of space into domestic and foreign would no longer guide the state's policy on nationhood and citizenship. Essentially, Orban moved these policy areas beyond the 'territorial trap.'

The government further created new agencies and representative bodies to coordinate the cross-border links with Hungarian communities and local/regional civil and political organizations (Kántor, 2014). The expansion of the institutional-organizational ecosystem of nemzetpolitika had two critical effects. First, it blurred the line of territorial sovereignty. 'Ethnic/Hungarian' political parties in the neighboring states and local representatives in municipal and regional councils became at least partially financially and therefore, politically subordinated to the government in Budapest, which sponsored a variety of local economic, cultural and infrastructural projects. Second, many of these 'ethnic' parties and local representatives in Vojvodina and other neighboring regions with Hungarian minorities became not merely the partners of the Hungarian state, but more specifically, political allies of Fidesz. Orban created a transborder patronage

[5] Unlike the residents of Hungary, transborder citizens of Hungary vote for party list only. They do not vote for district representatives.

network which, besides the sovereign borders, blurred the line between the Hungarian state and the ruling Fidesz party.

According to the guiding document of nemzetpolitika, *The Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad*, Hungary's "political, economic and cultural role" beyond its borders is a necessary condition for "the survival of Hungarian communities abroad" (NPÁT 2013, p.12). This statement confirms the post-2010 shift in nemzetpolitika from advocacy to active political intervention (Scott, 2018b). Examples of Hungary's 'political, economic and cultural role' illustrate different facets of the transborder sovereignty project between 2010 and 2015.

Under the educational program *Határtalanul!* (Without Borders!), the government sponsors students of Hungarian schools to take a trip to the "Hungarian-populated areas of neighboring countries." These trips are meant to give the participants first-hand "personal experience of Hungarians living abroad," learn about Hungarian history and culture outside of the state's borders, "build Hungarian-Hungarian relations" and develop the sense of transborder nation-ness among the young generation (Határtalanul, 2019).

Under the 2012 plan of the Ministry of Economy, *Strategy for the Growth of the Hungarian Economy in the Carpathian Basin*, the state set out to subsidize Hungary's small and middle-size companies to invest in the neighboring Hungarian communities. The investment would revitalize these usually low-income areas and prevent Hungarian emigration from these communities. The wider goal was to mobilize transborder cultural links between Hungary and the Hungarian communities beyond the border to turn the Carpathian Basin into a single economic unit despite the obstacle of sovereign and EU borders.

In many ways, these programs attempted to fill the gap left by the negligence of the national centers of power (e.g. the Serbian government in Vojvodina). Consequently, the external Hungarian investment made the local economy (mostly, small-scale agricultural farms) more and more dependent on the tenders and sponsorship programs originating from Budapest. Economic dependency went hand in hand with growing political influence, allowing Fidesz to develop and maintain patronage networks in each of the neighboring Hungarian communities (Sipos, 2019).

In Vojvodina, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ), a regionally active political party, has been the loyal political partner of Fidesz for more than a decade. VMSZ benefitted politically and financially by associating itself with Fidesz but also helped Fidesz distribute financial aid among the Vojvodina Hungarians (Gyurkovics, 2018; Keller-Alant, 2020). For example, the Hungarian government finances the local autonomous self-governing body, the Hungarian National Council, which then distributes the funds across local cultural and educational institutions: theaters, libraries, schools, kindergartens, etc. The financial arrangement has been mostly dependent on the partnership between Fidesz and its partner, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ), which has dominated the Hungarian National Council since its inception in 2010 and decides who in Vojvodina gets the funds sent from Budapest (Keller-Alant, 2020).

In addition to erasing political, economic and cultural boundaries between Hungary and transborder communities, nemzetpolitika has also sought to strengthen the boundaries between these Hungarian communities and the ethnocultural majority of the neighboring/parent state. The outer national border would weaken nationalizing processes and influences of the parent state (Scott, 2018a). The advocacy for territorial autonomy and self-government for the Hungarian transborder communities is the most explicit and far-reaching territorial policy. But in practice, the Hungarian government's other, non-territorial forms of support have achieved the same goal of practical self-governance and ethnic exclusion.

For example, in the border municipalities of Serbia, where Hungarians are in the majority (e.g. Ada, Senta, Kanjiža), 99% of Hungarian children go to Hungarian schools (Trombitás & Szügyi, 2013). Several universities in Vojvodina also offer higher education programs in Hungarian. Many, however, choose to simply move to Hungary and start university there after graduating from high school in Vojvodina (Ferdinand & Komlosi, 2017). All residents of Vojvodina can request official documents in Hungarian and communicate in Hungarian when receiving state services or conducting daily business (e.g. at railway or bus stations, post office, city hall, etc.). Hungarian is one of Vojvodina's official languages. Locals read, listen and watch Hungarian news via multiple Hungarian-language media outlets that are financed by the Hungarian government. Within five years of the enactment of Hungary's dual citizenship law, 60% of the Hungarians residing in Serbia acquired Hungarian passport between 2011 and 2016 (Pogonyi, 170). In the

town of Kanjiža, which is a majority Hungarian town in Vojvodina, 4,000 out of the 6,000 eligible acquired Hungarian citizenship. In practical terms, territorial autonomy for the Hungarian community in Vojvodina would not significantly elevate the community's minority rights.[6]

The Strategic Framework, the guiding document for nemzetpolitika, states that "the borders of the nation stretch as far as the influence of the national institutions, which help to maintain the national identity" (NPÁT 2013, p.14). Since 2004, when Csergo and Goldgeier defined Hungary's nemzetpolitika under the category of 'trans-sovereign nationalism,' a decade later, it is more appropriate to describe the policy as a project for 'trans-border sovereignty.' It is not merely the nation that spans borders and sovereign territories. It is Hungary's practical sovereignty, the state's power to decide on political matters, that extended beyond the country's territorial boundaries.

According to the common Westphalian understanding, jurisdictional boundaries define the space of absolute and indivisible sovereign authority of the state. This definition, however, is aspirational and does not constitute how countries practice sovereignty. John Agnew argues that sovereignty is "neither inherently territorial nor is it invariably state-based;" instead, it is "made out of the circulation of power among a range of actors at dispersed sites" (Agnew, 2009, p.9). Matthew Longo (2017) divides sovereignty into two forms: jurisdictional authority and institutional control. The former operates more in line with the Westphalian standard, in which sovereignty is territorially indivisible. In contrast, the latter – institutional control – can reach beyond the jurisdictional boundaries, and therefore, can be shared with other states. The example of the Hungarian community in Vojvodina illustrates these territorially flexible views about sovereignty.

And what's particularly important for this study of Hungary's southern border, Hungary has started to practice transborder, extra-territorial sovereignty in Vojvodina in the presence of an EU external boundary. The EU/Schengen territoriality has not limited Orban's swift institutionalization of Hungary's transborder nationhood. Hungary's emerging transborder political community since 2010 defied the geography and territoriality of the EU. Orban managed to reconcile Hungary's transborder nationhood and the membership in the EU. Orban's

[6] Interview with Robert Lacko, VMSZ member and an elected official at Kanjiža town council.

transborder sovereignty project in his second term (2010-2014) as Prime Minister helped fully separate the issue of border and territory from the functioning of the transborder political community. The border gradually disappeared as a policy problem for national reunification. It became invisible, a non-obstacle to nemzetpolitika and extra-territorial political power of the Fidesz government.

Meanwhile, the border was becoming a different kind of problem. And this new discourse of border problem was inherent in Hungary's membership in the EU. Security gradually emerged as a politically salient perspective regarding Hungary's southern border. By the beginning of 2015, security would challenge the dominant meaning of the border shaped by nemzetpolitika and the discourse of divided/transborder nationhood.

Border Security

Until Hungary's EU membership, the security of the southern border remained a politically insignificant policy area. According to various sources, during the 1990s, drug and human trafficking and illegal migration, flowing from south to north, became a common feature of the border in this period. Cars stolen in Hungary were moving in the opposite direction, either through formal border crossing stations or through the so-called "green border" (Szörényiné et al., 2000; Nagy, 2001). The border, on the one hand, defined the territorial edge of Euro-Atlantic security space, and on the other hand, served as a connecting hub within the evolving and flexible geography of organized crime, linking Western Europe with the Balkans, Turkey, and Asia further east. Despite such a geopolitical context, a mission of border protection as a task of national security does not feature in the official security policy documents of the period.

This changed with the membership in the EU. Hungary's 2004 National Security Strategy lists illegal migration as the fourth most important threat. It discusses the issue in terms of Hungary's new geographic role as an external border of the EU. The document defines border protection as "responsibilities and burdens of managing the Union's boundaries" (Hungary MoD, 2004, p.5). As a member state, Hungary reluctantly adopted a series of border and immigration control laws that restricted human mobility across the external boundaries of Schengen, including Hungary's

southern border. The government usually tried to postpone the implementation of these laws without explicitly breaking the EU rules. Besides, Hungary advocated for reforms in the border regime to offset the restrictive regulations and allow a more flexible mobility regime for the residents of the border area. Such local liberalizations would benefit transborder Hungarian communities, the majority of whom, at least in the case of Hungarians in Serbia, live in proximity to the border (Tóth, 2006).

In the first years of the 2010s, the Fidesz government hardened its practice of border security at the Hungarian-Serbian section in response to the growing number of migrants who informally crossed this boundary line into the EU. This border hardening occurred in parallel to the program of national reunification beyond the border, which allowed the easier and unrestricted cross-border movement to the Vojvodina Hungarians. The government started to turn away, expel, or detain an increasing number of migrants and asylum seekers (HHC, 2013). According to the Hungarian police, these restrictive measures help execute "Hungary's duties originating from our Schengen membership, that guarantee that unidentified persons meaning security risk are not able to access the territory of the EU" (HHC, 2012b). Hungary's second National Security Strategy, published in 2012, reaffirms the perspective that Hungary's location along the external border of the Schengen Area obligates the state to protect the core of the EU from unwanted immigrants (MFA Hungary, 2012).

In 2012, Hungary softened its border practice in response to harsh international criticism against detentions and expulsions that could qualify as a breach of the non-refoulment principle.[7] These changes in asylum law and practice attracted larger numbers of migrants towards the Hungarian-Serbian border (HHC, 2013; Frontex, 2014). Between 2012 and 2014, the number of asylum applications increased rapidly from two to forty-two thousand (HHC, 2014). The absolute majority of the asylum seekers in Hungary would not wait for the asylum decision and travel further to the west, according to Hungary's Office of Immigration and Nationality (HHC, 2014; HHC, 2015).

[7] The principle of non-refoulment represents a practice against returning refugees to a country where they might face persecution or where their lives might be in danger.

Hungary emerged as the key transit country along what at the time became known as the Balkan Route. This migration corridor extended from Turkey through Greece, Macedonia and Serbia to Hungary. The Vojvodina towns near the border with a sizeable Hungarian population (Subotica, Kikinda, Kanjiža) became resting points on the Balkan Route before migrants would attempt to cross the Schengen border and reach the European Union (HHC, 2012a). By December 2014, the Hungarian-Serbian border accounted for 55% of all the irregular border crossings at the external boundary of the EU (Frontex, 2015).

Orban blamed the rising number of immigrants passing through Hungary on the pressure from the EU to relax the strict border practice of expulsions and detentions, which, according to Orban, kept prospective asylum seekers away from Hungary before 2012-2013. During 2014, immigration is virtually absent in Orban's domestic political discourse.[8] However, on the European level, speaking in Brussels or at other EU forums, he argued that "migration must be stopped" rather than merely "well-managed or supervised" (Orban, 2014a).

At the Bavarian-Hungarian Forum in Munich in November, Orban argued that immigration would become a financial burden for the EU and criticized the view according to which immigration into the EU would support the labor shortage and revitalize the European economy. To address the labor shortage, he proposed encouraging higher birth rates and allowing job-seekers from the EU's eastern part to fill the vacancies available in Western Europe. Orban strictly contrasted "free movement of labor" within the EU with "economic migration," which he geographically specified as originating from outside of the EU (Orban, 2014b).

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[8] I divided Viktor Orban's 2014 speeches into two categories based on speech audience: domestic and international. Such a division resulted in a comparable amount of text: 56 pages of 'domestic' speeches and 40 pages of 'international' speeches. Despite the larger amount of 'domestic' text, the keywords related to border, migration and security were much more numerous in the 'international' text. Orban mentions "migration" and its derivatives (migrant, immigrant, immigration, etc.) only once in the 'domestic' speeches in 2014, but 24 times before an international audience. "Refugee" does not feature in the domestic discourse but appears six times in international discourse. I have found a similar disbalance with the terms "security" (3 and 13) and "border" (4 and 11). This content analysis indicates that for Orban the topic of migration in this period is more an issue of EU policy-making than a matter of Hungary's domestic politics.

In the summer of 2014, irregular migration through Hungary started to grow faster than before. The media labeled this sudden growth as the Kosovo Wave because Kosovars made up the largest share of irregular migrants in the second half of that year. In response, Austria introduced intra-Schengen checks along the border with Hungary (Frontex, 2015). At the end of October, the Parliament of Hungary debated the border agreement with Austria regarding temporary checks. All the political parties supported the reintroduction of temporary checks at the Austria-Hungary border. More consequentially, though, Austria's decision prompted a redefinition of the southern border within Hungary's domestic political discourse.

During the parliamentary debate, a member of the radical right-wing party Jobbik suggested that since "refugees from Africa and the Middle East travel to Austria through Hungary, it would be important to strengthen control of our southern and eastern borders." He described the Hungarian-Serbian border as "the most infected" with immigrants, defined as "violent offenders," and forecasted their number to grow (Bana, 2014). It was the first time since the start of the Kosovo Wave that Hungary's southern border has been defined as a policy problem related to migration.

Overview of the parliamentary debates in the second half of 2014 shows that between October and December of that year, Jobbik politicized the topic of immigration and advocated for stricter control of the Hungarian-Serbian border. Jobbik MPs articulated the danger of immigration to Hungary with metaphors, such as "flood," "tsunami" and "invasion." They linked the topic with the risk of an Ebola epidemy, crime and social rift due to the cultural incompatibility of immigrants. They criticized the Fidesz government for neglecting the problem and urged to take more drastic action at the southern border: quarantine the asylum seekers and set up "border hunter" units to patrol the perimeter (Sneider, 2014; Kárpát, 2014; Farkas, 2014).

Despite the growing number of irregular immigrants at the end of 2014, Orban and his Fidesz party did not politicize the issue, preferring instead to talk about jobs and economic projects (Orban, 2014c). Similarly, immigration did not attract much attention from the Hungarian public at the end of 2014. Only 3% identified this policy area as one of the two most important issues facing Hungary (15 percentage points less than the EU average of 18%). Out of 13 possible policy areas, immigration was 11th in terms of importance, just above terrorism, which mattered only to 1% of the Eurobarometer respondents (Eurobarometer, 2014).

Conclusion

The extension of citizenship and political rights beyond the border in 2010-2014 allowed the Orban government to 'solve' the territorial problem of the border that emerged a decade earlier with Hungary's membership in the EU. The unilateral shift towards the citizenship and political rights of the people (Hungarians beyond the border) created a new political hierarchy between the Hungarian government and transborder Hungarians, where outside powers (EU, neighboring state) had much less influence. Essentially, Orban constructed a power vertical, which was not limited by the territorial borders of Hungary.

The new, highly institutionalized and personalized form of relationship between Budapest and transborder communities marginalized the effect of territorial constraints imposed by the EU/Schengen external boundary on the ability of Hungary to act as a 'protector' of transborder Hungarian communities. The problem of the EU border disappeared because Orban's government 'virtually,' non-territorially integrated those non-EU residents of Vojvodina into the EU via dual Hungarian citizenship and voting rights. Hungarians beyond the border remained outside the EU territorially, but at the same time, they were inside the EU as fully integrated members of Hungary's national and political community.

This genealogy shows that much of the contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood had already been solved by the time the border wall visualized it in 2015. The southern border as a policy problem had largely disappeared from the discourse of nationhood. Instead, the security discourse of immigration emerged as the dominant perspective, which shaped the politics of the border at the end of 2014.

In retrospect, the making of Hungary's transborder political community between 2010 and 2014 represents the first step towards the resolution of the contradiction between the competing geographies. The second step, which occurred in 2015 (the object of the next chapter), consists of redefining Hungary's nationhood from strictly ethnic to broader civilizational terms. This shift would underscore the distinction between Hungarians, regardless of their territorial residence, as members of 'Christian Europe,' and foreign immigrants, as opposite of such broad territorial-

civilizational identity. The new distinction based on a continental scale and civilizational logic would gloss over the territorial inconsistency of a security fence along the Hungarian-Serbian border with regards to Hungary's transborder nationalism and legitimize the barrier as a necessary protective measure for national survival.

3.3 Politics of Fence

Introduction

This chapter offers a discursive-argumentative account of the politics of Hungary's southern border fence. It zooms in on the period between January and September of 2015 to explain a sudden emergence of the border fence as a discursive object of policy-making. At the center of the chapter's analytical frame is a dramatic change in the meaning of the Hungarian-Serbian border. The discursive shift in 2015 had a basis in the preceding decade, when the border's salience, as a problem to Hungary's transborder nationalism, decreased gradually while it started to become a central location in the practice of the EU-wide immigration control.

How did the Orban government reconcile the territorial vision of security with transborder nationalism? The security fence at the border defined this perimeter as the line between safe inside and dangerous outside. The dominant geography of nationhood, however, rejects this meaning of the border and such territorial configuration of inside and outside. People and places on the outside are part of the inside: transborder Hungarian nation. The discursive resolution of the contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood within the policy-making and political process of the southern fence is the central puzzle of this chapter.

The chapter divides the period and the analytical narrative into three parts. The first part, between January and June, sheds light on the politicization of the border and immigration. During this period, a series of discursive practices by Orban, his party and his opponents in Hungary and at the European level defined the problem in ways that dramatized the irregular cross-border mobility across the southern boundary and framed it as a danger. Orban's government, subsequently, tried a variety of strategies to solve what was increasingly becoming defined as a severe political and

security problem. In June, the government decided to build a fence, which was the centerpiece of Orban's geopolitical strategy.

The second part focuses on the geopolitical storylines that Orban started to assemble between June and July. In this period, Orban tried to justify the fence and situate it in a broader geopolitical story. Orban's geopolitical storylines introduced new and reframed existing hegemonic geographies of security and nationhood in a way to construct a straightforward but dramatic, and therefore, a convincing narrative that justified the fence. The merger of contradictory geographies in the justifying story of the fence required the creation of a new line of division to constitute a new, complementary relationship between the meanings of security and nationhood that previously had articulated contradictory, incompatible geographies.

The third part concludes the chapter with discursive and physical closure of the immigration problem. The problem closure involved addition of dramatic military language and historical analogies to the evolving geopolitical storyline of the fence. With it, Orban further embedded the political discourse in Hungary's geopolitical culture and reframed the meaning of the fence as a national symbol while marginalizing the contradictory, negative connotation as a material symbol of the nation's division.

Orban's public speeches during the year of 2015, available on the official website of the Prime Minister, represent the core of the research data for this discursive-analytical chapter. The second important source was the transcripts of parliamentary debates, available in Hungarian on the Parliament's website. This source allowed me to analyze the opposition's arguments and the argumentative quality of the policy-making discourse. Other sources include media articles, especially from a formerly independent news outlet Index.hu, and BBC, Hungarian police and Frontex statistics on immigration, my research interviews and other scholarly articles and books on Orban's anti-immigrant discourse and Hungary's border politics.

Immigration and the Border: The Emergence of a Political Problem (January-June 2015)

On 7 January 2015, terrorists attacked the office of the Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris and killed 12 people. On 11 January, Orban attended the march in support of the freedom of expression in Paris. There he told a Hungarian TV channel that "economic immigration" brings "trouble and danger" to Europe. Addressing audiences both at home and internationally, Orban advocated for "a tough policy restricting immigration" across the EU in light of "recent events." Although, those who committed the crime were French citizens, not migrants. Then, speaking of Hungary, he said: "We don't want to see significantly sized minorities with different cultural characteristics and backgrounds among us. We want to keep Hungary as Hungary" (Rettman, 2015). This was the moment when Orban's anti-immigrant discourse spilled from the European into the domestic discursive field.

Charlie Hebdo provided Fidesz with an opportunity to position itself as a leading voice on the politically salient issue of immigration and displace Jobbik's discusrive monopoly on the topic. According to research by two sociologists at Central European University, Gabor Bernath and Vera Messing (2015), Orban's government consciously started a media and political campaign around the issue of immigration immediately after the Paris attacks.[9] In the following weeks, Fidesz politicians and government communication dropped the term "refugee" and replaced it with "economic migrant" (*megélhetési bevándorló*). The adjective 'economic' in Hungarian is often used to denote criminals who commit petty crimes out of necessity, often in relation to the Roma. The implicit and often explicit logic was that these immigrants would lead to more crime and abuse of the social welfare system. Media reports on immigration repeatedly used images of asylum seekers in the moment of being detained by police officers, implicitly equating them with criminals.

The state-owned and private pro-Fidesz media featured experts on security and international terrorism to discuss immigration. In a most telling example, state channel TV2 reported one Fidesz MP's speech about immigration with a visual background of footage of the Charlie Hebdo attack (Bernáth & Messing, 2015). A week after Charlie Hebdo, Hungary's Office of Immigration and Nationality published a presentation on the ongoing immigration. It showed the growth of asylum

[9] Their research analyzed media discourses in January 2015.

applications over the previous year 2014 and the geography of migration, with Hungary at the center of the main route from Asia to Western Europe. A Fidesz- friendly think-tank published an opinion survey results, showing strong public support for stricter immigration policy (Jambor, 2015).

In February, Fidesz initiated a debate in the Parliament, titled "Hungary does not need economic immigrants." The Fidesz representatives repeatedly claimed that the vast majority of asylum seekers were not 'genuine refugees' but arrived in Europe for economic reasons. They further speculated that the Islamic State terrorists were among these immigrants. Orban did not participate in the debate, but a week later, he delivered an annual State of the Nation address, where he questioned whether the EU could "shelter people, who come here with the intent of destroying European culture?" (Orban, 2015a). Fear and resolve, not pity and generosity, were the appropriate emotions to guide the government's immigration policy at the southern border. The Fidesz majority leader laid out the plan: the state would "detain illegal immigrants arriving in Hungary, control them while in Hungary, and expel them from the country as soon as possible" (Rogán, 2015a).

The two main opposition parties, radical right-wing Jobbik and center-left MSZP (The Socialist Party), challenged the government's narrative and policy in different ways. A leader of Jobbik accused the government of inaction while "illegal border invaders have invaded Hungary." The party advocated for additional 2,500 border guards to patrol the Hungarian-Serbian boundary (Kárpát, 2015). MSZP, on the other, rejected the link between immigration and terrorism and emphasized emigration rather than immigration as a more pressing issue for Hungary (Harangozó, 2015a).

None of the challenges emphasized the contradictory meaning of the border concerning Hungarians who live across. The immigration debate in February, in contrast, further highlighted the EU/Schengen dimension of the southern border. The Fidesz representatives argued that Hungary's membership in the Schengen Area and the peculiar location, which made it both a transit country and the border of Europe, required from Hungary to guarantee the security of the entire EU territory (Kontrát, 2015).

The Kosovo Wave ended in March and together with it, immigration lost its political salience for a while. The topic returned to the central stage at the end of April after two shocking events. First, Fidesz lost a parliamentary seat in a by-election to a candidate from Jobbik on 12 April. Jobbik's victory highlighted the general trend in the public opinion surveys of the previous months that showed that Jobbik was catching up with Fidesz's nationwide rating (HVG, 2015a).

Second, a ship transporting migrants capsized near the island of Lampedusa in the Mediterranean and more than 800 people on board died on 19 April. A tragedy of such proportions elicited the feelings of sympathy and compassion among the European public (De Genova, 2017, 2-3). The event quickly prompted an extraordinary EU summit of the heads of member states, formally known as the European Council, on 23 April to come up with common immigration policy. Indeed, by the end of May, the EU leaders had agreed to relocate 60,000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy, which housed the highest number of refugees, and from outside the EU and distribute them across all member states. Distribution criteria included GDP, population size and unemployment rate. According to the formula, Hungary would have accepted 1,134 asylum seekers (European Commission, 2015a). The European Council (the EU heads of states) would formally adopt the plan a month later on 26 June.

These new domestic and European developments seriously undermined Orban's position. Both developments had immigration in common. At home, Fidesz was losing popularity to a challenger, which had been articulating a xenophobic nationalism and displacing Fidesz as the most vocal defender of the nation against the foreign danger. Jobbik's discourse of threat was an example of 'protectionist nationalism,' which Csergo and Goldgeier (2004) had identified a decade earlier as a form of nationalism found in some European countries but distinct from Hungary's dominant, trans-sovereign nationalism. The new geopolitical context of large-scale migration, however, allowed Jobbik to tap into the political force of such nationalist discourse and gain tangible success.

At the European level, Orban's anti-immigrant discourse was losing popularity with the changing 'structure of feeling' within the EU about the fate of migrants. The Prime Minister's spokesperson Zoltan Kovacs identified the positive emotions, such as compassion and sympathy, that people have for refugees and immigrants who face terrible conditions on their way, as the main problem

for his government. The task for the government was to engage in "communicative struggle," take the initiative and change the narrative (Kovács, 2019).

On 17 June, Hungary's Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto announced the government's plan to build a four-meter-tall barrier along the 175km-long border with Serbia. The announcement preempted the European Council meeting of the EU heads of states, planned for 26 June to adopt the common immigration policy. Szijjarto cited immigration statistics according to which 50,000 immigrants had crossed the border in Hungary in the first five months of the year. Still, the EU was ignoring the situation in Hungary. Moreover, the proposed EU solution was "rather time-consuming," and Hungary "[could] not afford to wait any longer" (MFA Hungary, 2015).

The domestic political contestation was limited and mostly inconsequential for the development of Orban's border discourse and policy. Both left-wing opposition and right-wing Jobbik acknowledged the seriousness of the problem in contrast to the February debate when this was not the case. They also accepted border control as a necessary measure. Opposition parties diverged on how to address the issue and whether the fence was the best solution. Jobbik fully endorsed the government's border fence but simultaneously pushed for the re-establishment of the independent Border Guard. MSZP argued that the fence would be ineffective: a 20th-century answer to a 21st-century problem. Instead, they proposed additional staffing of the Immigration and Asylum Office and the technological modernization of the police equipment to control the border better (Harangozó, 2015b). Besides, MSZP advocated for Hungary's participation in common EU policies.

At times, the criticism of the border fence relied on historical analogies to easily explain its negative meaning to the public. MSZP leader Istvan Ujhelyi made a reference to the Iron Curtain in his Facebook post on 17 June: a photo of Hungarian and Austrian Foreign Ministers cutting the Iron Curtain fence between the two countries in June 1989. Andras Schiffer of center-left LMP, also using the medium of Facebook, made a comparison with "the Israeli wall that locks Palestinians in ghettos." MSZP's Agnes Kunhalmi declared that "Orban and Jobbik would finish what started in Trianon," trying to emphasize the meaning of the border traditionally familiar to Hungarians (Index, 2015a). Except for this comment, the topic of Vojvodina Hungarians and their separation from Hungary did not emerge in the parliamentary debates or outside of it. Practically,

the opposition gave a free hand to Orban to devise a geopolitical storyline to justify the border fence by avoiding its inconvenient contradiction with Hungary's transborder nationalism. The announcement of the border fence marks a decisive shift in nationalist discourse in Hungary. The politics of nationhood broadened beyond nemzetpolitika. Orban's debate on border security and immigration with the EU leaders and arguments directed at 'Brussels' started to shape new affective geography of Hungary's nationhood and national borders.

Crafting a Storyline: Danger, Nationhood and the Border Fence (May-July 2015)

The dual scale of the problem of immigration and the political problem of getting outflanked required a geopolitical storyline that would combine the two scales: national and European. Orban was both a national politician and a European one. The anti-immigrant discourse, therefore, had to be flexible enough to speak to different audiences while maintaining coherence. He achieved this goal by emphasizing the European and national dimensions of the danger of immigration. The European dimension de-emphasized the territorial division of Hungary's nationhood and fixed the meaning of the border fence as a security measure against 'Muslim immigrants.' The national dimension within the EU re-politicized the border fence as a symbol of nationalism against multiculturalism.

Orban and his Fidesz/government colleagues assembled the dominant geopolitical storyline through a variety of discursive and policy-making practices. The storyline emerged during a three-month period, which started with a countrywide "national consultation on immigration and terrorism" (24 April) and ended with Orban's annual speech in a Romanian spa town (25 July). The storyline developed gradually through a series of critical events, PR campaigns, press briefings, political speeches, parliamentary debates and legislative changes in the intervening period.

"Flood": The Scales of Danger

When the Danube flooded its banks in Hungary in June 2013, the National Directorate for Disaster Management installed waterproof metal fences to contain the river. They were removed once the flood subsided. Later Orban thanked Gyorgy Bakondi, the Head of Disaster Management Directorate, for ensuring "defense" from the flood (Orban, 2014d). On 14 April 2015, Bakondi quit his job. Orban promoted him to the post of homeland security advisor to the Prime Minister. This was two days after Fidesz lost the by-election to Jobbik. In his new capacity, Bakondi's job was to manage the state's response to immigration.

Fidesz reanimated the anti-immigrant campaign with the "national consultation on immigration and terrorism" at the end of April. The government mailed a twelve-point questionnaire to the citizens of Hungary, who would send back their answers by 1 July. The questions were constructed in a way to position the reader negatively against migrants and nudge them towards supporting a strict immigration policy. The questionnaire presented unfounded and politically controversial statements as neutral observations. Binary choice questions on policy preference limited policy alternatives in a way to frame the government's preferred option as common-sense. In the questionnaire's introductory text, the Prime Minister reminded the readers of an "incomprehensible act of horror" and an "unprecedented act of terror" in Paris at the beginning of the year, which "extinguished" innocent lives "in cold blood and with terrifying brutality" and shook the whole Europe (Prime Minister's Office, 2015a). Orban's spokesperson Zoltan Kovacs admitted it was a "political questionnaire intended to seek support for the government's stance, that immigration and terrorism were tightly interwoven" (Thorpe, 2019, p.31).

While the government's discourse relied on terrorism to redefine the danger of immigration, other definitions of the problem, such as "economic immigrant" from a few months earlier, also remained. In early June, posters appeared in the streets of Budapest and across Hungary that read in Hungarian: "If you come to Hungary, do not take the jobs of Hungarians!" or "If you come to Hungary, respect our laws!". The government-funded billboard campaign combined several themes: culture ("respect our laws!"), economy ("do not take our jobs!") and security (terrorism) to promote anti-immigrant views. Each reinforced the other and also allowed the anti-immigrant narrative to speak to different domestic audiences, creating a discursive coalition out of distinct interest groups and social classes (Thorleifsson, 2017).

An extraordinary parliamentary session took place between 17 June and 6 July to debate and adopt changes in the asylum and border control law and create a legislative basis for the border fence. The Fidesz parliamentary majority, with the support of Jobbik, designated Serbia and several other EU and EU-candidate countries as "safe third countries." The government would automatically reject the asylum application of those who reached Hungary through any of these "safe third countries" because their prior presence, for example, in Serbia, a country at peace, removed humanitarian urgency and threat to their life. According to the government's logic, when crossing the border from Serbia into Hungary, they were no longer fleeing war but seeking material improvement of life. The new legal border barrier impacted political discourse. Immigration became not only economically disadvantageous, as primarily argued in January and February, but also illegal according to the new Hungarian law. Economic immigrants transformed into crimmigrants.

Besides the links to terrorism, economy and crime, the discursive construction of danger emphasized the scale and number of foreigners arriving in Hungary and Europe. First, Fidesz members repeatedly used a historical analogy of the Great Migration Period between the 4th and 6th centuries AD to underscore the magnitude of the problem: "it is no longer immigration, it is mass migration" [*népvándorlás*] (Rogán, 2015c). At a press briefing on 1 July, Orban argued that "the question we have to deal with is not a question of asylum, and not even a question of economic migration, but a modern-age mass migration which will remain with us for a long time as one of the greatest challenges determining politics in Europe" (Orban, 2015f).

Second, by July, Orban had appropriated the metaphor of "flood," which Jobbik had already introduced in the previous months to describe the rising number of immigrants entering Hungary during the Kosovo Wave. The latter itself is a part of the metaphor that interprets human mobility in terms of large flows of water. "Flood" has a long history in fascist discourse (Theweleit, 1987). In his annual speech at the Balvanyos summer camp (25 July), which gathers Hungary's conservative circles in a majority-Hungarian micro-region in Transylvania (Romania), Orban used the term "flood" three times to describe the scale of immigration into Europe. He declared that the "real threat is not from the war zones, but from the heart of Africa," from where "hundreds of millions" would "spectacularly breach" the North African "line of defense," which would "no

longer protect Europe from a vast flood of people" (Orban 2015j).

Metaphors, like "flood," allow grasping new or abstract concepts and processes, like "immigration" based on a more familiar experience. They simplify complex reality by emphasizing one aspect and hiding others, and therefore, shape thinking in a particular way and, consequently, sanction a specific type of action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The discourse of flooding went hand in hand with the proposed policy solution. Just like during the 2013 flood, Orban's government resorted to the metal fence to solve the problem they described as a flood. Orban's flood czar Gyorgy Bakondi would oversee the implementation of the new border policy. The power of this metaphor is visible in how widely it has circulated since then. The border police officer I interviewed for this research explained that "migration is like a water flow. First, you have one or two drops, then little water, then bigger water and a lot of water and when water flow is huge, you have side flows too".[10]

The visual and historical images of danger, such as 'flood' and 'mass migration,' further dramatized immigration as a problem and offered a justification for the border fence. The government's PR effort proved successful. Between May and July, the share of Hungarians, who identified immigration as a more significant problem than emigration, doubled and slightly exceeded the percentage of those who thought otherwise (Publicus, 2015).

[10] Interview with Border police officer 2.

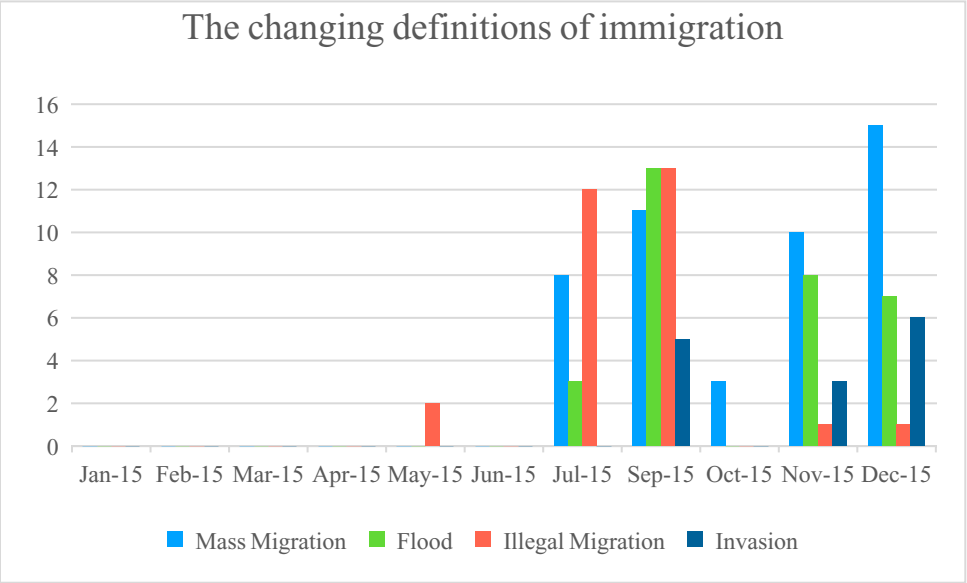

Chart 1. Definitions of immigration in Orban's speeches.[11]

"Christian Europe": Nation as Civilization

The definitions of the danger in terms of its magnitude shifted the implications of immigration. Some of the earlier frames – terrorism, crime and economy – implied a threat to people's physical safety and jobs. However, the discourse of "flood" and "mass migration" shifted the focus towards demography and implied a threat to society's 'way of life.' At stake, Orban argued, was Europe's survival as a distinct civilization and Hungary's survival as a nation.

At the beginning of June, Orban was asking, "what will our continent be like after such a wave of migration?" Anti-immigration policies at the EU level were necessary to maintain the continent as a "Christian Europe" and prevent its transformation into a "multicultural Europe" (Orban, 2015g). The entry of a large number foreigners with different civilizational backgrounds ("Islam, the Asian religions") would lead to the "extinction of European values and nations – or, to be more precise, their transformation beyond all recognition," declared Orban at the end of July (Orban, 2015h;

[11] The word count is based on Orban's public speeches during 2015. I gathered the text of these speeches from the official website of the Prime Minister's Office.

2015j).

These formulations of the object of protection indicate a shift in the nationalist discourse. Orban justified anti-immigrant border security with civilizational discourse rather than more familiar ethnonationalism. The opposition between Europe's Christian civilization and Asian/African/Muslim immigrants constituted the politically salient meaning of nationhood. Hungary, as part of Christian Europe, was under the threat of extinction from a civilizationally different and not an ethnically different enemy. Rogers Brubaker (2017) defines this form of nationalist discourse as "civilizationism." According Brubaker, civilizationism can become a form of nationalism whenever "the content of national culture or national identity is specified in civilizational language" (p. 1211). The sociologist has observed that civilizationism among the European populists unmarks territorially defined national identities and politicizes the "supra-confessional civilizational divide between (Judeo-) Christianity and Islam" (Ibid.). The lack of emphasis on national differences meant that this civilizational discourse defined Hungary's national territory in terms of its position inside "Christian Europe" and not against the neighboring nations/states.

The discourse downplayed the sovereign-territorial meaning of the southern border, which is the central problem in Hungary's transborder nationalism. Instead, Orban's civilizational discourse emphasized the EU/Schengen territoriality to identify the border as a defensive line against the outside danger. The civilizational geography articulated in Orban's storyline removed the political -sovereign layer. In its place, the border fence would demarcate "Christian Europe" from faraway places of danger (e.g. "heart of Africa"). This geography of nationhood and security no longer defined the space south of the border as Serbia or any specific country, but a route, a corridor, or a channel, diverting the 'flood' of 'mass migration' towards Hungary and Europe. Hungary's southern border would replace Europe's "line of defense" previously (presumably, before the Arab Spring) performed by the countries in North Africa (Orban, 2015j).

In response to the Serbian government's protest, Orban tried to reassure his Serbian colleague that his border policy was "in no way directed against Serbia or the Serbian people." He also promised to open more border crossing points for "law-abiding people – be those Serbs or Hungarians" (Orban, 2015f). The civilizational discourse allowed Orban to avoid the familiar tension between

Hungary's transborder nationhood and the southern border. It allowed him to de-emphasize the meaning of the border as a line dividing two sovereign states. National differences between Hungary and its neighboring countries were irrelevant in the new story of nationhood and its protection. The only relevant distinction was between "Christian Europeans" and "Muslim immigrants."

"Central European Marseille": Demographic Nationalism

Orban's civilization discourse complemented his national discourse but did not replace it. In the face of external danger ('Muslim immigrants'), the discourse enabled Orban to downplay national differences and political borders with neighbors and across the EU. But his discourse of "Christian Europe" did not replace Hungary as the primary scale of identification and organization of 'imagined political community.' The object of protection was not merely the European civilization (although this was a central discursive line), but a Europe made up of distinct European nations. Orban argues that immigration threatened Europe's "common values and culture" and "even to our diversity" (Orban, 2015j). The meaning of diversity was 'Europe of nations.' Orban contrasted this national particularism with a different definition of diversity as multiculturalism that threatened to erase the European civilization and national cultures. The border fence served to preserve Europe as the "continent of Europeans" and "Hungary as a Hungarian country" (Ibid.; Orban, 2015c).

Orban (2015e) further emphasized the country's vulnerability due to its small size (19 June):

> Big countries do not understand that, because big countries have no feeling of being in danger. If you have 80 million people or 60 million people, it is almost impossible to imagine that the moment can arrive when there are no more Hungarians left in the world or no more Germans in the world, or British. But that feeling for a country with a population of 10 million – like Hungary – is quite a vivid one. In the heart of Hungarian politicians and analysts, demography is the number one issue because it is a real threat.

Immigration was riskier for a small country like Hungary because "If we make a mistake in the issue of immigration just once, then changes will occur here which cannot be corrected later"

(Orban, 2015h). If Hungary's government had welcomed "large masses" of "non-Christian" people, "within a year or two, we would not be able to recognize our own country; we would be like a refugee camp, a kind of Central European Marseille" (Orban, 2015j).

Alongside the civilizational discourse, Orban advanced a nationalist discourse, which specified Hungary's demography as the main object of concern. This discourse of nationalism shifted focus from territory to demography. The central object was the state territory's national make-up, not the nation's territorial make-up, as problematized by transborder nationalism. The problem was no longer nation's division across political borders and sovereign territories. The problem was the nation's division inside Hungary's political territory along civilizational lines, i.e. multiculturalism ("Central European Marseille").

Territory as a problem emerged only in terms of Hungary's particular location within the EU/Schengen Area and on the Balkan Route. From early May, Orban speculated that Austria and Germany would soon close their internal Schengen borders and immigrants entering Hungary from the south "will be stuck in Hungary, as if in a giant sack" (2015b). Fidesz MPs during the June parliamentary session reiterated such geographical specification of Hungary as a transit country but also highlighted its role as a border country given the inability of Greece and Bulgaria as the EU's easternmost countries to close the Balkan Route. To prevent a large number of immigrants from being "trapped here in Hungary," a "responsible" political action by the Hungarian government would be to "close its southern external borders" (Rogán, 2015b).

Fighting Brussels, Defending Nation

The coexistence of civilizational and demographic nationalist discourse created a complicated meaning of Hungary's southern border. On the one hand, its interstate function dividing Hungary from Serbia faded in Orban's geography of "Christian Europe." Instead, it was Europe's "line of defense" and Hungary's security border to maintain its demographic character in the face of immigration. The border fence at the Hungarian-Serbian boundary was a territorial policy, but it addressed a demographic problem. This demographic security and civilizational meaning allowed Orban to depoliticize the purpose of the border fence during his meeting with the Serbian Prime

Minister.

On the other hand, the location of the fence along the actual sovereign border of Hungary allowed Orban to politicize its meaning within the EU context and frame it as a manifestation of Hungary's national sovereignty against the supranational European Union ("Brussels"). The civilizational discourse attempted to define the anti-immigration border security policy as a common sense against the external enemy. As a next step after establishing the necessity of the border fence, Orban framed this security policy as a political program against the internal European and Hungarian "left-liberal" forces, who wished to replace Europe's nations and civilization with dangerous foreign masses and multiculturalism.

Orban interpreted the EU-porposed solidarity clause and relocation scheme as an encroachment on Hungary's national interest in a regular radio interview in early May. He divided EU member states into two categories: those who "allowed refugees to enter their country," therefore, "effectively fail to defend their country's borders," and others, like Hungary, which "did not want to allow anyone in at all." To Orban, relocation of asylum seekers from the first group of countries to the second was unfair. The common EU policy based on such an 'unfair' proposal would not be acceptable to the government of Hungary. Orban, instead, wanted the common approach that acknowledged that "everyone should defend their borders" and prioritized to "relocate the problem outside the territory of Europe" as opposed to "internal solidarity" and the distribution of refugees within the EU (Orban, 2015b).

In a speech at the European Parliament in May, Orban described the refugee relocation scheme as a "crazy idea," "nothing short of absurd, bordering on the insane." In disagreement with such common EU policy on immigration, Orban demanded that "the right of Member States to defend their borders should be restored to national jurisdictions" and "the regulation of immigration delegated to national competencies" (Orban, 2015c). This unilateralist vision was already evident in the national consultation questionnaire that declared that "Brussels has failed to address immigration appropriately, Hungary must follow its path" (Prime Minister's Office, 2015a).

On 19 June, two days after the announcement of the border fence, Orban (2015e) explained the national-sovereign logic of Hungary's border policy as an alternative to the common EU approach:

> Each nation is defined by its borders. And borders must be defended by the state. That is our job. Full point. Defend the border. And if you are a member of the European Union, especially the Schengen Area, you have an obligation to defend your national border, which is the European border, to stop them.
>
> To defend the borders inside the European Union, especially the Schengen, outside border is a national obligation. It is a national imperative. It is not a common task. It is your job because you are a state. That is part of the definition of a state. Therefore, you have to do it. In which way, how to do it, is a technical issue. The main issue is that it is your obligation to maintain your border control and defend your border. And you can't wait for the European solution. I do not believe in a European solution. If we are able to find a European solution in the future, that would be fine. But now, tomorrow morning, we have to fix the border.

In the Balvanyos speech in Romania at the end of July, Orban (2015j) introduced a conspiratorial-populist language to define his border policy as Hungary's fight against the "European left" and "financial and political power in Brussels." Orban argues that "Brussels" is further either "unable to protect the people of Europe from the flood of illegal immigrants" or determined to "weaken Hungarian national and state sovereignty." In this story, Orban's government stands for the "people of Europe" and "Hungarian people" who "have not lost their common sense," "do not want illegal immigrants, and do not share the intellectual derangement of the European left." The "left" and "Brussels" have "a vested interest in erasing national structures, and eliminating national identities" and see immigration as an "opportunity" to reach this "long-term goal."

Thus, while civilizationism allowed Orban to downplay internal EU boundaries and create a cultural and security division between 'Europe' and the outside world, demographic nationalism served to draw a political division between 'Brussels' and Hungary and emphasize the importance of national-political boundaries inside the EU. The border became a location to affirm Hungary's political sovereignty against 'Brussels' and perform the nation-ness against the perceived danger of multiculturalism. Through this argumentative discourse, Orban defines Hungary's nationhood in opposition to multiculturalism. The meaning of border becomes positive, something that is essential to maintain national character against the destructive danger of

immigration/multiculturalism and ensure political independence from the anti-national forces in the EU. The negative meaning of the border that divides the nation loses its relevance in Orban's geopolitical storyline.

Importantly, for this research, this discourse of nationalism emphasized national and political borders in opposition to a supranational institution ('Brussels') and a multicultural Europe. The central tensions is a 'vertical' competition between the geographies of 'Europe of nations' (as both political-sovereign entities and cultural-demographic units) and the multicultural empire of Brussels (as an opposite cultural-demographic and political-sovereignty order). The 'horizontal' competition between the neighboring sovereign territories to define their nationhood across political borders, which is the topic of Hungary's transborder nationalism and the object of nemzetpolitika, is irrelevant in Orban's border security politics.

In this EU-oriented politics of nationhood, national borders define political sovereignty from the EU and not from the neighboring state. 'Multiculturalizing' Brussels replaced the danger of nationalizing neighboring states. Under threat was not merely a transborder Hungarian community but the whole Hungarian nation and the European civilization. The arguments for sovereignty and statehood are compatible with transborder nationhood because the meaning of statehood is defined not in contrast to, but in terms of nationhood and against cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. Subsequently, Orban's framing of the central tension diverted attention from the 'horizontal' contradiction between Hungary's border security and its transborder nation and removed this tension from the political agenda.

Border Closure/Problem Closure: Rampart Nationhood (September 2015)

The construction of the fence started in July. It had an effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy, creating what it meant to prevent. Fearing that the route would soon be blocked, people on the move rushed towards Hungary to reach their European destinations before the border closure (Frontex, 2016; Thorpe, 2019). The number of irregular border crossings from Serbia into Hungary increased from 500 a day before the announcement in June to 3,000 a day at the end of August, reaching a monthly total of 52,000 in August (Thorpe, 2015; Police, 2015).

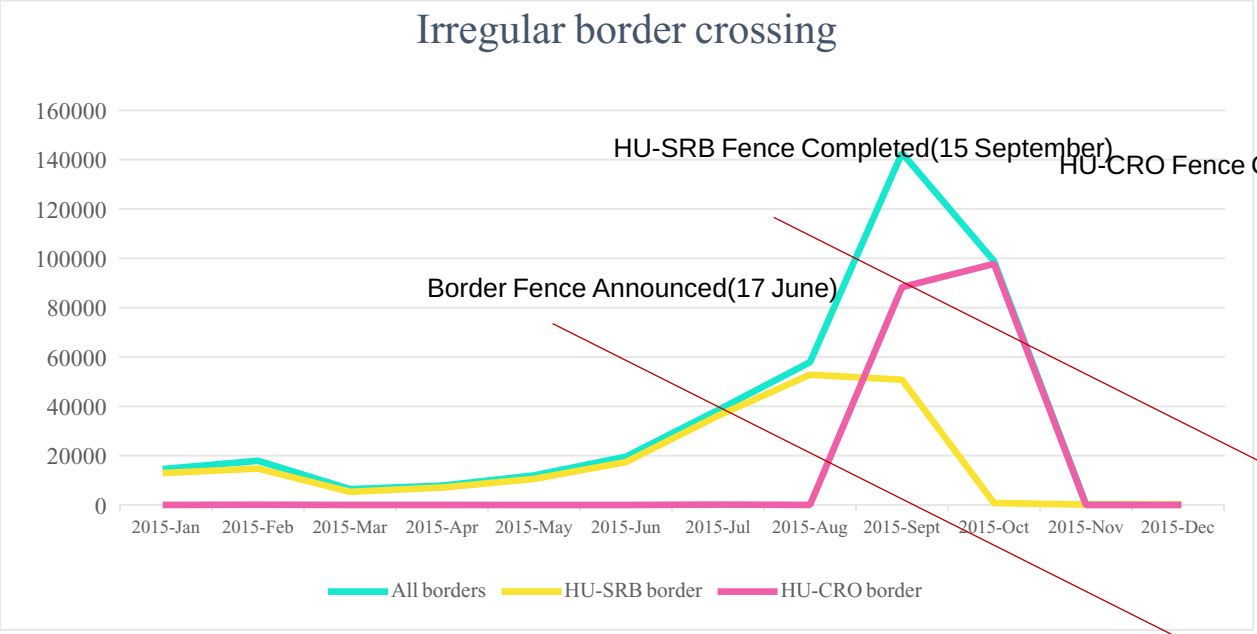

Chart 2. Irregular crossings into Hungarian territory recorded by Hungary's Police.

Besides this policy blowback at the border, Orban's anti-immigrant discourse faced a new challenge in the political arena after two tragic events. On 27 August, police found 71 people suffocated to death in a truck in Austria, 30 km from the Hungarian border. The car was transporting Iraqi, Syrian and Afghan immigrants from the Hungarian-Serbian border to Munich. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who was attending a migration summit in Vienna, said everyone was "shaken" by the news and urged for joint action to solve the migration crisis (Thorpe 2019, p.67). A few days later (2 September), the image of a dead child – Alan Kurdi from Syria – on the Turkish coast moved the world leaders and further encouraged to take a welcoming action towards immigrants (Adler-Nissen et al., 2018). This materialized in a new relocation scheme to cover additional 120,000 people (European Commission, 2015b).

In response, Orban accelerated the construction of the fence and dramatized the geopolitical storyline in the first two weeks of September. In an op-ed in the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Orban wrote that the defense of the Schengen border was the first order task and only after

"we have protected our borders and held back the tide[!], can we ask how many people we want to receive or if there should be quotas" (Orban, 2015k). He described the southern border fence as a "line of defense" against "an ever-mounting wave of modern-era migration," threatening the "European continent." In a radio interview, Orban predicted that "one morning we could wake up and realize that we are in the minority on our own continent. That is the end of Europe" (Orban, 2015o). At stake was "European Christianity" because "those arriving… represent a radically different culture." Islam was threatening the "idea of Europe" (Orban, 2015k). In an interview with a Hungarian TV channel, Orban (2015m) further elaborated that "Islamic communities… have far more children than our communities living according to the conventional European, Christian way of life" and in the "competition" between the "two civilizations here, we Christians will lose." By closing the border, the government of Hungary was preventing "competition of this kind" and "defending our way of life."

In addition to the apocalyptic definition of external danger, Orban further highlighted the political division inside the EU to frame the issue as the 'nationalism of common people' vs. 'multiculturalism of the Brussels elites.' He asserted that the "fear that their way of life is in danger" was spreading among the "people" of Europe (Orban, 2015m). "We Hungarians are full of fear. People in Europe are full of fear because we see that the European leaders are not able to control the situation," was Orban's message to Brussels (Prime Minister's Office, 2015b). Building a border fence was a "common sense" approach in a "battle for [Europe's] fate" and the "only chance of satisfying our citizens' legitimate demands and desire for security" (Orban, 2015k; 2015o). In contrast, the EU leaders were "almost encouraging" migrants to arrive as against "the will of Europe's citizens" by proposing the relocation scheme ("madness") (Orban, 2015o; 2015k).

Meanwhile, in the first week of September, Hungary's Parliament debated and adopted new restrictive measures towards immigration in an extraordinary two-day session. First, the crossing of the border outside the formal border crossing points (BCPs), obstructing the construction of the fence and damaging the barrier were declared criminal offense, punishable by several years of imprisonment. Second, the new law established "transit zones" within the sixty-meter distance of

On 15 September, the 175km-long fence was completed.[12] The legislative amendments entered into force and Orban declared a state of emergency in the counties neighboring the southern border.[13] In the previous days, nearly 10,000 people were crossing the "green border" into Hungary every day (Thorpe, 2019).[14] These people suddenly found themselves stuck at the border. The government mobilized riot police, including counterterrorism commandos, and armored vehicles on the Hungarian side of the border at the Roszke border crossing point. On 16 September, as the migrants on the Serbian side chanted "Open the Gate!", some started throwing water bottles and rocks across the barrier. Police fired tear gas and water cannon in response. As the situation escalated, some of the migrants managed to open the gate, leading to confrontation, which ended with numerous injuries and the arrest of eleven migrants.

The images of frustrated, angry young migrant men trying to breach the border barrier were on the front pages of pro-government newspapers the next day and played continuously on Fidesz-friendly TV channels. In contrast, Fidesz gave a political directive to the loyal media outlets not to show pictures of migrant children to discourage sympathy among the wider public towards the people Orban thought were attacking Hungary (444, 2015). "War on all fronts!" was the headline of *Magyar Nemzet*, the conservative daily newspaper, also referring to Hungary's political wrangling at the EU level (Lukács, 2015). Orban himself qualified the incident as an "armed, organized attack on Hungary" (2015l).

On 21 September, Orban (2015n) went to the Parliament to make a case for the military's deployment at the border. There, he redefined the problem as "invasion":

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[12] The border fence was extended westwards and on 16 October the Croatian-Hungarian border too was finally fenced and closed. The fence covers only about a third of the whole Croatian border perimeter since the rest follows rivers Mura and Drava.

[13] In March 2016, the government expanded emergency to cover the whole territory of Hungary and since then, has been extending its duration every six months.

[14] Interview with Mark Kekesi, refugee activist in Szeged.

> Millions of migrants are besieging the borders of Hungary and Europe. Millions more are setting out. As a result, our borders are in danger, our way of life is in danger, and Hungary and the whole of Europe are in danger. What is happening now is an invasion; we are being invaded.

Recalling the newspaper frontpage from a couple of days ago, Orban promised to "fight a battle on two fronts." The first front was against the "European left" who "look upon migration as an opportunity to accomplish their historic goal: the elimination of nations." The second front was against the "invasion" to "protect the borders of Hungary and Europe" and urged the audience to "prepare for a long struggle."

Besides militarized language and the sharpened populist line against political opponents, Orban enriched the geopolitical storyline with a historical myth to ground it in Hungary's geopolitical culture. Protecting Europe was Hungary's "historical and moral duty," declared Orban in the Parliament (2015n). Orban had underscored this point earlier in July as well: "while protecting Hungary, we protect the European Union [and] this is not unprecedented in Hungarian history, we are used to it, we fulfill our obligation" (2015p). The idea that Hungary has historically been a bastion of Christendom is an established knowledge within the Hungarian geopolitical culture. According to a Gallup poll in 2000, 71% of respondents in Hungary agreed that "Hungary has been the bastion protecting the West for a thousand years" (Száraz, 2012). The Constitution states on the first page: "We are proud that our people have over the centuries defended Europe in a series of struggles."

Two days later, during his meeting with Bavarian politicians in Germany, Orban remarked that due to the geographic arrangement of the Schengen Area, Hungary served as an external border for Germany. Orban described himself as "the captain of the border fortress" and underscored his "duty to come here and report on the situation" (Prime Minister's Office, 2015c). Fortress captains are well-known figures in Hungarian popular history (Pap & Reményi, 2017). One of the most famous fortress captains was Janos Hunyadi, who fought in the Battle of Belgrade (*Nandorfehervar* in Hungarian) in 1456 and halted the Ottoman invasion. This battle gave rise to the popular imagination of the country as a historic defender of Christendom.

Earlier in March, during his address to Hungary's diplomats, he noted that "Janos Hunyadi is painted on the wall of my office, which is called the Nandorfehervar Room and so I am constantly reminded of what can happen in the Balkans" (2015i). In an interview to a Swiss newspaper on 12 October, Orban (2015d) once again referenced the Nandorfehervar Battle to explain that Hungary's advocacy for "urgent action" against immigration was not simply self-centric but conditioned by its historical mission to save Europe from foreign invaders:

> We are sitting here in the Nandorfehervar Hall of the Hungarian Parliament Building. This mural here shows how Hungary defended Europe against the Ottoman Empire. If you look at the churches depicted here – Notre Dame, Westminster Abbey, Stephansdom and Cologne Cathedral – you can see that none of them stand here in Hungary.

The everyday visual reminder of the historical battle no doubt contributed to Orban's re-imagination of the "migration crisis" along the Balkan Route as a military invasion of Europe and himself as a proud and brave fortress captain, defending the continent's Christian civilization from Muslim invaders.[15] In this updated geopolitical storyline of immigration into Europe, the clash at the Roszke border crossing point between the Hungarian riot police and immigrants on 16 September symbolized the clash of civilizations and the defining moment when Orban's southern border barrier halted the "invasion." During the annual conference of the Hungarian Diaspora Council in Budapest in December 2015, attended by Orban, one of the members held a banner that read: Nandorfehervar 1456 = Roszke 2015 (Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2015).

The discourse of invasion and the myth of Europe's historical protector further marginalized the problematic coexistence of the security fence and the Hungarian communities outside of it. It offered a storyline that would include these transborder communities in the national effort to survive the invasion and protect the rest of Europe. This military-historical discourse of invasion and protection framed the border fence as a national symbol, as a modern manifestation of historical pride of the nation. Orban enlisted the whole nation, whether inside the territory of Hungary or outside of its border, who identified with this national pride and history, as a border

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[15] The Hunyadi-Orban comparison emerged already in the summer of 2015. One right-wing Hungarian blogger wrote on 22 July (the day of commemoration of Nandorfehervar) that "Orban today is doing what Janos Hunyadi did 559 years ago – defends his people, his home and all of Europe" (Csúri, 2015).

guard and a defensive bastion of Europe. Hungary was a rampart nation and Orban was the captain of the fortification (Berezhnaya & Hein-Kircher, 2019).

Rampart nationhood offered a simple, coherent vision that erased local, regional contradictions and territorial divisions of Hungary's transborder nation. The myth reframed the geography of nationhood and security. Orban's story geo-graphed the nation as a whole, regardless of political-sovereign borders, as a defensibe bastion of 'Christian Europe.' The specific location of the border fence was not important because it merely manifested and symbolized the border-ness of the whole nation. It could have been a hundred kilometers inside the territory of Hungary and the geopolitical storyline would not alter. This thick brushstroke marginalized the spatial complexities of the new border fence concerning Hungary's divided nationhood and that it did not exactly separate 'Christian Europe' from 'Muslim empires' outside of it.

Beyond the spatial vision which erased more local territorial differences and the meanings of the Hungarian-Serbian border, this storyline also reframed the temporality of nationhood. The introduction of Nandorfehervar into the storyline of the border fence diverted the nation's historical gaze away from the trauma of Trianon and towards the more heroic moments of the past when the country was greater in size and more powerful and Trianon had not yet happened. Recreating this medieval pride and glory in the 21st century meant to erase Trianon borders and hide the border's contradiction with divided nationhood.

By December, domestic approval of the southern border fence grew up to 87% from 68% in September and 34% in July (Publicus, 2015). Particularly drastic was the increase of positive attitude towards the fence among the Socialist voters from 40% to 75% between September and December, which proves that the center-left opposition had not offered a viable alternative to the storyline developed by Fidesz (HVG, 2015b). Widespread approval of Orban's border discourse and practice translated into political gains. By the end of the year, Fidesz had restored its rating, while Jobbik was losing support (HVG, 2015c). Outside of its policy effectiveness, the border fence proved politically beneficial to Fidesz to outflank Jobbik and maintain its status as the champion of Hungary's national interests at home and abroad.

Conclusion

The geography of protection articulated in the storyline of the border fence enabled Orban to make a nationalist case for border security without provoking a direct contradiction with transborder nationalism. The storyline emphasized the protection of "Christian Europe" and Hungary's national sovereignty within the EU. Orban defined the boundary between danger and security, the inside and the outside, in a way that would, in conceptual terms, include transborder Hungarians on the 'protected' side of the fence, although physically they would remain outside.

This storyline defined the meaning of national territory as a part of a wider civilizational space of 'Christian Europe' and its opposition to the anti-national 'Brussels.' The geographies of nationhood and danger that were salient before 2015 – the Carpathian Basin and the neighboring nationalizing states – disappeared. The opposition to the nation came from culturally/civilizationally different immigrants from outside and multicultural "left-liberals" inside the EU. The old tension between the nation and the sovereign border, which marks the neighboring territory and divides the nation, was gone. Transborder Hungarians became a non-issue. The new geography of nationhood, therefore, facilitated rather than hindered border security policy.

Table 1. The structure of Hungary's nationalist discourse of danger

	Transborder nationalism	**Demographic & Rampart nationalism**
Danger	Cultural assimilation	The end of nations & Christianity
External enemy	Neighboring nationalizing countries	Immigrants
Internal enemy	MSZP (The left)	The EU/Hungarian left, Brussels

Policy	Nemzetpolitika	Border Security
Solution	Transborder sovereignty	National sovereignty in the EU

3.4 Border Materiality

Introduction

This chapter illustrates the materialization of the southern border fence and its geopolitical discourse. It pays close attention to distinct infrastructural elements of the border and how they enact particular policies and geographies of security and nationhood. In this chapter, I argue that everyday border practices not merely respond to the pre-existing political decisions but also have a productive power to reproduce 'groupness' and identities of a distinct kind. As a result, the border can simultaneously serve as a connection between Vojvodina Hungarians and Hungary and keep foreign immigrants out. The fence does not create an absolute territorial obstacle but contributes to the dual meaning and practice of the border as a nationhood-security complex.

The first section introduces the local perspectives on the border fence, which indicate a simultaneous and unproblematic existence of contradictory interpretive repertoires regarding the border among the area's residents. The next two sections describe the operation of the border in the distinct 'nationhood' and 'security' assemblages. These different materialities of the border enact the contradictory perspectives/discourses in everyday life and in so doing, they create distinct identities for transborder Hungarians and immigrants. The fourth section pays a closer look at the symbolic landscape in one border village and the materialization of Hungary's rampart nationhood.

This chapter is almost entirely based on my fieldwork in the border region in May-June 2019. I conducted interviews with public officials, border police officers and ordinary residents in Szeged and smaller villages along the border as well as across the border in Serbia. Besides these interviews, my own travel, crossings of the border and visual experience of the boundary and its

material components allowed me to grasp how the border functions to inform the arguments developed in this chapter.

Border Repertoires

The local meaning of Hungary's southern border is contextual. The meaning of the border emerges within what the literature on discourse analysis calls "interpretive repertoires" (Wittgenstein), "speech genres" (Bakhtin) or "discursive field" (Foucault). The meaning given to the border depends on the immediate context of the conversation. In this case, the researcher's question provides a cue to the respondent and transports into a specific genre/repertoire. There are two central genres, interpretive repertoires or policy perspectives on the border: immigration control and transborder, divided nationhood.

The Mayor of Morahalom, at the center of the migration route at the border, said in response to the government's decision to build a border fence: "The point of the border is to separate things. Where it is absent, there is no order, and no order means no security" (Index, 2015d). But the statement only makes sense when situated specifically within the discursive field of migration produced by the governmental discursive practices in 2015. The same statement uttered at Orban's public appearance in Vojvodina would be unthinkable.

The contradiction in the meanings of this border requires discursive management and the demarcation of discursive context/field. The Mayor of Tiszasziget (another small village at the border), affiliated with Fidesz, regarded the fence as "efficient and necessary" because it "contributes to the sense of security" against the "real threat" of migration. He further asserted that "as soon as the fence is removed, migrants would come" because Hungary's southern border is the "shortest way" towards Western Europe. But when I asked about the spatial extent of the Hungarian nation and the role of this border in shaping the relations with the Vojvodina Hungarians, the respondent said that the "boundary of Hungarian nation lies 100-120 km south of the border" and "they drew this border at Trianon in a really bad place." Ultimately, he "would like to see this border open." Two different repertoires allowed the same respondent to speak about the same border simultaneously as 'necessary and efficient' and as 'drawn in a really bad place.'

Orban's geopolitical storyline very much influences the meaning of the border fence within the migration/security discourse. The storyline has firmly entrenched in the minds of the Hungarian public via continuous repetition in public speeches and in the (pro-government) media that turned the storyline into an 'interpretive repertoire.' The way local respondents talk about the border, whether they agree or disagree with Orban's narrative and justification, often echoes and relies on the vocabulary, metaphors, slogans introduced and reproduced through Orban's geopolitical storyline. Such reliance on the language limits the discussion within the speech genre of 'migration control.' It leaves that contradictory meaning of the border, associated with 'divided nationhood,' unmentioned or possibly even unthought. Therefore, the image of the border fence is associated with the 'sense of security' rather than the negative feeling of separation from Hungarians beyond the border.

The frequent mentioning of 'Europe' in the local discourse of the border indicates how much the geopolitical discourse produced in the political center has seeped into the local understanding of the matter, influencing how locals give meaning to their everyday surroundings. This is true even for those who are skeptical of the fence's usefulness and see political manipulation behind the slogans such as "Protecting Christian Europe." In articulating their opposition, they describe the border fence as located between Europe and non-European migrants. Respondents, who opposed the border fence and Hungary's immigration policy, did not contest the meaning of the border as a security line but only the method of immigration control. The two following statements indicate the pervasiveness of the entrenched geographical thinking characteristic to the discursive field of migration/security that shapes the meaning of Hungary's southern border:

1) "[The fence] had a certain role in stopping the migration but not like Orban says that we stopped immigration, look at the map of Europe."[16]

2) "If you look at the European borders, 175 kilometers [of the Hungarian-Serbian border fence] cannot defend [whole Europe]. We didn't solve any migration problem; we just left it outside. We don't see it, so it doesn't exist."[17]

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[16] Interview with Mark Kekesi, sociologist and human rights activist in Szeged.

[17] Interview with Robert Molnar, the Mayor of Kubekhaza.

"Europe" more naturally shapes the meaning of the border for those who do agree with the government's position and view the fence necessary. In the following statement, an ethnic Hungarian politician in Vojvodina repeated Orban's slogan of 'protecting Europe':

> As Serbia looks towards membership in the EU, an open border, without physical barriers or border crossing points would be in everyone's interests, but for that, Europe should be protected from outside. This means strengthening Serbia's southern borders to allow its northern border with Hungary and the EU to be opened.[18]

Several other respondents on the Hungarian side made the same point about sealing Serbia's southern border before opening its northern border with Hungary.

The difference between the fence and the border is a critical point. The border can be talked in two distinct and contradictory genres. Depending on which discursive field/policy perspective shapes the meaning, the border can have a negative or positive connotation. But the meaning of the fence is more fixed, as it is firmly rooted in the speech genre of migration/security. In everyday practice, the fence does not create a reason for the locals to construct an alternative meaning of it, associated with the separation of nation and community.

Hungarians living in the border village of Bački Vinogradi on the Serbian side and just across the Hungarian village of Asotthalom were initially scared of the idea of a border fence. The fence reminded them of the Iron Curtain. Later, as they found out that the fence did not obstruct their mobility and in addition to that, the large number of migrants have disappeared from this area, the locals started to approve Orban's border fence (Szerbhorváth & Feischmidt, 2017).

Unlike the Iron Curtain, Hungary's southern border fence does not forbid movement across the border via formal border crossing points. The local cross-border mobility has not changed as a result of the fence. Therefore, the idea that physical barriers at the border separate the nation does not make much sense for the locals who easily move between Vojvodina and Hungary's southern region. Whether shaped by the dominant political narratives coming from Budapest or by the practical, everyday experience of the border, the meaning of border fence seems so far strongly

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[18] Interview with Robert Lacko, the Head of Kanjiža City Council (Serbia).

tied to the danger of migration.

The following sections illustrate how the physical infrastructure and material functioning of the border regime shapes local and transnational identities and makes territories.

Transborder Nationhood Materialized

The political leadership of the Hungarian community in Vojvodina, represented by the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) and its influential chief Istvan Pasztor, expressed support for the new border fence on the very same day of the announcement. Pasztor provided a local, south-of-border angle to the topic when he suggested that the fence will divert the flow of people away from the border area. Simultaneously, he assured the locals that the fence would not affect their mobility through border crossing points (Index, 2015b).

Just as nationalist discourse inside Hungary was becoming more and more centered around the security and military discourses of the border fence, the government started to pour an unprecedented amount of money into Vojvodina and other Hungarian communities. The total amount of financial aid to Hungarian organizations beyond the border tripled from 2015 to 2016 and has been steadily growing ever since, while the growth between 2011 and 2015 was only incremental (Sipos, 2019). This is the first meaning of 'materialization' of transborder nationhood in parallel to the border fence.

In his first visit to Vojvodina since completing the border fence (April 2016), Orban avoided the topic of the border fence and instead focused on the region's economic development plan. He offered the Vojvodina audience an uplifting and optimistic tone, rejecting the survivalism that characterized his public appearances inside Hungary. Orban described Vojvodina as the "bridge that connects Serbia to Hungary and Europe" (Prime Minister's Office, 2016). He declared that the "barriers are no longer tight, or much less tight" for the Vojvodina Hungarians (Orban, 2016). The message was clear. The border was open for Hungary's ethnic kin in Vojvodina, while a starkly different border experience awaited immigrants stuck on the edges of the region's Hungarian-majority towns.

The border crossing points (BCPs) along the Hungarian-Serbian border are part of the continent-wide transport corridor often used by guest workers from south-east Europe and Turkey. They legally work in Austria, Germany and further west and travel back home regularly. On a macro scale, this 'legal' mobility corridor is indistinguishable from the 'illegal' migration corridor known as the Balkan Route. Differences and deviations between the regular and irregular mobility occur at the border where those with necessary travel documentation pass through formal BCPs while those without (i.e. irregular migrants) choose to cross the "green border." After crossing the border, the two routes realign again along the established transport lines. However, with the appearance of the fence, more and more irregular migrants in recent years have been trying to cross Hungary's southern border via formal BCPs hidden in vehicles.[19]

In August 2015, the railway emerged as the main gateway to Hungary for migrants as it directed them towards the border. In summer 2015, as the fence covered more and more of the border perimeter, the railway line left a gap in the barrier. It led to a competition over the fate of this transportation juncture between two institutions and two visions they represent. Hungary's railway company MAV advocated for the continuous connection while the police insisted on border closure. On 14 September, a train carriage with razor wires on its front façade – dubbed by journalists as "Mad Max" – arrived at the intersection, filled the gap in the border fence and completed the border closure.

Today, the "Mad Max" wagon is gone and a gate within the fence has filled the gap above rails. The train connection between Szeged and Subotica, two main cities on either side of the border, has since been suspended and replaced by additional buses that pass through the Roszke BCP. There is a second railway line that connects Budapest with Belgrade and operates unhindered. There, the gate over the rails is ordinarily closed, creating a continuous metal barrier, but whenever the train needs to pass, border guards manually open the gate.

Since 2015, Hungary and Serbia have opened three additional BCPs for vehicles. Currently, nine BCPs cover the length of the border (175 km) and offer more direct and quick access to the other

[19] Interview with Border police officer 2.

side than before. New BCPs have reduced the average distance between them to about 20 km and alleviated traffic jams, which is a more significant problem for the cross-border mobility local community than the physical fences on the "green border." Transborder Hungarians in Vojvodina, many of whom possess Hungarian passport, easily travel through BCPs without extra checks and waiting. Therefore, in practical terms, the border fence has had no adverse effect on their links to Hungary.[20] In fact, the border allows easier mobility to the holders of a Hungarian passport. According to the police statistical figures, the currently operating nine BCPs allow larger cross-border passenger traffic than before 2015 when only six BCPs functioned (KSH, 2019).

Most of the border-crossers are residents of the border area, often commuters to work or shoppers. Dual citizenship allows Hungarians in Vojvodina to work just across the border, creating a win-win situation both for job-seekers from the Serbian side and employers on the Hungarian side, who seek cheap workforce. In a small town of Tompa (Hungary), local industries advertise jobs just across the border in Subotica. The region's biggest employers are two large *diszkonts* (discount markets that sell products in bulk) that operate 100-150 meters away from the Tompa BCP. These two, located next to each other, are also Hungary's two largest stores by turnover. About half of the workforce and the absolute majority of the customers come from across the border in Serbia.[21] Customers can claim VAT of more than 20% of the full price at the border when their total purchase equals at least 175 EURO. Hungarian police call it "VAT-tourism." These products bought at the Tompa *diszkonts* are then re-sold in local shops in Subotica or informally through personal contact (Torontáli, 2018).

These everyday micro-practices of commuting, shopping, swift passing through BCPs when using a Hungarian passport challenge the meaning of the border as 'closed.' Free and easy access to the Hungarian territory differentiates the Vojvodina Hungarians from immigrants who seek to pass the same border but cannot and reinforces their identity as insiders within the Hungarian nation. Such a differentiated mobility regime relies on material elements that make up the border regime and the border experience: BCPs, vehicles, passports, shopping products. The right combination of

[20] Interview with Robert Lacko (Kanjiža City Council).

[21] Interview with the mayor of Tompa.

material elements creates and reproduces an everyday experience of 'transborder nationhood.' Other features, though, primarily the security fence and the supporting infrastructure, have designed a very different border experience for immigrants and materialized a contradictory meaning of the boundary as a highly secure perimeter that marks Hungary's sovereign territory.

Sovereignty Materialized

The border fence at the Serbian-Hungarian border immediately diverted the flow westwards towards the Croatian-Hungarian border. Once the Croatian section was also fenced and closed in the second half of October 2015, the number of irregular border crossings into Hungary drastically declined from several tens of thousands in September and October to a few hundred in November and December. Migrants started to look for routes with fewer obstacles.

The fence does not stand precisely on the borderline; it is about two meters or more inside the Hungarian territory. Somebody who approaches the barrier from the Serbian side has already crossed the territorial boundary of Hungary and Schengen before even touching the fence. In April 2017, the government added a second parallel fence a couple of meters further inside. The space in between the two lines of barriers turned into a road for border patrol cars to track the whole perimeter of the border.

Besides razor wires, metal fences and more traditional wooden watchtowers, the barrier also includes motion and heat sensors, night-vision cameras, listening devices and electric lines able to deliver non-fatal shocks. These technological updates expand the police's (and the state's) visibility of the border area and allow long-distance monitoring of the border perimeter without a large number of border guards on the ground. If someone touches or climbs the fence, the police can identify the specific place along the barrier's perimeter (with a 10-meter precision) where it happened. Heat- and motion-sensor cameras enable the police to see in a radius of 10 kilometers.[22] This high-tech visual surveillance is operated out of two Border Police Remote Control Centers,

[22] Interview with Border Police officer 1.

located in small border towns Morahalom and Bacsalmas. Visibility is further enhanced by helicopter patrols and drones, operating out of Szeged Airport. At times, they might fly into the Serbian air-space too.

These technologies enable and encourage a more pro-active policy of anticipating, visualizing and deterring "threats outside of the border."[23] The constant surveillance from air and on the ground has created an affective atmosphere in which the object of this surveillance cannot be anything else than a serious security threat. These high-tech security technologies in and of itself contribute to the everyday reproduction of the security discourse produced initially in Budapest.

This is no longer a mere control of a variety of possible events that can and do happen at the border but a mode of governance best described as "the administration of negative potentials" (Masco 2014, p.26). And the condition of potentiality justifies the continuous presence of the "temporary security border closure" (*ideiglenes biztonsági határzár, IBH*), i.e. the fence in official government communication. A border police officer I interviewed explained the constant need for the border barrier:

> There are two million people [refugees] in Turkey. The movement of people from Africa and the Middle East still continues. The human rights activists say that there is no migration, but there would be if these preventive mechanisms were not in place and that is because Hungary geopolitically lies on the main international migration route. The fact that Hungary currently is not on the main route is thanks to these security measures.

As the fence acquired more hi-tech character, the number of guards and patrols along the border perimeter has decreased. Yet, they are an indispensable part of the border regime: the "second line of defense after the fence."[24] Physical, human and legal barriers make up what the government and the police call a "threefold security" regime.

This "threefold security" comes into action in the practice of pushbacks. In July 2016, the Parliament adopted a law that designated the 8 km zone inside the Hungarian territory from the

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[23] Interview with Border Police officer 2.

[24] Interview with Border Police officer 1.

border as an area where any person caught to have crossed illegally can be quickly deported back to Serbia by police. The new law made formal expulsion procedures – court hearing, lawyers and legal guarantees – unnecessary within this 8 km wide border strip (Nagy, 2016). As a result, the border zone has become a space of exception, where standard rules and legal procedures do not apply and the state practices sovereign decisionism. The border police instantly decide whether to expel an individual beyond the territory or not.

This "8 km" rule is not a coincidence. Police routinely patrol along Highways 55 and 43, which run about 8-10 kilometers north of the border. In between these highways and the border, smaller country roads and settlements create the bulk of the police operation area of border monitoring. Since 2015, the government provided additional grants to municipalities in the border area to purchase security cameras and install across the settlement area and recruit field guards and civil guards, whose job is to call the police if they spot a migrant.[25]

The police view this approximately 8 km wide strip up to the highway line as the "second line" of the border.[26] Police have about one hour to intercept an irregular border crosser within this area before the person moves beyond the highway line and enters the "inner" territory, where it is harder to find them.[27] In 2019, 92% of interceptions occurred within this 8 km strip. The police statistics on interceptions specifically divide the figures into two spatial categories: within the 8 km zone and outside of it, defined as "inner" territory (*mélység*).

In September 2015, the government set up two 'transit zones' next to the border crossing points in Roszke and Tompa. These transit zones replaced open asylum reception centers located in the country's interior, often near cities and towns, which was a significant talking point for Jobbik to argue that migrants bring crime to these areas and the government needs to separate them from populated areas.[28] Orban's administration designated these new transit zones as a place where

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[25] Interviews with the mayor of Tompa and Border Police officer 2.

[26] Interview with Border Police officer 1.

[27] Interview with Border Police officer 2.

[28] Two open and one closed asylum reception centers still operate in Hungary as of November 2019 while several have been closed since 2015.

migrants can apply for asylum. In principle, this allows migrants a legal way to enter Hungary. In practice, however, only a very minimal number of individuals are allowed into the transit zone and even less are granted asylum after a lengthy asylum determination procedure (HHC, 2020).

The location of transit zones right inside the border fence has its specific spatial logic. First, asylum seekers can directly approach the transit zone from the Serbian side, enter via a steel turnstile and submit an application there without going through a formal border crossing point, which is 50-100 meters away from the transit zone. Second, once inside the transit zone, asylum seekers can voluntarily leave the transit zone at any moment but only to the direction of Serbia, from where they arrived. The territory of Hungary is closed for them (Immigration and Asylum Office, 2019).

The law defines transit zones as a special territory: being inside the transit zone means that the person has not yet entered Hungary's jurisdictional space, much like the transit zones within airports, and therefore, standard rules and procedures on the deprivation of liberty can be disregarded (Nagy, 2016). This new border feature enables the government to keep the asylum seekers under watch until it makes the decision about their status. If the Hungarian authorities decide negatively regarding the person's asylum status, then the person is expected to return to Serbia. Because Serbia has been refusing to readmit the individuals rejected by Hungary, the Hungarian authorities indirectly force them to leave by depriving them of food (HHC, 2019).

The transit zones easily fit Agamben's description of the camp, where the sovereign power reduces human beings to 'bare life.' In this way, by claiming exemption from liberal norms, the state enacts itself as a sovereign power (Bauder, 2020). In Hungary's case, this sovereign act of unaccountability to liberal norms serves and performs a particular geopolitical vision. These performances of sovereignty not only define the border as a security line against the external danger of immigrants but simultaneously affirm Hungary's national sovereignty from 'Brussels' and 'liberal elites' of the EU, who criticize Orban's government for inhuman treatment of asylum seekers (HHC, 2020). Border security becomes an act of national defiance against the

Rampart Nationhood Materialized

In the first two months of 2015, Asotthalom, a small village a few kilometers north of the Hungarian-Serbian border, found itself in the center of a narrow migration corridor. Approximately a thousand migrants a day, mostly Kosovars, passed through the village or surrounding areas in January and early February. The village soon acquired the title "Lampedusa of the Balkan Route," after the Mediterranean island, which has long been a focal point of migration into Europe. Asotthalom happened to attract the largest number of migrants because the main interstate highway on the Serbian side approaches the borderline within 500 meters just south of the Hungarian village. The proximity to the border made this place a perfect point for migrants to depart from the highway and reach the territory of Hungary only 500 meters away.

In January 2015, Asotthalom's Mayor Laszlo Toroczkai, who at the time was a member of Jobbik, started to publicly advocate for a border fence against migrants (Serdült, 2015).[29] He also organized a defense structure, made up of field guards (*mezőőr*), i.e. those who patrol outside of the village, and civil guards (*polgárőr*), within the village, to keep the migrants out of the area. To this day, the road sign at the entrance of the village notifies the passengers that Asotthalom is protected by field guards, civil guards and CCTV cameras. The text on the road sign is superimposed on the background image of the statue of Janos Hunyadi, the Fortress Captain of Nandorfehervar.

In 2012, Toroczkai opened the Monument of Hungarian Martyrdom outside of the village and about 500 meters from the border. The monument represents a tree with branches cut and a nest made of barbed wires on the top. Mythical eagle-like bird, *Turul,* which is Hungary's national(ist) symbol, sits in the nest, holding a sword in its beak and looking towards Subotica on the southern side of the border. The base of the tree has the shape of the Great Hungary map. The monument commemorates the massacre of Hungarians in Vojvodina at the end of World War Two by

[29] Toroczkai gained country-wide fame in 2006 as a leader of anti-government riots. He is a founder of an ultra-nationalist and territorial revisionist group Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (*Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom*, HVIM). The title refers to the 64 counties that made up the Kingdom of Hungary before 1920.

Yugoslavian partisans.[30]

In the following years, Toroczkai built an open-air museum around the monument: Delvidek Memorial Park. *Delvidek*, meaning "southern land," refers to the southern region of pre-Trianon Hungary, most of which was transferred to Yugoslavia. Using *Delvidek* rather than *Vajdasag* (Hungarian name for Vojvodina) is usually a sign of territorial nationalism as the former conveys the historical belonging of the concerned geographic area to Hungary. The latter does not have such a political and historical connotation. In Serbia, using *Delvidek*, especially by politicians, can be viewed as a territorially revisionist discourse (Szerbhorváth, 2014).

The new addition to the museum includes information boards on the cities of Delvidek. The text is only in Hungarian. Beside a paragraph-long general historical information, each city's information board includes a table showing the change among the city's demographic groups by nationality/ethnicity over time. Most of these tables show a general trend of the shrinking "Hungarian" population in these cities and the increasing number of "Serbians." These figures reinforce the central discourse of nemzetpolitika around the danger of cultural assimilation and demographic replacement. These alarming numbers are juxtaposed with the images noteworthy buildings and the scenes of everyday life from the past when these cities were part of Hungary.

In 2018, Toroczkai opened a new addition to the Delvidek Memorial Park: a replica of the Nandorfehervar (Belgrade) fortress during the famous battle in 1456. Small action figures of Hungarian soldiers are defending the fort against the Ottoman forces on the other side of the river, who are laying the siege and preparing to attack. The background of this miniature exhibition features "Nandorfehervar 1456" and a photo of a Janos Hunyadi statue.

In July 2019, Toroczkai unveiled a statue of Mihaly Szilagyi in the center of Asotthalom, who was another fortress captain next to Janos Hunyadi during the Nandorfehervar Battle. According to Toroczkai, the "hero" of Nandorfehervar "defended not just Hungary but whole Christian Europe."[31] The statue should remind Hungarians today of the virtues of "heroism, courage, self-

[30] The information table at the monument alleges that 40,000 Hungarians were killed.
[31] The names of Hunyadi and Szilagyi were inscribed on the automatic guns of the white supremacist terrorist Brenton Tarrant who killed 51 people in Christchurch NZ in March 2019.

sacrifice" and make them feel "truly proud" (Toroczkai, 2019). The museum and the statue in Asotthalom indicate that Orban's discourse of rampart nationhood has materialized in the border landscape. The myth of Nandorfehervar has enriched the 'structure of feeling' of the southern border. The sense of victimhood associated with the Trianon trauma has come to coexist with the pride in the heroic defense of 'Christian Europe.'

Conclusion

Orban's border fence speaks five languages: English, Serbian, Farsi, Urdu and Arabic (Kallius, 2017). Loudspeakers installed three hundred meters apart along the barrier warn anyone who approaches the fence that damaging or crossing it is a crime. It suggests not to violate the criminal code of Hungary and instead apply for asylum in the nearest transit zone (Medvegy, 2017). The target audience is not the Vojvodina Hungarian farmers, who most likely own and work the fields adjacent to the fence. Anyway, the fence does not speak Hungarian.

A common understanding of the power of borders assumes that they shape spatial identities by dividing space and separating people. But this example of a border illustrates a more complex spatial operation of identity formation along and across the boundary. The border is an assemblage of distinct material elements. Since 2015, these separate elements have come to assemble according to two different logics: transborder nationhood and immigration control/security. These distinct border assemblages enact specific policies and reproduce specific territories, meanings of the border and identities.

The loudspeakers in the fence are part of the security assemblage, which tries to regulate, discipline and, at the last resort, punish immigrants. This technological apparatus of security forgets in its everyday operation the existence of a part of the Hungarian nation outside of the 'protected' territory. It operates by differentiating the Hungarian-speaking inhabitants of Vojvodina from those temporary residents (migrants), who speak and understand one of the loudspeaker's five languages. The BCPs, on the other hand, reward Hungary's extra-territorial citizens by allowing a fast pass through the 'line of defense' of 'Christian Europe.'

The fence does not only not prohibit Vojvodina Hungarians to feel Hungarian; it encourages them to do so because, despite the physical presence of the fence, their experience with the border does not depend on this security structure. The fence, visible from the roads and highways that lead to the BCPs, remind the Hungarian passport holders of their privileged status compared to immigrants to whom the fence speaks. Material infrastructure shapes the lived experience of the border regime. Those who can use BCPs and are unobstructed by the fence are different from those who cannot pass the BCPs and have to either cut the fence or jump over it or enter the transit zone. Distinct infrastructural elements of the border produce different group identities.

Therefore, borders do not merely define identity and danger by dividing the space into two static territories. Borders also enforce such division by creating a regime of mobility and enable the state to sort out who enters and who stays out. The border is a technology of power that allows the state to overcome the static territoriality problem. It enables the state to bring inside those under its symbolic/practical protection, who live beyond its jurisdictional boundary but who can move in and out of the state territory. Thus, residence on the territory is not the only marker of nationhood. The marker is the possibility and eligibility of a person to enter the territory, especially when others are barred from entry. In this way, the border can define nationhood beyond territorial markers.

Photo 2. A border guard has opened the gate above the railway and is waiting for the train to pass before closing the gate and sealing the border barrier near Kelebia in June 2019. Author: Gela Merabishvili.

Photo 3. The fence near Tiszasziget in May 2019 from the Hungarian side. Border patrol uses the space between the two lines of fences as a road. Author: Gela Merabishvili.

Photo 4. The entrance into Asotthalom. The road sign warns visitors that the village is protected by civil guards, field guards and security cameras. Author: Gela Merabishvili.

Photo 5. A miniature replica of the Nandorfehervar Battle. Author: Gela Merabishvili.

3.5 Conclusion

In November 2017, Orban gave a speech at the annual gathering of the Hungarian Standing Conference (MAERT), an umbrella institution for Hungarian diaspora groups, where he acknowledged the contradictory meanings of the border barrier and the task of national unification:

> [W]e needed to build a fence on a border where we did not want to have one, as Hungarian communities also live on the other side of that border. [I]t was an important achievement for the Hungarians of Vojvodina to have understood and accepted this. With such a fragmented nation, it is not easy to build fences and stop waves of migrants; but if we do not want to exchange our way of life for a different one, such steps will need to be taken (Orban, 2017).

As the reference to ‘our way of life’ makes it clear, Orban advances a nationalist argument for the border fence to counter the ‘uneasiness’ of such a project from another nationalist point of view, from the perspective of a ‘fragmented nation.’ The threat to the nation’s ‘way of life’ justified a

policy that accentuated the nation's fragmentation. Orban frames the choice between the destruction and the division of the nation. The fence, therefore, was a necessity.

By installing the fence, Orban has simultaneously diversified the meaning of the border and nationhood. But the origins of the border as a security line lies at the beginning of the 2000s when Hungary joined the EU and the Hungarian-Serbian boundary become an external border of the Schengen Area. The EU membership led to a direct clash with the border's meaning as a source of territorial division of Hungary's transborder nation.

The solution, which Orban's government realized with full force after 2010, led to the extension of citizenship and voting rights, together with additional economic, cultural and infrastructural projects beyond the border. In this way, Orban's government created a transborder political community out of a 'fragmented nation' and crucially, in opposition to not just an international border (Hungary-Serbia) but also an external EU border (Schengen/non-Schengen). The border's adverse effect on national unity decreased despite the presence of an ever-tightening regime of immigration control along the same perimeter. By the beginning of 2015, Hungary's extra-territorial sovereignty straddled the two types of borders and territories.

As immigration grew and emerged as a political problem, Orban faced a challenge to address the issue without damaging the narrative of transborder nationhood. The public explanation for pursuing immigration control at the border in full force shifted Orban's nationalist discourse towards the demographic make-up of Hungary and Europe. He stressed the civilizational difference of the incoming immigrants to identify the danger and the necessity for a border fence. The national myth of Hungary's unique role during the medieval wars between Europe's Christian kingdoms and the Ottoman Empire enabled Orban to articulate the border policy in a nationalist language. Rampart nationhood erased Hungary's territorial divisions along interstate borders. The storyline included the whole nation inside 'Christian Europe.'

Instead, Orban highlighted a political division inside Europe between those who defend the nation and those who wish to eliminate nations and Christian culture by encouraging Muslim immigration. Hungary's sovereign borders, therefore, signified either a civilizational struggle against the faraway enemy or a political fight with 'Brussels.' In both, Hungary, as a sovereign,

Christian nation, remained united against the opponent. Hence, Orban's storyline merged nationhood and security and situated on the same side of the geopolitical division in which multiculturalism and open border represented the opposite side.

The politics of Hungary's southern border in 2015 illustrates a shift in the dominant form of nationalism, and more precisely, in the political practices of nationalism. The new geopolitical context of migration created an opportunity for political actors to successfully articulate and advance a security discourse framed in nationalist language. The border emerged as a central element of the new nationalist-security discursive field as a defensive perimeter necessary for the survival of Hungary as a Christian European nation.

This new border discourse materialized in the form of the border fence and border security regime that appeared in September 2015. Simultaneously, the older meanings and the functions of the border, associated with Trianon and nemzetpolitika, and requiring openness and connectivity, also remained. The fence has reduced the irregular crossings into the territory of Hungary from Serbia. Still, simultaneously, every day, thousands of Hungarians from both sides pass through BCPs without obstacle on their way to work, relatives or university. By responding to different policy requirements, the border itself contributes to the practical resolution of the security-nationhood contradiction.

This case study has shown that nationalism, border and territory are flexible concepts. Their meaning depends on political discourses. Hungary's nationalist discourses in the past three decades have operated with three spatial forms. The first is the Carpathian Basin, which signifies the country's transborder nationhood. This is a legacy of a long history of statehood within such territorial format. Trianon, as an affective storyline, refers to this map of Hungary, the one that the Treaty ended.

The second is 'Christian Europe' as a nation of nations. This is a civilizational discourse of nationhood, which constitutes the meaning of national identity in opposition to the civilizational other: the Muslim immigrant. The myth of Nandorfehervar signifies this territorial format.

The third is a sovereign territory of Hungary within its post-Trianon borders. However, Orban politicized this spatial form not in relation to Trianon and transborder nationalism, which would

have de-valued this vision; but in contrast to ‘Brussels’ and demographic nationalism. The territory of the Republic of Hungary is a national territory in comparison to the broader EU and mainly Western Europe, where multiculturalism has become a norm. The fence along the southern border ensures that the national distinction between Hungary and other EU states remains and Hungary will not become ‘Central European Marseille.’

These territorial formats of nationhood allow a politician with oratorical skills, such as Orban, to create multiple dangers and enemies, define political problems as a matter of national importance and switch from one discourse to another according to political context. Therefore, contradictions between geographies of nationhood and security are not set in stone. An alternative meaning of national territory would reframe the national task in a way to complement, rather than compete, with the geography of security. But these shifts in the form of nationalism occur in parallel to the changes in the discourse of danger. As a result, the development of a geopolitical storyline over a political problem involves a co-constitutive redefinition of nationhood, security and the border, which brings the former two together.

4. Borderization in Georgia

4.1 Introduction

In November 2019, Doctor Vazha Gaprindashvili from Tbilisi was detained inside South Ossetia and jailed for several weeks for illegally crossing the state border of the Republic of South Ossetia. Gaprindashvili, as reported, refused to sign a paper in which he would admit charges and insisted that the only state border he recognizes is the one at the Roki Tunnel. It marks the internationally recognized borders of Georgia with Russia, but in fact, the State of Georgia has not had any access to it for three decades. In practice, this is a border between South Ossetia and Russia.

The statement instantly made Gaprindashvili a national hero in Georgia. Although Gaprindashvil has not provided any concrete reasons why he entered South Ossetia, according to a popular idea, this was a political act of defiance against what Georgians commonly view as "Russian occupation" of South Ossetia (Civil Georgia, 2019). By physically defying one border and rhetorically reifying another, Gaprindashvili's act articulates the idea of Georgia's territorial integrity. Borders become spatial means to communicate a deeply believed national truth of territorially whole Georgia.

The political significance of Georgia's borders grew following the Russian/South Ossetian-Georgian war in August 2008. South Ossetia had declared independence from Georgia and the desire to join Russia already in 1992, but until 2008, Russia did not reciprocate. Following the August War, Russia recognized South Ossetia's sovereignty. According to the new Russian view, the Roki Tunnel was no longer a border with Georgia but with the newly independent Republic of South Ossetia. The line separating South Ossetia from Georgia would become an international border. Georgia refused to recognize this new Russian/South Ossetian reordering of space. In legal and political discourse, it insisted on the older definition of the Roki Tunnel as a border between Georgia and Russia and started to refer to the South Ossetia-Georgia boundary as the "occupation line."

The new spatial order brought two interrelated but contradictory tasks for the Georgian state: regaining territorial integrity, which meant establishing control over the Roki Tunnel border, and securing the perimeter along the "occupation line" to deter further Russian advance and potential military attack. The first meant the erasure of the South Ossetia-Georgia boundary or moving the actual de facto border northwards to align with the territorial borders of Georgia as imagined by Georgians and endorsed by most of the world's countries. The second meant more security presence of the state at the line and its solidification, which would further emphasize South Ossetia's separation and Georgia's territorial division.

In the years following the 2008 war, South Ossetia and Russia jointly began physical demarcation of the South Ossetia-Georgia boundary. In 2013, the process became more pronounced and visible. Internationally, it became known as borderization. Borderization added more urgency to the questions of Georgia's security and territorial integrity. Newly installed border barriers visualized existing territorial division and "occupation." Besides, they also highlighted the threat of Russia's military presence inside South Ossetia, often described as a slow-motion expansion of "occupation" and invasion of new territories on the Georgian-controlled side. This spatially dynamic definition of borderization became known as "creeping occupation."

The following three chapters describe the inter-relationship of these two policies and their intersection at the South Ossetia-Georgia boundary. The chapters show how this boundary shaped the geographies, political discourse and policy practices of security and territorial integrity in Georgia over the last three decades. The first chapter traces the evolution of the boundary between the late 1980s, the start of the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict, and 2013, the beginning of borderization. The second chapter zooms in on Georgia's domestic political debates on borderization. The final chapter examines how political discourses and policies have materialized at the border.

4.2 Genealogy of Border

Introduction

This chapter traces the evolution of the meaning and form of the South Ossetia-Georgia boundary from the perspective of Georgian politics. The central object of analysis is the relationship between the border and Georgia's discourses and practices of territorial integrity. It traces the roots of current borderization in the expansionist and uncompromising policies of the successive Georgian governments. These policies militarized the area and contributed to earlier forms of territorial divisions and bordering in and around South Ossetia.

Ethno-territorial Border (1989-1992)

The present boundary between Georgia and the de facto Republic of South Ossetia originated in 1922 when the newly Sovietized Georgia agreed to the leadership in Moscow to create the South Ossetia Autonomous Oblast/Region (SOAO). The decision was preceded by a history of violence in the territory between 1918 and 1920 during the brief independence of Georgia, when the central authorities violently suppressed Ossetian rebellions, killing thousands and forcing many more to flee to North Ossetia. SOAO, formed in April 1922, was a compromise solution between the full independence from Georgia, advocated by South Ossetian Bolshevik nationalists, and no special territorial status, backed by the new Bolshevik political elite in Tbilisi (Saparov, 2010). SOAO became one of the three autonomous territorial units within the new Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia, but it had more limited degree of self-governance than the other two. Adjara and Abkhazia were Autonomous Republics, not Oblast/Region.

Although practically unimportant, borders and territorial contours of SOAO and the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic entered into popular imagination via cartography as natural homelands of Ossetians and Georgians. At the end of the 1980s, when ethnicity as a category of practice became politically salient and highly polarizing, these cartographic images provided a ready-made territorial project to ethnic entrepreneurs in Tskhinvali and Tbilisi (Cornell, 2002). The boundaries created by the Bolsheviks at the beginning of the 1920s decades later defined the space perceived by Georgian nationalists as a sacred homeland of Georgians and a future territory of an independent Georgia (Nodia, 1997).

The "national independence movement" (*erovnuli modzraoba*) – a group of dissidents turned political leaders in charge of mobilizing people for the cause of Georgia's independence – at the end of the 1980s popularized the slogan "Georgia for Georgians." This claim of territorial ownership challenged the Soviet leadership in Moscow but simultaneously downgraded territorial rights and rejected the historical presence of non-Georgian people, such as Ossetians, on the territory of Georgia. The dissident nationalist storyline described ethnic minorities as 'ungrateful guests' of Georgia and local political stooges of the 'evil masterminds' in Moscow (Suny, 1994). Georgian nationalists regarded territorial autonomies as "Bolshevik encumbrances upon a Georgian geo-body – an imagined organic nation space – designed to divide, fragment, and dismember it" and therefore, an undesirable and dangerous inheritance of the Soviet/Russian colonialism (Toal & O'Loughlin, 2013, p.141; Broers, 2009).

Considering the rise of ethnocultural nationalism in Georgia, South Ossetian civil activists rightly feared that their political and economic rights would suffer following the country's eventual independence. South Ossetia's Popular Front (*Ademon Nykhas*) was the key political actor and nationalist entrepreneur in Tskhinvali. It exercised considerable influence over SOAO's Deputy Council, the leading decision-making body within the Oblast. In October 1989, the South Ossetian Deputy Council requested from the Georgian Supreme Council to upgrade the region's autonomous status from Oblast to Republic. Georgia's Supreme Council denied the request. The Popular Front took a more radical step and appealed to the Soviet authorities in Moscow to unify North and South Ossetia (Birch, 1996; Cornell, 2002). To South Ossetian nationalists, the SOAO territory was a southern portion of the historical Ossetian homeland, which extended on both sides of the Caucasus Range (Cvetkovski, 1999).

The discourse of Georgian nationalists turned more exclusionary in response to the steps taken by South Ossetian nationalist actors and political representatives. Instead of taking a more conciliatory approach and emphasizing shared Georgian-Ossetian past and present, nationalist entrepreneurs in Tbilisi prioritized proving Ossetians wrong by continuous declarations of Georgian ownership of the contested space of South Ossetia. They did this, for example, by referring to the territory as "Samachablo" [the land of the Machabeli family] as opposed to "South Ossetia."

On 23 November 1989, the leader of the national movement, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, organized a march from Tbilisi to Tskhinvali to "protect national and human rights of the Georgian population in the land of historical Samachablo" (Gamsakhurdia, 1989). The South Ossetians, however, perceived the planned event as a violent march to "deprive the Ossetian people all the rights to their historical homeland, the land of their ancestors" (Bestaeva, 2019). On 23 November, fifteen thousand Georgians arrived at the entrance of Tskhinvali, several hundred meters past the nominal boundary of the SOAO. Tskhinvali Ossetians blocked the road into the city and prevented the incoming crowd from entering Tskhinvali and staging a demonstration in the city center. The impasse lasted a few tense hours but ended without significant violence.

One participant remembers that "many residents of the town and the [South Ossetian] Republic's regions rushed [to the scene] and stood as one to defend the fatherland" (Bestaeva, 2019). Another participant recalls that the fear of being overrun transformed him and his friends into "Ossetian" defenders their people and their town from the perceived "Georgian" attack (Tskhurbati, 2019). These accounts illustrate the significance of the event as a moment of "extraordinary cohesion and intensely felt collective solidarity" when South Ossetian 'groupness' happened (Brubaker, 2002, p.168). Today, South Ossetians celebrate 23 November as the "Day of Courage and Unity." This was the first event when a territorial boundary between South Ossetia and Georgia physically emerged in the form of, what one South Ossetian journalist has described as, South Ossetia's " moral and human barrier to the Georgian nationalism-chauvinism" (Dzagoeva, 2010). Although the human barrier outside of Tskhinvali stood only for a few hours, the event is important because it gave a physical, visible and territorial form to the emerging ethnopolitical conflict.

In 1990, Georgian authorities banned regional parties from participating in the upcoming general elections. It underscored the territorial vision of unified Georgia, where political power represents the majority of the territory's population, i.e. Georgians. In an attempt to protect its political power, South Ossetia's Deputy Council upgraded the status from Autonomous Oblast up to the Soviet Republic, a direct subordinate of the Soviet government in Moscow, after the earlier attempt to declare the Autonomous Republic within the Georgian SSR failed in the previous year. The move, then, prompted Georgia's newly elected Supreme Council, headed by Zviad Gamsakhurdia, to abolish South Ossetia's autonomous status altogether in December 1990 and

distribute the territory among existing municipal districts of Georgia. The Council downgraded the city of Tskhinvali as a regular municipality within the Gori district. At the Council session, Gamsakhurdia claimed he "recognized the right of the Ossetian people of self-determination and the creation of independent statehood." This Ossetian state, however, had to relocate to North Ossetia, which Gamsakhurdia declared as "their historic homeland." The area of South Ossetia, on the other hand, was "an indivisible part of the sovereign Republic of Georgia" (Kobakhidze 2019, p.10).

Scholars have described these two years leading up to December 1990 as the "war of laws," which then led to an actual military phase of the conflict. During this period, the legal-political status of South Ossetia's administrative boundary became an essential part of ethnic politics. The rival sides attempted to protect their interests and attack the opponent by changing the legal and political status of the contested territory. From the Ossetia side, it meant emphasizing the political-administrative distinction from the rest of Georgia. From the Georgian side, it meant blurring the distinctiveness of South Ossetia's territory. According to rival decisions and laws, the boundary's political meaning and administrative capacity increased or decreased.

Gamsakhurdia's decision to annul SOAO was the most dramatic step in the escalating 'war of laws.' The zero-sum logic of Gamsakhurdia's decision ended any possibility of a negotiating outcome and put the Georgian leadership firmly on the path of military action to bring the political vision of unitary Georgia to fruition (George, 2009). The Georgian leader declared a state of emergency and sent armed forces to Tskhinvali. Ossetians viewed the Georgian militia's presence in the city as "occupation" and took up arms (Denber, 1992). The war broke out in January 1991.

The war rearranged the ethno-territorial boundary between Ossetians and Georgians but did not erase it, as Georgian nationalists hoped. For several weeks, Ossetian and Georgian militias divided Tskhinvali. After the withdrawal, the Georgian militia maintained control of the heights around Tskhinvali and the main road north towards the Roki Tunnel and south-east to Tbilisi, both of which passed through Georgian-populated villages.

The ethnopolitical struggle became distinctly territorial as political actors and activist groups started to claim ethnic ownership of the land via territorial practices. South Ossetia became divided

into bounded, securitized and militarized ethnopolitical enclaves. Territorial boundaries that had until then been an object of disagreement within legal documents and political maps quickly turned into physically existing informal borders that started to shape the everyday life. Informal Ossetian armed groups set up checkpoints at every road entering Tskhinvali. Similar groups emerged within the Georgian villages around Tskhinvali. Violence both politicized and streamlined ethnic identification, forcing many locals from "mixed" families and with multiple loyalties to choose a side.

In April 1991, following the independence referendum, Georgia declared independence from the USSR. In January 1992, few weeks after the final dissolution of the USSR, South Ossetians voted for independence from Georgia and unification with the Russian Federation in the referendum. The Georgians of South Ossetia boycotted the vote, just as Ossetians did earlier in the referendum on Georgia's independence. By this time, Gamsakhurdia had fled Georgia, but his exclusionary nationalism and territorial vision remained. The Military Council, which temporarily governed the country after their leaders ousted Gamsakhurdia, refused to grant political-territorial autonomy to South Ossetia (ISNC, 2019).

The war ended with a peace agreement in the summer of 1991 between the new Chairman of Georgia's Government Eduard Shevardnadze and Russian President Boris Yeltsin. The Sochi Agreement established a Joint Control Commission made up of representatives from Russia, North Ossetia, South Ossetia, Georgia and the OSCE. They would oversee the developments in the area and coordinate the peacekeeping activities. The agreement defined Tskhinvali and 15 km from its center in any direction as the zone of conflict. The agreement also established a security corridor along the boundary between South Ossetia and Georgia, extending 7 km either side (ICG, 2004). Within the security corridor, peacekeepers were allowed to set up checkpoints.[32] In line with the agreement, a peacekeeping force of 2,000 soldiers, made up of South Ossetian, North Ossetian, Russian and Georgian contingents, were deployed in the area. Besides, unarmed officers of the OSCE Mission in Georgia, some of them based in Tskhinvali, would monitor the de facto border

[32] The area of security corridor covered a 12 km stretch of Georgia's only east-west highway, allowing Russian or Ossetian peacekeepers to set up checkpoints on this road.

(ICG, 2007).[33]

Gamsakhurdia's attempt to erase a cartographic line in December 1990 ended two years later with a militarized border and physical separation of South Ossetia and Georgia. The war killed more than a thousand people and forced many more to flee. Anti-Ossetian atmosphere and violence forced about 60,000 Ossetians across Georgia (outside of South Ossetia) to escape. Most of them moved to North Ossetia. The nationalist slogan "Georgia for Georgians" materialized within the territory controlled by the country's government, but the purified space did not match the national territory of Georgia as imagined by the nationalists.

Frontier of Statehood and Nationhood (2004-2008)

In the mid-1990s, Ossetians and Georgians from the border area set up an informal market between Georgian-controlled Ergneti and Ossetian-controlled Tskhinvali. The market laid at the southern end of the Transcaucasian (Transkam) Highway, which connected Georgia with Russia via South Ossetia. The market gradually grew to encompass all kinds of legal and illegal goods. Mostly, these were cheap Russian products that entered the Georgian market untaxed. Drugs and weapons also passed through the Ergneti market (Demetriou, 2002). The Ergneti market started to attract sellers and buyers from neighboring countries.

Within a few years, the Ergneti market became the largest employer on both sides of the border. It significantly helped the locals during the economic downturn of the 1990s. It also became the central contact point between Georgians and Ossetians. Despite the lingering distrust along the ethnic lines, ethno-territorial politics no longer dominated the Georgian-Ossetian relations that developed in the market (De Waal, 2010). Shared economic interests depoliticized the salience of ethnicity and restored some level of stability and understanding between the previously conflicting sides within the new business-like atmosphere.[34] From a conflict zone, the border area transformed

[33] The OSCE mission in the zone of conflict ended in the summer of 2009.

[34] Interview with an Ergneti resident (September 2019).

into an informal free economic area (Kukhianidze et al., 2004). By the early 2000s, those formal or informal groups with the means of violence, who participated in the conflict in the early 1990s, were busy making money by providing "security" for the vehicles transporting untaxed goods on the roads from the Roki Tunnel at the Russian border to Tbilisi. The status quo of unresolved territorial conflict and a lax state presence benefited these actors (King, 2001).

Mikheil Saakashvili replaced Shevardnadze as a result of the Rose Revolution in 2003. Saakashvili's political program was nationalist, as it focused on the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity, and modernizing, as it aimed to strengthen the state's institutional capacity, end the corruption and achieve fast economic growth. In his inauguration speech, he pledged to "strengthen our country and restore its territorial integrity" (Civil Georgia, 2004a). His desired vision of Georgia was a "united, stable, democratic, independent and powerful state." He specified the territory as stretching "from Tsiteli Khidi (Red Bridge) to river Psou, from Sarpi to Dariali" (Civil Georgia, 2004b). The new government regarded the strengthening of the state capacity as a precondition to achieve territorial integrity. The goal of Saakashvili's "state-making nationalism" was to "get Georgia back" by establishing control over its territorial borders and effective governance across the whole territory (Toal, 2017, p.144; Siroky & Aprasidze, 2011).

Adjara, the Autonomous Republic in the south-west of Georgia at the border of Turkey, became the first frontier that Saakashvili's expansionist effort would tackle. In May 2004, Saakashvili's new government "liberated" Adjara from the local leader's rule.[35] The central government's effective control expanded spatially from the Choloki Bridge, which until 2004, represented a de facto border between Adjara and Georgia, to Sarpi, a highly important customs point at the border with Turkey. To Saakashvili, this was "the beginning of Georgia's territorial integrity" (Civil Georgia, 2004c).

Emboldened by the turn of events in Adjara, Saakashvili's government switched its attention towards South Ossetia and the Ergneti market at its southern boundary. In line with the modernizing, anti-corruption discourse, the government officials described the market as a black

[35] Saakashvili arrived in Batumi after Aslan Abashidze – the former leader of Adjara – fled and declared on the Black Sea shore: "Aslan has run away! Adjara is free!"

hole in the country's budget. The goal was to, first, establish the state's control over this part of the border and later, as in Adjara, relocate the de facto border to the north and reach the Roki Tunnel, the central passage between South Ossetia and Russia. The Ergneti market was the first step in this expansionist program. As an economic lifeline of South Ossetia, Saakashvili's government believed that its closure would deprive the South Ossetian authorities of vitally important financial resources and the regime would lose legitimacy among ordinary South Ossetians (Smith, 2004).

In the spirit of "fight against smuggling," Georgia's Interior Ministry blocked 40 roads out of Tskhinvali and set up multiple checkpoints within the zone of conflict (Civil Georgia, 2004c). By early June 2004, the Ergneti market was fully closed, but the increased presence led to an escalating armament, militarization and violence throughout June, July and August. The 'fight against smuggling,' which itself was a euphemism for territorial revanchism, quickly transformed into an armed conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia. Daily shootings killed at least 22 soldiers, police officers and residents from both sides (Welt, 2010). The conflict reignited the traumas of the previous war. A public opinion poll in July found that 95 percent of Tskhinvali's residents "opposed reestablishment of Georgian sovereignty," and 78 percent were ready to "personally fight if needed" (ICG, 2004, p.13). The conflict destroyed much goodwill and grassroots rapport that had accumulated in the Ergneti market in the previous decade (De Waal, 2010).[36] The previously fuzzy and flexible border between South Ossetia and Georgia quickly solidified. New Georgian and South Ossetian checkpoints popped up and further demarcated the already highly divided ethnopolitical space of South Ossetia (Smith, 2004).

Following the fiasco of the Adjara plan in South Ossetia, Saakashvili adopted a different tactic. During the next year and a half, Saakashvili made several offers of "broadest autonomy" within a unitary Georgian state to the leader of South Ossetia Eduard Kokoiti. The arrangement included a possibility of a free trade zone as a substitute for the informal Ergneti market, but this was contingent on the government's control of the Roki Tunnel either by its forces or via OSCE monitors (Fuller, 2007). Simultaneously, Saakashvili attempted to create a populist narrative of South Ossetian people versus Kokoiti's governing elite to undermine the political-territorial rival.

[36] Interview with two Ergneti residents (September 2019).

He sponsored an alternative Ossetian government under the leadership of ex-prime minister of the de facto republic Dimitri Sanakoev. Besides, Saakashvili's administration invested in public facilities in the Georgian-controlled enclaves in South Ossetia, where 20,000 self-identified Georgians remained since the 1991-92 war (ICG, 2007). Visible changes in the Georgian enclaves, Saakashvili hoped, would impress South Ossetians and help win their loyalties. The benefits of switching sides included free medical service to all the residents of South Ossetia. As part of this 'soft power' approach, the Georgian government (with the Interior Ministry's central participation) also launched a propaganda television channel *Alania* [historical name of Ossetia] to "spread pro-Georgian information" (DFWatch, 2014).

Saakashvili's diplomatic overtures did not lead to the intended outcome, partly because his other policies to outflank Kokoiti undermined diplomacy. With no success in bilateral talks with the de facto authorities of South Ossetia, the Georgian government doubled down on the confrontational approach. Saakashvili's administration organized a parallel election and referendum in November 2006 to challenge the ones conducted by the de facto authorities.

In Tskhinvali, the absolute majority re-elected Kokoiti as the president of South Ossetia and voted for independence from Georgia, reaffirming the result of the 1992 referendum. The residents of the Georgian-controlled enclaves, meanwhile, elected Sanakoev as the president of South Ossetia and voted to integrate South Ossetia with Georgia. The rivalry acquired the same zero-sum nature that characterized the early stage of the Georgian-Ossetia conflict, the 'war of laws' period in 1989-90. Confrontational politics narrowed the possibility of compromise and gradually increased violence.

Having lost any hope of reaching a deal with Kokoiti, Saakashvili's administration designated Sanakoev, sitting in Georgian-populated village Kurta, rather than Tskhinvali-based Kokoiti, as the only legitimate representative of South Ossetia and the Ossetian people. To avoid the terms such as "president" and "Republic of South Ossetia," indicating the territory's independence from Georgia, the Georgian government declared Sanakoev as the Head of the "Temporary Administrative Unit" (TAU) on the territory of former SOAO. The Parliament of Georgia formally established this awkwardly-worded territorial-administrative unit with its budget, ministries and special forces in May 2007. Its territory surrounded Tskhinvali from three sides. On the fourth side to the south was Ergneti, the village inside uncontested Georgia.

The Georgian enclave north of Tskhinvali, the seat of the Sanakoev government since the 2006 election, consolidated the administration's control of the part of Transkam Highway that passed through the area. The local military police, set up by Georgia's security agencies, conducted passport checks at "border" posts at the northern and southern tips of the enclave (ICG, 2007). To the complaints made by the South Ossetian and Russian sides, Georgia's Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili, on his visit to the area, responded: "This is our territory and we would block roads or close borders as we like" (Kobakhidze, 2019, 23). Instead of 'reintegrating' South Ossetia into Georgia, the country's government was consciously making new borders inside the territory. Meanwhile, Georgian villages south of Tskhinvali and inside the undisputed Georgian territory (Nikozi, Ergneti, Tkviavi), which until 2004 had been fully oriented towards Tskhinvali due to their geographic proximity, significantly lost this link and gradually gravitated towards Gori as the primary economic center of the region.

The South Ossetian side also contributed to the making of the border. Besides checkpoints, Kokoiti's government built up defensive fortifications and dug up trenches around Tskhinvali and along the border with Georgia. The appearance of this defensive infrastructure – trenches, checkpoints, roadblocks – occurred in the context of almost daily violence (killings, detentions, shelling, kidnappings and mine explosions) that bred insecurity (ICG, 2007). The border infrastructure – roadblocks, checkpoints and trenches – was not merely a passive material context of the escalating conflict but also an active participant creating new motives and conditions for further violence or shutting down possibilities of inter-communal trust and political exchange.

As these territorial boundaries solidified on the ground, Saakashvili's program of gathering of lands stalled. By 2008, Saakashvili's expansionist vision and Minister Okruashvili's promises to celebrate the next New Year in Tskhinvali appeared futile. To overcome the four years of unsuccessful effort at regaining control over South Ossetia, Saakashvili decided to turn escalating but localized violence in the summer of 2008 into full-scale artillery and infantry attack on Tskhinvali. In the first hours of the military operation, Saakashvili and his generals believed they would "restore constitutional order" and "liberate" South Ossetia (Toal, 2017, p.159). But Russia's overwhelming retaliation changed the outcome and ended Saakashvili's expansionist drive.

The Birth of Borderization (2008-2012)

Under the Russian protection, irregular Ossetian militia plundered and burned Georgian villages inside and immediately outside of the boundary during the war and in the following weeks (AAAS, 2010). Over 18,500 Georgians fled the war and the subsequent violence from South Ossetia.[37] Between 2,500 and 4,000 Georgians remained within the borders of South Ossetia, most of them in the Akhalgori district (ICG, 2010).[38]

Within a few days, the war entirely transformed the spatial arrangement of power in South Ossetia that had existed since 1992. The Georgian government lost all its presence in the area. It lost control of twenty-one villages that made up three "Georgian enclaves" around Tskhinvali, formalized as the "temporary administrative unit" in 2007 (SSG, 2017; ICG, 2010). The Ossetian government bulldozed some of these villages and left others to decay. The borders that defined competing territorial sovereignties inside South Ossetia disappeared and shifted towards the external boundary of South Ossetia with Georgia.

The war homogenized South Ossetia's political space and expanded it territorially eastwards by merging the Akhalgori (Leningor in Ossetian) district. The Akhalgori district was part of the SOAO until 1991, but since 1992 most of it, including the town of Akhalgori, was fully integrated into Georgia economically, socially and geographically. Demographically, 85% of the Akhalgori residents considered themselves Georgian, although ethnic belonging has never been very clear cut. The South Ossetian government controlled only a smaller, south-western part of the Akhalgori district with several Ossetian villages before August 2008. Kokoiti's government extended its control over the entire district in the weeks after the war. For the first time since its declaration of independence in 1992, the South Ossetian Republic spread its control over the whole territory of

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[37] Out of 13,400 residents of three Georgian enclaves around Tskhinvali, only about 50, mostly elderly people, stayed during the war. The rest (approx. 5,000) of the 18,500 displaced are from Akhalgori. These are Georgian government figures (Amnesty, 2009).

[38] According to South Ossetia's latest 2015 census, over 53,000 people live in the Republic, almost 4,000 of them Georgian. More than half of the Georgians of South Ossetia live in Leningor (Akhalgori) district, while over 500 Georgian live in the town of Tskhinvali which according to the census has a total population of over 30,300 Georgian (South Ossetian Department of State Statistics, 2016).

former SOAO.

At the end of August, Russia finally recognized South Ossetia's independence. Russia's recognition strengthened the case for the new meaning of the boundary as a "state border." Russia backed up the political support with the continuous military presence inside South Ossetia and along its de facto state borders. The absolute majority of South Ossetians generally regarded the Russian military presence as a guarantee of their security from a repeated attack from Georgia (Toal & O'Loughlin, 2013).

Saakashvili's government immediately framed the Russian presence in South Ossetia as a foreign occupation of Georgia's sovereign territory. The Parliament passed the resolution on the occupation at the end of August (two days after Russia's recognition of South Ossetia's independence). It declared South Ossetia and Abkhazia as "occupied territories" and Russian military forces stationed there – "occupying military units" (Parliament of Georgia, 2008). The Parliament's subsequent Law on Occupied Territories (October 2008) defines "occupied territories" by referring to the territorial limits of former SOAO rather than according to the physical presence of the Russian military. Neither the Parliament nor the government provided any map to clarify a territorial shape of occupation. To underscore that these were territories under Georgia's sovereignty, the law, among other prohibitions in these territories, restricted mobility of non-Georgian citizens across the Russian-Abkhazian and Russian-South Ossetian borders.

The discourse of occupation redefined the geographies of security and nationhood of Georgia and created an overlap between them. New nationalist slogans, such as "Abkhazia and Samachablo are Georgia," and "20% of Georgia is occupied by Russia," expressed cartographic anxiety about the loss of national territory. The discourse of occupation further elevated territorial integrity as the central feature of Georgian nationalism (Kabachnik, 2012). Beyond the effect on national geo-body, Russia's military presence redefined South Ossetia as a source of insecurity and danger. The traumatic experience of the recent war kept the Georgian public anxious about a renewed Russian attack from a much closer position than before August 2008. Saakashvili turned this public insecurity into a slogan "The enemy stands at 40 km!" It referred to the shortest distance between Tbilisi and the South Ossetia border. The slogan served to demobilize domestic political opposition by insisting on the national unity (defined as the broad acceptance of Saakashvili's

views and policies) in the face of external danger.

In the weeks after the war, Georgian police set up border observation posts in the villages along the border. The newly established European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) started its observation patrols at the beginning of October on the Georgian side of the border. Their mission was to observe and report on the incidents along the border, what the EUMM consistently defined as an "administrative boundary line" (ABL) in acknowledgment of Georgia's territorial integrity. Russia denied the EUMM's access to South Ossetia and assumed the role of a security guarantor on the South Ossetian side at the request of the Tskhinvali authorities (ICG, 2009).

Russian and Ossetian armed personnel blocked the roads going in and out of South Ossetia in October 2008. South Ossetian government designated the border as closed and its crossing as a crime. The only legal way to enter South Ossetia remained from Russia (ICG, 2010). This law was a direct opposite of Georgia's Law on Occupied Territories, also adopted in October 2008, which criminalized foreign citizens' entry into South Ossetia from Russia and allowed only from the territory controlled by Georgia. To Georgia, the line separating South Ossetia from (the rest of) Georgia was not a border but an arbitrary line of occupation defined as a result of the war.

In August 2012, South Ossetian authorities further tightened control over the border by creating a closed border zone, where citizens of South Ossetia and Russia could enter only with special passes (RES, 2012). The width of the border zone ranges from 100 meters to 8 km (counted from the boundary line towards the inner territory of South Ossetia). Its area covers 693 km^2 and 23 villages (Sputnik, 2017; Komakhia, 2017).

Despite closing the border, South Ossetia opened four "places of simplified mobility." These were crossing points for specific residents of South Ossetia. These crossing points allow Georgians who live in South Ossetia and Ossetians in Georgia, but within particular border villages, to travel across the border. Crossing by anybody else and anywhere else is prohibited and will lead to detention and a fine (Osinform, 2011). Despite these new restrictions on mobility, South Ossetians and Georgians on both sides of the border kept moving between the two territories whenever it was possible. Detentions, too, became a norm.

In April 2009, Russia and South Ossetia signed an agreement on joint protection of South Ossetia's state borders. The agreement designated Russia's Border Police Service (part of Federal Security Service, FSB) and South Ossetia's Committee for State Security (KGB) as the responsible agencies for protecting the borders (MFA Russia, 2009). From May 2009, about 900 FSB border guards started to patrol the border between South Ossetia and Georgia (Amnesty, 2009; EUMM, 2018). Between 2009 and 2012, Russia built nineteen semi-military border bases along the border to house the border guards, secure the perimeter and observe the Georgian-controlled areas beyond the border (EUMM, 2017).[39] Besides these border bases, Russia has also built three military bases in Tskhinvali, Java and near Akhalgori that house up to 4,500 soldiers (ICG, 2010; Amnesty, 2018).

In August 2009, South Ossetia created a commission for delimitation and demarcation of its borders. The commission offered Georgia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct delimitation work jointly but received no answer from Tbilisi. South Ossetia started demarcation alone and consulted with the Soviet military map produced in 1984 to identify the location of the border (Rosbalt, 2009). In the same August, EUMM observed as Russian border guards installed 80 cm long metal poles in Kveshi, a Georgian village near the border, which led the locals to fear that the border would divide the village in the middle. According to the EUMM's GPS measurements, the scene was 200 meters outside the actual boundary line on the Georgian side (U.S. Embassy, 2009). The Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs quickly reported and qualified this as an attempt by "Russian occupiers" to "move the so-called "border" and reach deeper into Georgian territory" (MFA Georgia, 2009). The next day, the metal poles disappeared. Likely, Georgia's security service removed them as it was a usual practice under Saakashvili's administration to secretly remove demarcation poles and barriers at night after Russian/Ossetian border guards installed them.[40]

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[39] Most of the border bases are few hundred meters behind the borderline and on the higher ground that allows those inside the base to see far beyond the border, e.g. Georgia's main east-west highway. Simultaneously, many of these border bases can be seen from the Georgian side. Vertical dimension plays a role in the Russian/South Ossetian practice of border security.

[40] Two former senior officials in Saakashvili's government have reported on such a practice. Interview with Shota Utiashvili, former senior official of the Interior Ministry (October 2019). Also: Kapanadze, 2016.

The start of border demarcation by South Ossetian authorities and Russian border units elevated the physical and political visibility of the boundary inside Georgia. Georgian officials started to refer to it as an "occupation line" as an extension of the already established narrative of occupation (Civil Georgia, 2010a; MFA Georgia, 2009). In his UN General Assembly address the following month (September 2009), Saakashvili articulated the problem of occupation by relying on the theme of borders and the Berlin Wall analogy. "Georgia today, like Germany a generation ago, is a nation with a deep wound running through her. A wall cuts off one fifth [20%] of our territory," declared Saakashvili (Civil Georgia, 2009a). In November, Saakashvili noted that "when Europe celebrates the 20th anniversary of the collapse of the Berlin Wall... barbed wire is now stretching here in Georgia." The barbed wires marked an "occupation line," not "an administrative or a political border," insisted Saakashvili (Civil Georgia, 2009b). Neither EUMM nor Georgian media reported on the physical obstacles along the boundary at the time, but a later EUMM publication identified 2009 as the year when the first physical barriers appeared along the border to block the free movement of people (EUMM, 2018).

In the following month (December 2009), the Parliament (with Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) in the majority) adopted a statement on the "unlawful activities of Russia on the territory of Georgia." The bulk of such activities listed in the document is concerned with the creation of the South Ossetian border: construction of Russian military bases and other infrastructure, deployment of border police forces of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) "along the administrative border," and the "construction of barbed wire barriers and the wall between the occupied territories and the rest [of Georgian territory]" (Parliament of Georgia, 2009, p.1). The Parliament underscores two meanings of the South Ossetia border: a line that divides Georgia's national territory ("deepening the annexation of Georgia's occupied territories") and a security line, which marks the danger to national security ("constant provocations threatening not only Georgia but the security of the whole Europe with the escalation of the conflict") (Ibid., pp.1-2).

This statement is important as it marks the first time when the physical markers along the boundary become a distinct territorial problem from an already established concept of occupation. Border demarcation does not merely symbolize occupation and territorial division, as Saakashvili's earlier

Berlin Wall analogies stressed. It also deepens the gravity of the problem and gives it a dynamic character. This is done either via "provocation," which can lead to a worsening security environment and renewed military conflict, or "deepening annexation," which does not specify whether it means the increase of Russia's political control over the territory or spatial expansion of occupied territories.

In 2010, EUMM found more evidence of "a broader policy of unilateral border demarcation" near the border in Ditsi, a Georgian village south-east of Tskhinvali. Several Russian and South Ossetian armed men and civilians were conducting measuring activities on the land and had installed steel poles in the ground (EUMM 2010). Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) swiftly declared that "Russian occupational forces started to seize additional territory and move the line of occupation forward" (Civil Georgia, 2010a). After EUMM established that metal poles were in line with the SOAO boundary, MIA requalified the incident less dramatically as "a clear provocation" from Russia (Civil Georgia, 2010b).

In this case, MIA clearly (but mistakenly) identifies demarcation as a form of territorial expansion of occupation. Redefinition of the incident as "provocation," however, maintained the meaning of border demarcation as a specific and developing problem with its security consequences rather than merely a confirmation existing condition of occupation. Other governmental policy documents also identify the "occupation line" as a source of danger. The National Security Council's document Threat Assessment for 2010-2013 describes the "line of occupation" as a place of "possible provocations and incidents" (NSC Georgia, 2010, p. 2). The National Security Concept, published in 2011, presents it as "a staging-ground for provocations and a bridgehead for a possible renewed military aggression" (NSC Georgia, 2011, p. 35).

In 2011, Russian and Ossetian border guards started to install barbed-wire fences and border signposts. There were two types of signposts informing the visitor about "State Border": those with English and Georgian texts faced the Georgian-controlled areas and others with Russian and Ossetian texts faced the areas controlled by South Ossetia. In 2012, they added only a limited length of fencing. In 2013, the process intensified after the Russian border service contracted a Stavropol-based company Stilsoft, specializing in security systems and surveillance technology, to install border infrastructure (Kotaeva, 2014).

In early 2013, EUMM introduced a new term "borderization" into Georgian public discourse to describe the process of border demarcation.[41] While "demarcation" suggests merely the marking of territory, "borderization" contained additional meanings involved in border-making: the securitization of territory and the separation of people (EUMM, 2018, p.3). The organization has provided two definitions. The first describes "borderization" as a physical-material process: physical markings and activities on the ground to make visible or obstruct passage of the [Administrative Boundary] Line" (EUMM, 2017, p.4). These include barbed-wire, metal or wooden fences, trenches, fire-break strips, graded land, "State Border" signposts, observation towers and surveillance technology. The second, broader definition characterizes it as a border regime. This definition combines three elements that regulate people's mobility across the boundary: a set of legal rules, physical infrastructure, and surveillance and patrolling by Russian and Ossetian border guards.

Conclusion

This chapter has found that the Georgian leaders' expansionist drive, guided by Georgia's territorial nationalism, has contributed to the deepening of territorial division between Ossetians and Georgians and the materialization of the border. The clash of Georgia's quest for territorial integrity with the reality of distinct South Ossetian territorial identity resulted in the war and the subsequent hardening of the boundary, which became known in Georgia as "occupation line." Russia's military presence in post-war South Ossetia shifted the meaning of the line as a source of danger and insecurity in contrast to earlier understanding as a frontier to expand and consolidate the territorial control of the rightfully Georgian land. The demarcation of the line (borderization) visualized and shaped the sense of danger.

[41] The EUMM website and its archive of news and press releases show no mention of "borderization" until 2013.

Photo 6. Border fence and surveillance camera near Nikozi. Author: Gela Merabishvili.

4.3 Politics of Fence

Introduction

The chapter traces domestic political debates on borderization and explicates the discursive production of threat. It identifies the main geopolitical storylines with which the two leading political parties explained the problem of borderization and how each reconciled the quest for territorial integrity (geography of nationhood) with the necessity to deter the security threats emanating from and beyond the “occupation line” (geography of security).

The chapter mostly relies on the online media sources, particularly English-language news outlet *Civil Georgia* but also other Georgian-language publications. Besides, I have reviewed parliamentary debates, available via the official website of the Parliament of Georgia and used my research interviews with existing and former members of the government, recorded in September and October of 2019.

"Creeping Occupation" and "Provocation": The Emerging Storylines of Borderization (2013)

In October 2012, the newly formed party Georgian Dream (GD), led by billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, replaced Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) in the government. Ivanishvili had amassed his wealth in Russia during the 1990s and 2000s. Saakashvili portrayed his opponent in the heated pre-election campaign and after as a Russian oligarch. Ivanishvili's campaign promise to normalize Georgia's relations with Russia further allowed the UNM politicians to mobilize anti-Russian affect against the domestic political opponent. The pre-election rhetoric continued after the election when the UNM, now in opposition, started to frame GD's policy towards Russia as appeasement. Saakashvili's presidential term would end only a year later in October 2013. The year-long cohabitation of Ivanishvili's premiership and Saakashvili's presidency, when Georgia's political scene became deeply polarized, set the stage for the politicization of the South Ossetia border.

In the first quarter of 2013, barb-wire fences appeared in several locations along the border. According to the EUMM, "recently erected fences have directly affected the freedom of movement and livelihood of the local population" (EUMM, 2013a). At the end of March, Georgian MFA raised the issue during the Geneva talks with the Russian counterpart and a few weeks later, the deputy foreign minister discussed the problem of "barbed wires" during the ministry's weekly press briefing. In both cases, MFA emphasized the humanitarian aspect of

By the end of May 2013, Russian and Ossetian border units had fenced up to 25 km of South Ossetia's boundary (more than a third of the currently existing 60+ km). Georgian media did not cover the accelerated pace of borderization. In the first months of 2013, the topic remained outside of general public knowledge. It changed at the end of May.

On 27 May, the EUMM reported on the new fences in Ditsi and emphasized their "negative impact" as "obstacles" to the "freedom of movement" that further "impedes people's livelihood and divides families and communities" (EUMM, 2013b). Georgia's leading TV channels and other media outlets quickly reported the story but changed the focus to emphasize the allegations made by the Ditsi residents that the new fences had 'moved' the boundary 300 meters forward and had left some of their farmland and pasture on the Ossetian side.

The main reason why the political and media attention increased at this specific moment can be attributed to the increasing role the GD's foreign and security policy towards Russia started to play in the domestic debates in the spring of 2013. In March, UNM and GD adopted a bipartisan foreign policy resolution in th Parliament, which listed a number of principles Georgian foreign policy would follow. The adoption of the resolution led to heated debates, during which GD tried to moderate the radical anti-Russian language of the text. To UNM, this meant the policy of appeasement [*dakvavebis politika*]. The accusation became UNM's central line of criticism against the domestic political rival. Borderization, which accelerated in the same period, suddenly enabled UNM to present a visual, material evidence of the failing GD policy towards Russia and mobilize the nationalist narrative of occupation and anti-Russian affect against the domestic opponent.

Saakashvili commented immediately that this was an "attempt to move the occupation line" deeper into the Georgian-controlled areas (Civil Georgia, 2013a). A local farmer's land problem was quickly tied to the narrative of "Russian occupation" and territorial integrity of the state, expanding geographic scale and further geopoliticizing the issue of the border. Two UNM members of parliament arrived in Ditsi on the same day and, speaking in front of TV cameras, blamed Georgian Dream's "unilateral concessions" for encouraging Russia to step up the fencing process (Civil Georgia, 2013a).

On 31 May, Saakashvili declared in a television address that the shifting of the "occupation line" posed "a threat of losing control over thousands of hectares of land." He specifically defined the border as an "occupation line" and called on the government to use the term. He also claimed that "Russia's actions are directly proportional" to the Georgian government's "soft rhetoric," and by installing fences, Russia was testing the government's "firmness" (Civil Georgia, 2013d). On 3 June, Saakashvili decided to convene the National Security Council (NSC) on the issue of borderization, while his UNM party demanded from GD to adopt a bipartisan parliamentary resolution condemning Russia's action.

In the following days, UNM had introduced a new term, "creeping occupation," as an alternative to EUMM's borderization. It interpreted the loss of agricultural lands used and cultivated by the locals as a gradual contraction of the territory controlled by Georgia and spatial expansion of "occupation." GD's "unilateral concession" was, therefore, implicitly meant to convey that the ruling party was allowing territorial concessions. "Creeping occupation" added a new crucial element to the understanding of "occupation": that since the election of the Georgian Dream, Russia was expanding the area of occupation. The problem of occupation was no longer static but deepening, expanding and worsening due to an inadequate policy of the government.

To deflect the UNM's criticism, Georgian Dream's politicians and government officials generally downplayed both the degree of the threat as well as its novelty. PM Ivanishvili skipped the NSC meeting, claiming that "nothing extraordinary happened in the country yesterday or day before yesterday" (Civil Georgia, 2013f). Ivanishvili responded to the UNM's criticism and rejected the situation description "creeping occupation": "they want to portray a situation as if we have lost the territories; *they* gave away these territories [in 2008] and *we* are now trying to return these territories." He described the installation of the new fences in Ditsi as "misunderstanding rather than the policy guided from the Kremlin… or some kind of a provocation" and urged the audience not to fall into "hysteria" over this. Ivanishvili asked EUMM to intensify patrols along the border and raised the possibility of sending additional police force to the area.

Minister of Reintegration Paata Zakareishvili also rejected the interpretation of new border fences as "creeping occupation." Instead, he stressed that Russians are "drawing the line" around the territory they "invaded" in 2008 intending to turn it into a "state border." The problem Georgia was

facing, according to Zakareishvili, was that of "dividing lines" that prevents both Ossetians and Georgians from reaching beyond these lines and worsens their everyday life and socioeconomic conditions. Furthermore, he asserted that these "lines" were drawn primarily against Ossetians rather than Georgians to cut their links with Georgia (Netgazeti, 2013a).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the Ditsi incident as "a blatant violation of Georgia's territorial integrity" (Civil Georgia, 2013b). The Ministry of Internal Affairs briefed the Tbilisi-based foreign diplomats on the details of borderization. "Borderization," according to MIA, "directly undermines security and stability on the ground." A senior Ministry official acknowledged that the fences had indeed been installed 120 meters deeper on the Tbilisi-controlled territory rather than on the edge of it and had affected 18 families and cut off part of their farmland (Civil Georgia, 2013e). The government's rhetoric with foreign audience, therefore, underscored the seriousness of the problem in contrast to the domestic rhetoric versus UNM which downplayed the severity of the problem. The GD government did not reject the occupation narrative and in fact, utilized it in its international communication. It only opposed a specific interpretation of the broader condition of occupation – "creeping occupation," promoted by the UNM – and within a specific discusrive field – the polarized domestic politics.

Borderization continued intermittently over the summer. On the anniversary of the 2008 war on 7 August, MFA's statement paid particular attention to the "barb-wire fences across the occupation line" that expand "the area of occupation" and "clearly violate Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of internationally recognized borders." Further, the statement underscored that the "provocative policy aimed at destabilizing Georgia" (Civil Georgia, 2013g).

New fences appeared in Ditsi on 17 September and in Dvani on 22 September. Saakashvili's second (and last) presidential term was about to end with the new election planned at the end of October. The new borderization hotspots provided a convenient stage to the opposition presidential candidates to hold campaign rallies and mobilize anti-Russian nationalist sentiments against the ruling party. UNM's presidential candidate Davit Bakradze arrived in Dvani on September 30 from where he called on other candidates to join him in "protesting the Russian occupation of the Georgian territories" (Netgazeti, 2013d). Other opposition candidates also arrived in Dvani and accused the government of inaction and inability to stop "creeping

annexation." An UNM-friendly publication *Tabula* created a special feature on borderization called "Barbed wires" [*mavtulkhlartebi*] and ran a daily borderization story between 17 September and election day on 27 October.

Saakashvili, who was in New York for the UN General Assembly at the time, commented in a TV interview that "in the recent month we've lost control over more agricultural lands than it was in Kurta and Tamarasheni," referring to the 'Georgian enclave' north of Tskhinvali before the 2008 war. This statement echoed the one made by the head of Gori municipality the day before, according to which in the area of Dvani, the line has moved forward by 400-500 meters and has taken 10 hectares (25 acres) of the village farmland (Netgazeti, 2013b). Saakashvili also claimed that Georgian Dream's "policy of appeasement before Russia will be counter-productive" and called for "firmness" instead of "incomprehensible reverences," which Russia regards as "a sign of weakness" (Civil Georgia, 2013i). Influential UNM politician Giga Bokeria defined "creeping occupation" as "invasion of additional territories" beyond what had been occupied in 2008. He identified two key effects of borderization: "human tragedy" for the locals and "purely strategic threat" of losing critical infrastructures, such as oil pipelines, electricity lines and the country's main highway, to the "shifting occupation line" (Netgazeti, 2013f).

To these criticisms, Ivanishvili responded by rhetorically asking whether his government should have "launched war again," referring to the recklessness of the Saakashvili government in August 2008 (Civil Georgia, 2013j). GD's presidential candidate Giorgi Margvelashvili further explained that Georgia "will not yield to provocations" (Civil Georgia, 2013i). Minister Zakareishvili also relied on the term "provocation" to make sense of the events. He interpreted 'Russian barbe wires' as 'provocative' acts with which "Russia wants to fuel tensions" (Civil Georgia, 2013k). Georgia's task was to "withstand and not overreact" to Russia's "cascade of provocations" aimed at undermining the Georgian government's "pragmatic and calm policy towards Moscow" (Civil Georgia, 2013n).

On 9 October, Saakashvili decided to convene the National Security Council to discuss the threat of the "shifting occupation line." PM Ivanishvili and the Parliament Speaker Usupashvili immediately refused to participate in what they perceived to be the president's "PR masquerade" (Civil Georgia, 2013o). Undeterred by the drawback, Saakashvili traveled to Dvani and delivered a

televised speech standing behind a podium a few meters in front of a newly installed fence and a border signpost. Rather than a "misunderstanding," he referred to Ivanishvili's definition of borderization made in May, Saakashvili declared that the "occupier is conducting a well-planned attack on our sovereignty, independence, freedom and future." Russians, he explained, are moving forward, which has "tragic effects for those who lost agricultural land," but it also represents a "lethal danger to the Georgian statehood." He accused the Georgian Dream government of not prioritizing the issue of "Georgia's security and sovereignty" and not acting to stop the "creeping occupation." The solution that Saakashvili offered was to react "calmly but firmly," by which he meant to make the "creeping occupation" the main topic of Georgia's foreign policy (Tabula, 2013).

The government's diplomatic activities, as well as American and European statements during this period, show that in many ways, GD had indeed prioritized this issue in the conversation with foreign partners.[42] Foreign Minister Panjikidze was speaking about borderization at an OSCE event on the same day as Saakashvili delivered his vision of "creeping occupation" in Dvani. Earlier, on 19 September, Panjikidze briefed the Tbilisi-based foreign diplomats on the new wave of borderization and asked the diplomats to "condemn Russia's provocative acts" (MFA Georgia, 2013c). On 4 October, MFA organized a tour of Ditsi, Dvani and Khurvaleti for the Tbilisi-based foreign diplomats to give them a first-hand visual experience of the problem. Again, borderization as a threat to security and a breach of territorial integrity is the message the GD government articulated in its international communication.

By November, Russia and South Ossetia had fenced 45 km of the boundary line. This 45 km long fenced line amounted to more than 10% of the full length of the South Ossetia-Georgia border (390 km) (Ellena, 2013).

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[42] Several high-level statements were made following the Ditsi and Dvani incidents from Georgia's international partners, including the statements by the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi (September 20), EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs (1 October), U.S. State Department (1 October) and NATO Secretary General (2 October). While all demanded the removal of the physical barriers from Russia, none of them endorsed the specific interpretation of these new fence installations as "creeping occupation" of additional Georgian territories. Instead, they all focused on the negative impact of these fences "along the administrative boundary line" (as opposed to "occupation line" increasingly used by MFA Georgia) on the freedom of movement and economic activities of the local population (EUMM, 2013c; Civil Georgia, 2013h; 2013m; 2013l).

While in May and June, Saakashvili still talked about the borderization incident in Ditsi as a "provocation," by the end of September, the term "provocation" had become associated with the interpretations offered by the GD members. The meaning of the word was heavily shaped by the 2008 war, which to the many critics of Saakashvili at home and abroad was a case of Russia's successful attempt at provoking the inexperienced Georgian government into full-scale war.[43] This went against UNM's official narrative that the war was a result of well-planned Russian aggression against Georgia's sovereignty and, therefore, inevitable.

The competing framings of borderization as "provocation" or "creeping occupation" both implied Russia's dominant negative role. Further, they defined the domestic political opponent as an accomplice or enabler of Russia's activities in South Ossetia. Another distinction was the nature of the border in the overall aggressive policy of Russia against Georgia. UNM insisted that the "creeping occupation line" in and of itself was a threat to Georgia's statehood and sovereignty. GD defined the boundary, not as a geostrategic but more of a political weapon against Georgia, that needs careful management rather than a blunt response. Otherwise, minor provocations at the boundary would turn in a full-scale war and it was that potentiality, rather than the existing condition and current developments along the border, that posed the most severe threat to Georgia's sovereign statehood.

"Creeping occupation" narrated a dramatic story of the looming disaster of Georgia's national sovereignty, while the frame of "provocation," articulated by GD, described the events at the border as routine. "Creeping occupation" activated 'cartographic anxieties' and the enemy image of Russia in the Georgian public and, therefore, more forcefully resonated with ordinary patriotically-minded citizens than the alternative storyline. It felt truer to see a larger nefarious Russian plan against the territorial integrity of Georgia behind the installation of border fences than merely technical work of boundary demarcation.

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[43] The European Union's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, also known as the Tagliavini Report (2009), used the term "provocation" when describing the start of the war: "The shelling of Tskhinvali by the Georgian armed forces during the night of 7 to 8 August 2008 marked the beginning of the large-scale armed conflict in Georgia, yet it was only the culminating point of a long period of increasing tensions, provocations and incidents" (p.11).

Civil society organizations in Georgia and the Georgian diaspora staged numerous protest demonstrations at the border in Ditsi and Dvani, in major cities in Georgia and abroad. Most of these protest events adopted and popularized the slogan "creeping occupation" (Civil Georgia, 2013k; Netgazeti, 2013c). On 6 October, football matches in Georgia's top league started with footballers wearing specially made white T-shirts that read in Georgian: "Ditsi and Dvani are Georgia!" (Netgazeti, 2013e). Such speech acts until now had been reserved for Abkhazia and South Ossetia (usually referred to as Samachablo in nationalist slogans) as a whole. Ditsi and Dvani, unlike the two larger entities, were controlled by the Georgian government. Still, the discourse of "creeping occupation" created a misleading understanding that these villages were no longer under Georgian control.

A series of public opinion surveys in 2013 found that between March and November, the share of those respondents who viewed Russia as a "clear and existing threat" jumped from 26 to 36 percent. Mentions of territorial integrity as the "most important national issue" also grew in the same period from 34 to 39 percent.[44] The share of those who thought that the situation over territorial integrity got worse since October 2012 increased from 2 to 12 percent between March and November. Yet, an overwhelming majority saw no change (80%) and the plurality of 48% approved the government's response to the "erecting of fences along the ABL," while 28% disapproved (NDI, 2013a; NDI, 2013b). These figures indicate that the narrative of "creeping occupation" had a measurable effect in the broader population but not enough to force the GD government to accept, adopt and incorporate the security framing offered by UNM.

"Creeping Annexation" (2014)

[44] National Democratic Institute has been conducting Georgia-wide (excluding South Ossetia and Abkhazia) public opinion surveys for more than a decade. In 2013, NDI conducted four such surveys in March, June, September and November. The figures for 'Russia as a threat' and 'territorial integrity as the most important issue' has been much higher earlier, in the years after the 2008 war. The election of Georgian Dream in October 2012 had a significant effect on these two categories. The 'Russia as a threat' perception declined from 48 to 26 percent between August and November 2012. The 'territorial integrity' perception declined by 5 points to 29% in the same period but it had been declining even before that from the peak of 49% in 2009.

The year 2014 saw very little new fence-building along the South Ossetia boundary. The crisis in Ukraine dominated the year. Between December 2013 and September 2014, the Parliament adopted two declarations and two resolutions regarding Russia's interference in Ukraine. GD attempted to condemn Russia's actions against Ukraine's "sovereignty and territorial integrity" without inciting further animosity between Russia and Georgia. UNM demanded a stronger language in these documents. GD refrained from supporting international sanctions on Russia, which the opposition harshly criticized as an example of appeasement policy.

During the parliamentary debates on one of the Ukraine resolutions on 6 March 2014, a leading UNM MP Goka Gabashvili brought an explicit historical analogy of Chamberlain and Churchill and their different treatment of Hitler to articulate the distinction between the "worldviews" of GD and UNM and their respective views on Putin. The MP argued that just like Neville Chamberlain in the 1930s, GD was more concerned with "not irritating a madman" while the "madman" was "busy annexing and occupying the territories of neighboring countries" (Parliament of Georgia, 2014a). Another UNM MP, Chiora Taktakishvili, during parliamentary debates on the Ukraine resolution, declared that the GD government's "appeasement rhetoric towards Russia resulted in the occupation line that is shifted by 11 km, additional invaded territories, and the Georgian citizens forced out of their homes" (Parliament 2014a). Her claim regarding the '11 km' did not have any evidence.

As the previous comment shows, borderization became increasingly perceived as a part of a larger geopolitical storyline of revanchist and aggressive Russia. Understanding of Russia as a "clear and present danger" grew dramatically among the Georgian public and reached 50 percent in April 2014, up from 36 in November 2013. A large majority of Georgians saw Russia as the most responsible side for the crisis in Crimea and disapproved of Russia's annexation of the peninsula (NDI, 2014a). Although no significant borderization incidents occurred in the intervening period between April and August, the survey conducted at the end of summer shows a sudden reversal in the popular perception of the government's handling of borderization ("erecting fences along the administrative boundary line"). Only 33% approved the government's job (a 15 point decline from November 2013) and 46% disapproved (an 18 point rise) (NDI, 2014b). The absence of new demarcation work on the ground leaves the developments in Ukraine as the most likely influence

on the Georgian public's views on borderization.

In response to the news in October 2014 that Russia was planning to form a stronger political and military alliance with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, UNM submitted draft proposals for two consecutive resolutions. The draft resolutions stated that Russia had responded to the Georgian government's "policy of rapprochement" with "further grabs of occupied territories, annexation and the construction of so-called "border infrastructure." The latest "step to annex these territories... is a continuation of aggression which Russia had been conducting against its neighbors, including Ukraine, for many years" (UNM, 2014).

Besides drafting the parliamentary resolutions, UNM organized a large-scale rally in central Tbilisi to denounce the government's perceived inaction in the face of the threat of annexation. The protesters carried Georgian, Ukrainian, EU and U.S. flags and the banners that read: "Stop Russia" and "No to Annexation." Protesters labeled the GD government as "collaborationist." One of them declared that "the enemy, standing in 40 kilometers [referring to Russian forces in South Ossetia], will not be able to harm us if we don't have a collaborationist government in 400 meters from here [referring to the State Chancellery building that houses the government]" (Civil Georgia, 2014).

The GD majority rejected both of the UNM draft resolutions and instead adopted its version on 17 October. The GD document toned down the UNM version but maintained its condemnation of Russia's "step towards fully annexing" Georgia's "ancient corners." The document further highlighted the "construction of barriers along the occupation line" among Russia's earlier wrongs against Georgia (Parliament of Georgia, 2014b). This was the first time the GD-majority P arliament mentioned the new border barriers in its resolution. Still, the document omitted the phrase used by UNM in its draft ("further grabs of occupied territories"), which referred to the spatially dynamic nature of borderization.

On 24 November 2014, Russia and Abkhazia signed the Treaty on Alliance and Strategic Partnership. On 18 March 2015, the day that marked the first anniversary of Crimea's incorporation into the Russian Federation, Putin and South Ossetia's Leonid Tibilov signed the Treaty on Alliance and Integration. It is this time around – the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015 –

that the term “creeping annexation” found a new life in Georgian political discourse after its initial appearance in the mid-2000s. The earlier meaning was formed in the context of increasingly tense Russian-Georgian relations after the 2004 conflict. In 2014-15, however, it was the geopolitical discourses of the period, “creeping occupation” at the South Ossetia boundary and “annexation” of Crimea, that popularized the term in relation to the new alliance agreements between Russia and Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The meaning of “creeping” tied to “annexation” referred to the degree of Russia’s control politically and militarily, rather than its spatial expansion. The meaning of “creeping annexation” described Russia’s geopolitical conduct. In this sense, borderization (whether defined as “creeping occupation” or “provocation”) is part of a broader program of “creeping annexation.” For example, a policy paper by the researchers at the Georgian Institute of Politics defines borderization as Russia’s “tactic to implement creeping annexation” and a “part of Russia’s campaign to undermine Georgia’s sovereignty as well as the wider European security order” (Kakachia et al., 2017, pp.8-9).

The Ukrainian crisis enriched and spatially enlarged the emerging geopolitical storylines of borderization in 2014. It introduced Russia’s regional revanchism as an overarching explanatory framework to understand security developments on the ground in Ukraine and Georgia. This updated, ‘geopoliticized’ discourse of borderization linked up local, national and broader regional/international scales and was flexible enough to be incorporated by both major political parties in Georgia and accepted by the majority of the Georgian public.

Influenced by the events in Crimea, “creeping annexation” became a new middle ground rooted in the shared understanding of Russia’s revanchist program in its near abroad. This storyline allowed GD to acknowledge Russia’s active role without conceding that the government lost new territories. “Creeping occupation” was still outside of typical GD vocabulary. Despite the common ground, political competition and the discursive struggle over the meanings of the problem continued.

Consolidation of the Borderization Storylines (2015)

A new spike in the politics of borderization emerged in July 2015. On 10 July, several new green "State Border" banners appeared between the villages of Tsitelubani (on the Georgian side) and Orchosani (on the South Ossetian side). According to the EUMM officials, the new signposts had advanced 1 km to the south from the previous markers of the South Ossetia boundary (North, 2015). As a result, the border now divided a large field that Georgian residents used as farmland. Beyond the local significance, the newly demarcated border was only a few hundred meters north of Georgia's main east-west highway and had intersected an oil pipeline deep in the ground. The British Petroleum-owned Baku-Supsa pipeline carried up to 100,000 barrels of oil daily from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea via Georgia.

This new development echoed earlier warnings from UNM leaders that described the 'creeping occupation' as a "strategic threat" to the country's critical infrastructure, including the pipeline and the highway (Bokeria) and a "lethal danger to the Georgian statehood" (Saakashvili). Despite physical territorial changes, the newly marked border did not extend beyond the cartographically defined boundary of South Ossetia, according to the 1980s Soviet maps and Google Maps. The EUMM statement was also silent on the question of shifting 'administrative boundary line', focusing instead on the "negative effects on the local population, their livelihood and freedom of movement" (EUMM, 2015).

Georgia's Interior Ministry called it "deliberate provocative actions by the Russian occupying forces, which are directed towards destabilization of the situation and pose a threat to peace and stability on the ground" (Civil Georgia, 2015a). Foreign Ministry qualified the incident as an "illegal action" and "Russian provocation" "directed against peace and security on the ground" (Netgazeti, 2015a). Georgian PM's special envoy to Russia, Zurab Abashidze, visited the area and described the incident as "an obvious provocation, a deliberate provocation, a very dangerous provocation" that "can trigger such violence, which may then spiral out of control" (Civil Georgia, 2015b). Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili argued against "excessive panic" because already before the placement of new border signs, "this territory was under occupants' influence and not under our control." He promised to "remain principled on issues, which concern our territories – our Abkhazia and Samachablo" but simultaneously continue developing "constructive, pragmatic relations" with Russia (Civil Georgia, 2015c). Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli further specified

that “[Russians] are testing our patience daily, trying to provoke and engage us in the conflict, which, I can assure you, Georgia’s current authorities will not let happen” (Civil Georgia, 2015e).

On 14 July, opposition political activists (unaffiliated with UNM) and journalists arrived at the new hotspot of borderization from Tbilisi to stage a protest. The slogans on their posters read “No to creeping occupation” and “You cannot divide us with barbed wires,” directed against Russia. Other protests slogans, like “SOS! Stop inaction!” addressed the government of Georgia. The protesters displayed the flags of the EU and Ukraine along with the flag of Georgia (Netgazeti, 2015b). Several NGOs, think-tanks, opposition-affiliated journalists and political activists organized a much more massive protest rally in front of the government’s State Chancellery building in Tbilisi on 18 July. Although the protest slogan was “Stop Russia,” protesters directed much of their anger at the government’s “harmful” and “treacherous” policy and a lack of action to “defend the country from the Russian occupation” (Civil Georgia, 2015d).

Some of the same organizers of the “Stop Russia” rally published a statement addressed to the government. The statement asserted that the “seizure of Georgian territories by Moscow” represents a continuation of Russia’s “recent annexation policy,” i.e. the treaties with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The statement provides a list of actions that the government should undertake. The list includes a recommendation to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to “strengthen monitoring along the highway” and “intensify activities along the administrative boundary to prevent such provocations” and ensure the security of the local population (GRASS, 2015).

On 15 July, UNM tabled a draft resolution “Shifting of the Occupation Line by the Occupying Forces of the Russian Federation into the Depth of the Georgian Territory.” The text of the draft resolution was similar to the statement by the NGOs and think-tanks. Besides the usual recommendations to the government to raise the issue of borderization and occupation on the international arena, including to convene the UN Security Council, the UNM’s text also demanded from the government to “restore the reduced police forces along the occupied territories” (UNM, 2015). This point echoed an opposition criticism that since 2012, the government had removed some police posts along the boundary with South Ossetia. The government rejects this allegation.

The parliamentary debate on the UNM draft on was a clash between two geopolitical storylines of "creeping occupation" (UNM) and "provocation" (GD). UNM's line of criticism followed the established pattern since 2013. It identified the change of Georgian policy towards Russia in 2012 under the GD administration (labeled interchangeably as "inadequate," "appeasement," "non-irritation") as the reason for emboldened Russian actions against Georgia in the form of "creeping occupation" and "creeping annexation." "Aggressive foreign policy," to the UNM members, would have been an "adequate" response to the "emotions caused by the events along the occupation line." The "occupation line" was a testing place for the "honor" of Georgia because "security does not exist without honor" (Parliament of Georgia, 2015a).

Almost all of the speakers from GD referred to the 2008 war when Saakashvili made a "mistake" in his response to Russian provocations that led first to the Russian invasion and later, occupation. To the GD politicians, the war was the defining moment in the intensification of Russian hostility towards Georgia, including incidents at the border. They attributed "creeping annexation" to the reckless policies of the UNM government. Therefore, primary political responsibility for the existing and continuing borderization lay with their political opponent. In contrast to Saakashvili's administration, the GD politicians boasted of having "avoided the causalities" and "prevented war" with cautious response to Russian 'provocations' (Parliament, 2015a). The GD geopolitical vision framed the boundary with South Ossetia as a testing place of patience and prudence rather than of honor and aggressiveness.

GD presented its geopolitical storyline in an alternative draft resolution, entitled "Further Provocative Actions of Russian Occupying Forces Against Georgia." The text reminds the reader that "as a result of the 2008 war, a significant part of the country's territory is occupied." It describes the recent borderization incident as "marking of yet another section of the line dividing occupied Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia from rest of Georgia." GD's text describes a static picture of the border in contrast to the UNM draft, which stressed the "shifting of the occupation line deeper" into the Georgian-controlled territories. These new boundary markings are Russia's "provocative actions" that continue the policy of "de facto annexation of the occupied Tskhinvali region" and "encroachment on Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity" and serve to "undermine Georgia's security efforts." The text lists a recommendation to the government to

"discuss the topic of stepping up patrolling along the whole perimeter of the occupied territories with the EUMM in coordination with the Ministry of Internal Affairs" (Parliament of Georgia, 2015b). After another heated debate session on 24 July that followed and rehearsed the positions articulated earlier, the majority of MPs eventually voted for the GD draft and against the UNM draft.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the emergence and the evolution of Georgia's domestic political debates about borderization. Despite political polarization, both major parties shared the notion of Georgia's territorial integrity and the broader problem definition of "occupation." Both parties understood borderization as the material side of the "occupation line." The disagreement and the debates focused on the definitions of danger and the most appropriate policy of security. Both storylines, "provocation" and "creeping occupation," agreed that Russia is the primary source of danger. This common ground became particularly visible after the Ukraine crisis and formed the basis for the shared, uncontested geopolitical storyline of "creeping annexation." Yet, despite the agreement on the broader themes, the established partisan narratives of borderization enabled the sides to attack the opponent's vision as aggravating the Russian danger and undermining Georgia's security.

Table 2. Geopolitical storylines of borderization (2013-2015)

Borderization Storylines	**Borderization**	**Creeping Occupation**	**Provocation**
Institutional setting	EUMM	UNM	GD
Border	Administrative boundary line	Shifting occupation line	Static occupation line

Threat	Obstacle to mobility; militarization	Loss of territory	Attempt to provoke war & Russian invasion
Blame	Russia/South Ossetia	Russia; GD	Russia; UNM
Policy	Cross-border engagement; local initiatives	Aggressive diplomacy & increased policing	Strategic patience & dialogue with Russia
Key texts		Resolution on Shifting of the Occupation Line Deeper into the Georgian Territory (2015)	Resolution on Further Provocative Actions of Russian Occupying Forces Against Georgia (2015)

4.4 Border Materiality

Introduction

This chapter switches the analytical perspective from Tbilisi to the villages of the Gori district on the Georgian side of the border. The four sections illustrate distinctly local views and effects of the border and the politics of borderization. The first section focuses on the impact of borderization on local people and how 'creeping occupation' looks in the villages that are directly affected by the border fences and other restrictions. The second section turns attention towards the state and its attempts to alleviate the local insecurities. This part accounts for the Georgian state's practice of security and its territorial effects. The third and fourth sections illustrate alternative, local meanings of the border, territory and nationhood that challenge the hegemonic discourses of borderization and occupation.

This chapter is based on my fieldwork in the border region in September and October of 2019. I visited about a dozen villages along the border, viewed the built fence and unbuilt sections of the

border at different locations and conducted eighteen interviews with residents, including local officials, in the area and Tbilisi. Beyond interviews and 'visual learning' of the border, my travel necessarily involved interaction with the Georgian police, which controls roads going in and out of the border villages. I had to spend between 15 minutes to 2 hours at the police checkpoints before the local officers verified my Interior Ministry travel permit. Although unintended, this experience with the police helped me understand the spatial tactics the state uses to secure the region. Other sources for this chapter include media stories published by the journalists and media outlets based in Gori, who cover the local developments of borderization.

Creeping Insecurity

Currently, South Ossetia has fenced more than 60 km (out of the total 390 km) of its boundary with Georgia. Fences are mostly along the southern, densely populated section. The material infrastructure of the overall border regime also includes 20 km of surveillance technology, more than 200 "State Border" signposts, nineteen Russian semi-military border bases and five crossing points (EUMM 2018, p.2).

Borderization has altered the lived space of Georgian villages along the boundary. During the 1990s and 2000s, these villages expanded into South Ossetia without meeting any obstacle from the border. During this period, the South Ossetia-Georgia boundary was merely a line on outdated Soviet maps while real borders defining the actual territorial control of competing power-centers (Tbilisi, Tskhinvali) lied deeper inside South Ossetia. For example, until 2008, Ditsi was a border settlement in name only because the area north of the boundary line, the Georgian-populated village of Eredvi, was also controlled by the Georgian government. The land, which Ditsi residents cultivated, straddled the nominal boundary. In practice, however, it was no different from farmlands anywhere across uncontested Georgia. Many Georgians of the border area built new houses on the outskirts of their villages but nominally inside the South Ossetia boundary.[45]

[45] Interview with a former member of the Georgian government and with Murman Badashvili (Mayor of Ditsi).

The lived everyday geography, which had formed in the two decades before 2008, had to confront the reordering of South Ossetia's ethnopolitical space following the August War. The new spatial order was based on the well-forgotten late Soviet cartography. Borderization, which mostly followed the boundaries of SOAO, reversed the local territorial gains made between 1992 and 2008. For those residents, who lost land, the border indeed had moved, when in fact, the new physical barriers simply revived the forgotten lines on the map and materialized them in the lived everyday space. The local perspective became a basis for media reports and political speeches that produced the national(ist) storyline of "creeping occupation line."[46]

Borderization has separated at least 34 Georgian villages from the surrounding agricultural lands or places of non-economic importance, such as cemeteries and churches.[47] The new border barriers have divided residential properties (backyards) of at least 20 families. In three villages (Dvani, Khurvaleti and Gugutiantkari), border fences have cut off several households from their villages on the Georgian-controlled territory.[48] Many more families, between 800 and 1,000, lost access to farmland, pasture and forests, which they had been using earlier either privately or as communal village property. As an illustration, in the village of Jariasheni, sixty families out of the total of 138, lost at least part of their farmland as a result of borderization, according to Georgia's Public Defender's Office. Besides, many of those residents whose property remains on the Georgian-controlled side but near the demarcated or open boundary, have become wary to use their land. They fear detentions, more commonly known as abductions, by Russian and Ossetian border guards. As locals claim, Russian guards often cross into Georgian-controlled areas (Amnesty, 2018).

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[46] There has been at least one case when farmland belonging to the Ossetian village Orchosani ended up in the 'ownership' of the village of Karapila on the Georgian side after the boundary was marked (ShKIC, 2019b). Such cases, if it happened elsewhere, are usually outside of the typical Georgian media coverage which focuses on the instances when Georgian villages lost, rather than gained, the land.

[47] Georgian authorities have counted 9 such churches that remain on the Ossetian side separated by the border (Amnesty, 2018).

[48] Most of these individuals left the property on the Ossetian side and moved to the Georgian side. Only one person, Data Vanishvili from Khurvaleti, stayed in his house and acquired national and international fame as a victim of borderization.

The village of Kirbali is considered as the 'most dangerous place' along the border because almost every family in Kirbali has a member who has been detained by Russian and South Ossetian border guards for 'illegally' crossing into South Ossetian territory (Aptsiauri, 2018). The area of Kirbali along the South Ossetia boundary remains unfenced and in many cases, villagers unknowingly violate South Ossetia's border regime. On Easter day, when Georgians visit the graves of deceased relatives, police parks a car in the middle of the local cemetery at the edge of the village to mark a safe area.

Physical barriers are intermittent along the South Ossetia boundary. Fences are mostly found in and around settlements to physically separate those from neighboring villages on the Ossetian side. Some of these neighboring villages have no empty, non-inhabited space or a clear boundary between them. In such cases, borderization barriers divide one household from another, or in rare cases, the fence has cut backyards and gardens belonging to a single family. This is the case for a Georgian village, Khurvaleti, which has, over the last decades, merged into neighboring Ossetian villages Tsinagari and Dzukata. The area was one of the first to be demarcated by borderization.

The presence of physical barriers decreases the likelihood of detentions but does not remove local anxieties about abductions.[49] Russian border guards 'abducted' two female inhabitants of Khurvaleti from their backyards along the fenced boundary with neighboring Ossetian village Tsinagari.[50] A female respondent from Ergneti felt unsafe and does not dare cultivate her plot of land near the border for fear of Russian border guards. Others, especially men, do.

Residents have been increasingly asking the Government of Georgia to intensify police presence and install security cameras mirroring the surveillance technology on the Ossetian side to deter occasional intrusions of armed Russian and Ossetian men. In the absence of such reassuring measures, locals feel abandoned by the government in Tbilisi.[51] Poverty and unemployment, further deepened by the loss of land and established trading network to borderization, are also central contributors to the pervasive feeling of abandonment (Amnesty, 2018).

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[49] Interviews with two residents of Ergneti, Olesya Vartanian (researcher) and Nino Dalakishvili (journalist).

[50] Interviews with Luda Salia (Khurvaleti resident) and Nino Dalakishvili (journalist).

[51] Interviews with two residents of Ergneti and Olesya Vartanian (researcher).

Managing Insecurity & Reproducing Borderization

While most of the media attention goes to Russian and Ossetian installed barriers, the Georgian state's infrastructural build-up and territorial practices in the region often stay outside of the media focus. Georgia has developed a network of observation posts and checkpoints operated by the Georgian police to surveil the developments both inside South Ossetia and on the territory controlled by the Georgian state, colloquially known as the "villages along the dividing/occupation line." This material-technical base allows the state to create a grid of security and legibility and enforce territorial control in a mundane way daily. Through the extensive police infrastructure, the state has turned the border area into a special kind of territory, which the state 'sees' and manages differently from the rest of Georgia.

Police checkpoints and observation posts ensure security in two ways. First, it secures the local population and land from outside danger expressed in the slogan of "creeping occupation." Second, it prevents the risks from inside, often defined as provocations: uncoordinated activities by a variety of individuals and groups near the border that can lead to conflict escalation. The infrastructure is essential in managing this second, affective-political dimension of borderization: border protests and performances, vigilante patrols and the access of journalists to the hotspots of borderization.

This two-way orientation of security has materialized in two lines of police check-points and observation posts, creating two parallel security boundaries that have sandwiched Georgian villages along the border. The northern line consists mostly of observation posts right up to the boundary of South Ossetia. The government established these posts soon after the 2008 war. There are several dozen such posts along the South Ossetia boundary and more than 100, including the Abkhazia boundary. These are usually located 50-100 meters away from the border at the tip of a local village, securing and closing off the roads connecting the village with the South Ossetian territory. These posts serve as a buffer between Georgian villages and South Ossetian territory, local Georgian population and Russian and Ossetians border forces. Officers at these border posts have done a special training where they learn SOPs for specific scenarios that might emerge at the

border, including phrases in Russian to "avoid escalations and provocations" and remain "in line with the state policy."[52] It illustrates the security dilemma posed by borderization: checking Russia's territorial advance and securing the local population without creating security risks for the opponent that can lead to an escalating response.

The southern line of police checkpoints regulates mobility between Georgian border villages and the rest of the country, effectively creating an internal border. As a result, Georgian security infrastructure surrounds most of the border villages: observation posts to the north along the South Ossetia border and roadside checkpoints to the south (informal internal border). The distance between the two types of police posts, and the two kinds of boundaries, vary between 1.5 km and 10 km. The area in between has become a securitized territory where access is selective and the state's gaze more intrusive. Locals can freely cross this invisible border, but officers stationed at the checkpoint recorder their names. Non-residents need prior permission from MIA.

The intensity of police presence and surveillance varies from village to village. In a place like Khurvaleti, surrounded by the border from three sides where fences can be found in the residential areas, dividing one house from another, police have established a tighter control. Police control every move of visitors, as it was in my case, and does not leave them out of sight. Police justify such intrusive control as necessary "for your security."[53] Visitors are not allowed to approach the border fence closer than a 50-meter distance.[54]

The Georgian state's infrastructural power is not limited to the territorial practices enacted by the police. Infrastructural power, according to Mann, is the state's ability to penetrate society and implement political decisions through its infrastructure (Mann, 1984). The state's management of the effects of borderization also involves policies directed at the well-being of the local population. These humanitarian projects aimed at offsetting economic loss are part of the governmentality of the border, providing not just physical but social security to locals and encouraging them to remain

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[52] Interview with a senior government official.

[53] Based on my own experience with the police in Khurvaleti and other villages along the border in October 2019.

[54] This 50-meter rule does not apply in Nikozi where locals and visitors can approach the fence. Farmers work on a farm that extends right up to the border fence.

in the region. Therefore, the state's response to the security environment at the border is both geo- and bio-political project, combining a mix of territorial and population policies.

The government's infrastructural development and social benefit programs address local problems and simultaneously increase the state's presence at the border. This policy dimension is at the heart of governmentality of this sensitive space, aimed at exercising the state's power through the needs (economic, emotional) of residents, enabling and supporting them rather than merely restricting them. In the course of these policies, not just the border territory, but also its population becomes an object of governance.

At the height of political drama following the new incidents of borderization in Ditsi and Dvani in September 2013, the GD government created a temporary commission to address the needs of "the population in the villages adjacent to the dividing line." Paata Zakareishvili, State Minister for Reintegration (now, Reconciliation and Civic Equality) and Davit Narmania, Minister for Infrastructure, coordinated the commission's work. The commission's function was to study the local needs and address them. As a result, over the past several years, the border villages have received a variety of benefits: subsidies for energy consumption, tuition fee waiver for university students, etc.[55] Simultaneously, the Parliament granted the status of "mountainous area" to most of these villages, which allows additional benefits: higher pension, lower income tax, farming subsidies.

Material loss is not limited to farmlands and gardens, but also larger infrastructural systems, such as water reservoirs and irrigation canals. Until 2008, Georgia controlled the Zonkari Reservoir deep in South Ossetia, which provided water to large parts of the Tskhinvali and Gori districts. With the loss of Georgian enclaves, the government also lost control of this reservoir. The villages on the Georgian side of the border lost access to this water source and few canals that originate in the Ossetian mountains. As a result, agricultural production suffered not only in the fields divided by new border barriers but also further south from the boundary. Without water, local farmers could no longer harvest fruits, such as apples, peaches and pears, to sell. This worsened local

[55] Interview with Rusudan Kiladze (Mayor of Mereti-Gugutiantkari-Zardiantkari municipality).

poverty.

To address this and other problems, the government, often in partnership with international donors, such as the EU, has implemented a set of infrastructural projects (e.g. gas grids, irrigation system). The water problem has been solved in many villages by building local wells and reservoirs that provide drinking water to the households.[56] By solving the problem of dependency on South Ossetia, these projects have created a new infrastructure of reliance on Tbilisi.

New infrastructure has diminished the border-ness of the place that previously defined the local economy (e.g. trade via Ergneti and Tskhinvali) and the social life (mixed ethnic families and networks). The area is physically at the edge of Georgian-controlled territory, but functionally, it has separated from the space beyond the border: South Ossetia. South Ossetia's borderization initiated this separation, but Georgia's infrastructural projects to alleviate the damage further entrenched it. The process of ethnic and political separation that started in the early 1990s and dramatically accelerated in 2008 has solidified in the separated material infrastructure. Each side of the border now has been more firmly embedded in distinct national and transnational infrastructural networks: South Ossetia has become tied to Russia via gas pipelines, electricity lines, transport corridors (besides financial, security and political dependencies), while the Gori region is intersected and integrated not just by the nation-wide grids, lines and networks but also by transnational corridors such as the BP-owned oil pipeline between Baku and Supsa.

The Tiriponi irrigation canal that crisscrosses the South Ossetia-Georgia boundary several times remains the most visible of very few local infrastructures that still connect the two territories. It is the most critical water source for local farmers on either side of the border and therefore, the canal forces the Georgian and South Ossetian sides to cooperate on technical management. This cooperation usually takes place at the monthly meetings in Ergneti under the EUMM supervision. The vulnerability that comes with such peculiar bi-territorial functioning of the canal represents an advantage, an opening for the opposing sides to cooperate. The cooperation over Tiriponi has been one of the very few bright spots in the peace process since 2008. The Tiriponi case represents a

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[56] Interviews with Murman Badashvili (Mayor of Ditsi); Aleksandre Bujiashvili (Mayor of Merjvriskhevi); and a resident of Nikozi.

different, local logic where border can coexist with the condition of interdependency and mutual vulnerability.

Cooperation over Tiriponi illustrates a contrast with the uproar in Georgia over the BP pipeline incident in 2015 when it became clear that a small portion of the pipeline passed under the South Ossetian-controlled territory. Influenced by the discursive frame of "Russian occupation" and "creeping occupation," the media and the politicians narrated the story as a problem of a border dividing the pipeline rather than a more positive story of a pipeline connecting two separated territories. It seems that the logic of security requires separation, but the separation of people and land worsens the original problem of Georgia's territorial integrity. The Georgian state's practice of security in the area, therefore, addresses the risks emanating from borderization but, in doing so, deepens territorial and communal division across the line. Counterproductively, the quest for security at the (non-) border solidifies the divide and entrenches the problem of Georgia's territorial integrity.

Bordered Identities and Peripheral Affects: Alternative Meanings of Borderization

In the Georgian-controlled Zardiantkari, part of the residents is Ossetian. Some of them live along a short lane between the Georgian police post and the fence, which divides Zardiantkari from the Ossetian village Khelchua that starts just behind the barrier. Ossetian Kiazo Gobozov was one of the few people who lived in this 'neutral zone' between the police post and the fence. South Ossetian authorities granted him and others in the zone the de facto republic's citizenship and a right to travel to Tskhinvali, where Gobozov's son lives. In 2019, the 96-year-old man died. Border guards opened the gate installed in the dividing fence for the funeral, which also functions as a border crossing point for the few residents of the 'neutral zone'. Ossetian neighbors from Khelchua entered Zardiantkari's 'neutral zone' to pay respects to Gobozov. Traditional funeral dinner, *kelekhi*, was set up at the gate: people of Khelchua sat on their side of the fence and people of Zardiantkari sat on the Georgian-controlled side at the end of the 'neutral zone.' Some Georgians from Zardiantkari crossed the gate to spend the evening with the neighbors in Khelchua.

Gobozov was buried across the fence, on a cemetery of Khelchua next to his wife's grave.

The story of Gobozov's funeral did not make the national news in Georgia. Only a local, Gori-based news outlet covered it in a short article, which remarked that Gobozov's "death erased occupation" (ShKIC, 2019a). 'Occupation,' as understood by the majority of Georgians, of course, did not end on that day: South Ossetia remained beyond the control of Georgian authorities. But 'occupation,' as understood and felt at the border, as a presence of a barrier that physically affects the locals and constrains their lived space, did end indeed, even if only for one evening and in one specific location.

Local views are more complex than the national, politically shared narrative of "occupation line" presents. Local meanings highlight ethnic differences that exist across the border and get further hardened as a result of borderization. However, local meanings also emphasize cross-border belonging and identification with specific places and localized communities that erase territorial or ethnic divides. The story of Gobozov's funeral illustrates these two critical distinctions between the local and the national understandings of the border and territorial integrity.

First, the border fences divide particular places (Khelchua and Zardiantkari), people (neighbors) and people from places (Kiazo Gobozov in Zardiantkari and his wife's grave in Khlechua). It is not primarily an "occupation line" that divides Georgia's sovereign territory, but a much more locally meaningful separation barrier.

Second, ethnicity as a practical category with which people make sense of their social relationships and politics is much more salient than in Georgia's political discourse of occupation. The border, of course, does not neatly divide people according to their (prior) ethnic identification: there are Ossetians on the Georgian side and Georgians on the Ossetian side. But it does produce a sense of group belonging, as already implied in the phrase such as 'Georgian side' and 'Ossetian side.' During the funeral, Georgians of Zardiantkari and Ossetians of Khelchua sat on either side of the border, thus making the line an ethnic boundary. However, ethnic distinction, although existing in practice, does not imply the desire for separation. Some (but not all) crossed the divide and socialized with neighbors from the other side.

Another example highlights this last point. An elderly male resident of Gugutiantkari, a neighboring village on the Georgian side, complained about the most recent incident of fence installment in his villages which, according to him, left the part of village lands (including some of his property) on the Ossetian side. He argued that the fence does not follow the boundary line separating the Gori district (Gugutiantkari) from the Tskhinvali district: "Give to Ossetia, to the oblast, what belongs to it, but not what belongs to us" (Aptsiauri, 2020). The "us" is a locally specific pronoun, referring to "us" in Gugutiantkari, or "us" from the Gori district. The distinction with the national narrative of territoriality is clear. Within political discourse, any mention of "us" refers to Georgia as a whole and the local man's distinction between the territories belonging to Gugutiantkari and those belonging to Disevi (inside the Tskhinvali district) is meaningless. Both are occupied territories.

The occupation discourses avoid explaining this local, ethnic dimension of the border, national territory and the conflict. The Russian occupation is the only explanation worth emphasizing. Borderization is creeping annexation. Places beyond the border – Tskhinvali and other smaller settlements – have no particular meaning in the national narrative beyond the understanding that they are "occupied territories." The human dimension of borderization, centered on the problem of maintaining contact between friends, relatives, family members and neighbors, tends to be marginalized in the hegemonic storyline of "Russian occupation," which values physical land explicitly defined as an "occupied territory"/sovereign Georgian territory. The storyline frames the lost farmlands primarily as the contraction of Georgian-controlled territory and as the creeping expansion of occupation.

A mural in central Gori, painted by famous Georgian stencil artist Gagosha in 2015 to commemorate the 2008 war, illustrates the hegemonic geopolitical storyline of occupation. It shows a little girl with scissors in her hand, and an adult man, standing (presumably) on the Georgian side of the barbed wire fence. In a reading of this mural, Natia Nadiradze (2019), a long-time researcher of borderization, notes that an apple tree, with apples fallen on the ground, and an empty grey landscape ('occupied territory'), remain just beyond the fence with no sign of humans on the other side. The absence reduces the little girl's desire to cut the fence to the national phantom pain of territorial loss, territorial occupation.

Photo 7. Mural in Gori visually narrates the territorial conception of the "occupation line." Author: Gela Merabishvili.

For most of the Georgians who live far from the border, e.g. in Tbilisi, borderization is something that they learn from the media representations. Space that is being borderized is represented, and therefore, understood and felt in cartographic terms, often in uniform color (grey, red) to distinguish it from the non-occupied territory of Georgia. The essence is therefore reduced to the territory, to the "twenty percent" that is "occupied by Russia."[57]

The cartographic shape of 'whole' Georgia in the top left corner (with Abkhazia and South Ossetia included and unmarked) amplifies this territorial-centered message. Inside the border contour, the words "The Price of Independence" suggests a particular causal relationship between Georgia's

[57] In reality, the combined area of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (defined within the limits of autonomous entities) is about 18% of what Georgians define as the country's sovereign territory.

political sovereignty and territorial integrity, that occupation of 20% of the country is a price to be paid to remain independent from Russia. Such fixation on territory hides the locally-significant human dimension of borderization and the continuous attempts by people on both sides of the fence to keep relations alive.

In contrast to the territory-centered geopolitical narrative of borderization, local residents' attitude and relationship with the border is primarily (although not solely) shaped by the desires to reconnect with the places and the people who remain on the South Ossetian side. For most of the adult population of this area, places beyond the border inside South Ossetia have been part of their everyday, intimate geography. Residents of Ergneti were very much integrated into the social and economic life of Tskhinvali. During the Soviet period, the town was part of their daily life. Many went to school and university in Tskhinvali, they shopped in the city and enjoyed theatre and other cultural events there. Elsewhere along the border, villages on either side had developed close links, such as Zardiantkari and Khelchua, Khurvaleti and Tsinagari/Dzukata, Mejvriskhevi and Ghromi. The border closure diminished these links.

Borderization more directly affects people in these villages by prohibiting the space of mobility and separating them from a place with which they have a deep emotional attachment. Residents of Nikozi and Ergneti, on the Georgian side, can see Tskhinvali from their homes but cannot reach. A large number of families in the border villages inside South Ossetia are ethnically mixed Georgian-Ossetian, which makes border crossing almost an inevitable necessity (Nadiradze, 2019).[59] "How can you rest, when you have your mother, your sister, your cousin over there?" explains a woman from the village of Karapila, on the Georgian side, whose many relatives remain in a village just across the boundary, visible from her home in Karapila (ShKIC, 2019b). Occasionally, especially when under the influence of alcohol, the feeling of attachment overwhelms the fear of detention and moves people across the border to visit relatives or places of worship inside South Ossetia (ShKIC, 2017; ShKIC, 2018).

[59] Interview with Aleksandre Bujiashvili (Mejvriskhevi, October 2019). A large number of residents in the villages on the Georgian side are Ossetians but can and do present themselves as Georgians. 60% of Khurvaletians are 'ethnically' Ossetian (Sordia, 2009).

These examples illustrate a specifically 'peripheral affect' of nostalgia (Khalvashi, 2015), common in the border area but absent elsewhere in Georgia where the hegemonic geopolitical affect is the cartographic anxiety visualized in the Gori mural. This is an affective experience that exists before and beyond representation (through media, maps, political speeches), something that is felt when being in space: inside, close to, or outside of the specific places and people (Thrift, 2008).

The "In-Betweeners"

Peripheral affects do not derive from people-to-people relations and sacred places only. They have a strong practical, material dimension to it, centered on people's everyday needs. The issue of land is central. Whereas the land is primarily a sovereign territory in national political discourse, locally, it is mainly a source of livelihood and income, a private or a communal (village) property. The local prism of the everyday necessities also shapes local practices around the border that performatively redefine its meaning and illustrate the gap between local and national discourses of borderization, territory and statehood.

The following quote from a respondent in Khurvaleti, whose language showed a comfortable 'fluency' and knowledge of hegemonic political discourses, illustrates the clash of local, more practical concerns and national, more ideological causes:

> There are people in these border-side villages, whom I call the 'sold for Russian pension.' They get both Russian and Georgia pensions, [they are] 'in-betweeners' [*shuashistebi*]. There are mixed families, those who live near barbed wires. They benefit if the Russian [border guard] shifts the border. They do not think in terms of the [Georgian] state. They are not interested in the concept of Georgia's unity, an independent Georgia. They only want to travel to Tskhinvali without obstacles.[60]

[60] Interview with Luda Salia (Khurvaleti resident).

The word *shuashisti* can be best translated into English as 'in-betweener': those who choose not to support or vote for any of the major political parties and therefore, they irritate politically agitated part of society with clear preferences and strong antagonistic attitudes towards the opponent. It is a derogatory term, emerged in recent years in the context of polarized political space between UNM and GD. The use of this term outside of the domestic political field and in the context of territorial conflict between Russia/South Ossetia and Georgia is not common.

However, its use in the context of borderization points towards a paradox. The line that barbed wires have demarcated is not a border according to the dominant Georgian perspective, but those who transgress and maintain a presence on both sides of it, those who actually defy the border-ness of the line, get a label of an in-betweener, disloyal half-member of the Georgian nation. From this officially articulated nationalist point of view, these people who remain in between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali and receive pensions both from the Georgian and Russian states 'are not interested in the unity of Georgia.' However, an alternative view would emphasize that these in-betweens represent a unified Georgia, one that acknowledges distinct geopolitical orientations within the whole territory that includes South Ossetia. These in-betweeners exemplify a possible future, in which territorial integrity accommodates heterogeneous political identities and the political organization of space, not just ethnic differences and cultural autonomy.

These in-betweeners expose the generally unproblematized link between the discourse of territorial integrity and ethnic supremacist form of nationalism. The discourse of territorial integrity, and its most recent and potent formulation in the form of 'occupation,' are merely territorialized, de-ethnicized visions of nationhood, originally articulated under the slogan "Georgia for Georgians!" The concept of 'territorial integrity' in Georgia has a particular, contextual meaning, one that has become naturalized over time. It articulates a territorially united Georgia where either ethnic minorities remain loyal vassals of majority Georgians or they will become Georgianized. Alternative forms of achieving territorial integrity, which would accommodate a de-centralized political power, for example, between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali, contradicts with nationalism (or this form of Georgian nationalism). Paradoxically, the desire 'to travel to Tskhinvali without obstacles' somehow becomes an interest that challenges, rather than complements, the idea of Georgia's territorial unity.

Such an in-between challenge to the dominant visions of nationhood and territory are multiple in the villages along the border. Another man in Gugutiantkari reacted with frustration to yet another extension of metal fences in the village by suggesting that "if the government cannot stop [borderization], let us unite with Russia again, the way we were before." His neighbor, in a separate conversation, repeated the same view: "We should not have separated from Russia. See what the independence brought to people?" (Aptsiauri, 2020).

This is often described as old people's nostalgia for the Soviet Union, but a more practical, pragmatic thinking based on personal and community experience explains much of this nostalgia. With the loss of access to Russia's market, poverty grew. Border residents regard Russia not only as a geopolitical problem but also as a solution for some of the current issues.

The Ergneti market is a particularly important place in this regard. Locals still feel its absence. The fallen apples on the Ossetian side, depicted on the mural in Gori, are implied to be left unpicked. They symbolize the land and the economic productivity that has been hurt by borderization. But missing from the mural are apple trees on the Georgian side, the fruit of which is picked but never sold, as the traditional market and supply chains to export those apples no longer exist, in part, due to the geopolitical orientation of Georgia away from Russia. For much of Georgia, the loss of the Ergneti market is unimportant but not for the locals, whose livelihood and daily lives were very much invested in the market and embedded in the economic system centered on the market. In the context of deteriorating economic conditions after 2008, local farmers have much more limited space to produce and sell agricultural products. The long-gone relative economic well-being and income from the Ergneti market in the early to mid-2000s has become an object of nostalgia. In the regional geopolitical field of the period, Ergneti played an essential role as it linked the post-communist periphery (Georgia, South Caucasus) with the center (Russian market) (Derluguian, 2004). It was an in-between place par excellence and space which formed such political identities.

A middle-aged male resident of Ergneti, whom I interviewed in September 2019, recalls:

> The Ergneti market was an ideal thing. It needed only some slight adjustments. Agricultural products of the whole Georgia came here and nothing remained to be sold. It went to Tskhinvali and Vladikavkaz and other cities of Russia. Quality was less of an issue

> and low-quality products were sold too. You had direct contact with Russia. Now we are told, 'Stay away from the Russian market,' but Europe itself tries to enter the Russian market.

This past personal experience and the present structure of economic underdevelopment have produced a particular geopolitical 'habitus' of the locals, which demonstrates some positive attitudes towards Russia. Even when the locals agree that "yes, Russia is an occupier," most of them still have "this dream and nostalgia" to "take the apple to Moscow." They view Russia as a culturally close and economically beneficial "friend" whose potentially positive influence in the area has been prevented by "politics."[61] My respondent from Ergneti (September 2019) underscores this distinction between Russia as a 'political' enemy and an 'economic' solution:

> The locals have become used to [the fenced border] and they continue a normal life, knowing that they cannot do much. Why do I need [activists from Tbilisi] to shout that 'Russia is an occupier!'?! They keep arriving here from Tbilisi with posters, [chanting] 'Occupation!'. The situation gets tense and then everybody leaves and the locals stay. I know with whom I am dealing with, but I want to live here. Russia comes here with force and invades, [but the Georgian government should] use diplomacy, we should recognize the reality.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated some of the contradictions between the local and the national visions of the border. I contrasted the meaning of 'creeping occupation' with local experience, in which human insecurity plays a central role and the discourse of sovereign territory are secondary. The border is a daily problem, tied to physical safety and livelihood, which requires the state's intervention. The state's practice of security attempts to address these insecurities but also navigates the geopolitical storylines articulated in Tbilisi. The practice of security must not escalate conflict but simultaneously deter a potential expansion of the "occupation line." The

[61] Interview with Nino Megrelishvili (Khviti resident).

exercise of security, however, deepens territorial separation across the border and undermines the very foundation – the idea of territorial integrity – which defines borderization as a problem in the first place.

This notion of territorial integrity faces challenges at the border. First, the local meanings of the border redefine the problem as a matter of inter-ethnic and localized social relationships in contrast to the totalizing vision of 'occupation,' which avoids the problematic aspects of ethnic politics by putting all the blame on the "Russian occupation." Second, the role of Russia looks different at the border, where residents have been trying to survive in the atmosphere of multiple wars and ever-worsening poverty in the past three decades. Enmity and brinksmanship with Russia do not help their legitimate desire to create a decent, stable and predictable future.

This peripheral perspective allows us to question the hegemonic geopolitical discourse of nationhood. In contrast to the political debates on borderization between UNM and GD, which centered on the competing views of ensuring security for Georgia and remained committed to the shared vision of territorial integrity, this chapter has reversed the hierarchy. By centering human security and the politics of 'in-betweenness,' the existing practices of security and the guiding notions of territory and nationhood become de-naturalized. The peripheral perspective, therefore, can reframe the domestic political debate stuck within the 'truth regime' of occupation.

4.5 Conclusion

The August War reframed the problem of territorial integrity in Georgia from separatism to occupation. According to the new hegemonic narrative, the territorial division of Georgia was the effect of Russian occupation and no longer of Ossetian separatism. The meta-narrative of "Russian occupation" gave a new meaning to the border as "occupation line": a place where occupation and occupied territories started. The frame of "Russian occupation" marginalized the ethnic dimension of the territorial conflict and the meaning of the border as an ethno-territorial boundary. Instead, the "occupation line" underscored a security threat of renewed Russian invasion and the division of the national territory by the foreign enemy.

Two critical events at the end of 2012 and early 2013 – polarization of Georgian politics following the UNM's loss of power to GD, and acceleration of border demarcation – catapulted these distinct meanings of "occupation line" into emerging political storylines that shaped the popular understanding of the border and the process of borderization. UNM proposed a new description of the situation: "creeping occupation." It expressed a spatially dynamic process resulting in the loss of the government-controlled territory that required urgent national security response. "Creeping occupation" expanded the political blame to cover not just Russia but also the existing Georgian government, under whose watch and soft approach ("appeasement") to Russia, the enemy was stealthily invading new territories of Georgia.

GD responded with its reframing of the security-centered understanding of the "occupation line." The central node of this new storyline was the 2008 August War. It defined borderization as a continuous Russian 'provocative action' aimed at dragging Georgia into war with Russia and further undermining Georgia's territorial integrity. In line with the understanding of the situation at the border as 'provocation,' the overarching goal of the government's security policy at the border was "restraint," "de-escalation" and "strategic patience" to prevent an escalation of violence and the repetition of the mistakes of 2008.

The politicization of borderization did not result in the questioning of territorial integrity. Within domestic politics, Russian infringement of Georgia's territorial sovereignty was something that "goes without saying." It was a shared geopolitical affect embedded into the storyline of "occupation" and the hegemonic geographic vision of Georgian nationhood and statehood in the borders of former Soviet Georgia, including all of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This interpretation of borderization as "occupation line," which is getting thicker, bolder and more visible, provided an overall shared conceptual background for partisan storylines with which political parties engaged in debates. The shared meaning of the boundary as "occupation line" and the commonsense understanding of the territorial integrity of Georgia produced a shared negative attitude across political parties and the wider public towards the border barriers.

This distinction between politically debated storylines of borderization and the overarching common meta-narrative of "occupation" is essential in understanding why border security did not emerge as the common-sense policy response against borderization. These political storylines

focused on one specific aspect, one particular meaning, of the South Ossetia boundary. Both "creeping occupation" and "provocation" storylines discussed the border as a security line but left the other meanings unarticulated. That unarticulated meaning was "occupation line" that divides the Georgian nation and territory.

The absence of active border security against borderization indicates a contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood. The UNM storyline defined the South Ossetia boundary as an insecurity line, a place where the security threat of "creeping occupation" had to be stopped. But according to the meta-narrative of "occupation," this was a narrow, second-order task compared to the primary task of reversing the "occupation," which could not have been done by strengthening the boundary. Any active Georgian effort to keep the enemy from further crossing the line would have solidified the "occupation line" and entrenched the status quo defined as "occupation."

Border security is a territorial policy. It produces the inside and the outside: two different territories. Having two territories (South Ossetia and 'Georgia proper'), rather than the single one ('whole Georgia' that includes South Ossetia), is the original problem of Georgia's territorial integrity. For the Georgian state in the case of South Ossetia, border security means keeping not just Russians out but also the territory of South Ossetia out. This could make sense if Georgia did not consider South Ossetia as part of the nation and sovereign territory. Instead, Georgia's hegemonic territorial vision actively seeks to erase the "occupation line," end the territorial division and extend control over the whole South Ossetia. The territorial logic of border security, therefore, directly contradicts the territorial logic of Georgia's nationhood and statehood. The contradiction has produced a quasi 'border security' practice that needs to strike a balance between providing (a sense of) security and preventing this line from solidifying into a border.

5. Israel's Security Fence

5.1 Introduction

In 2002, the Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, started construction of a security fence in the West Bank. Its primary goal was to protect Israeli citizens from Palestinian terrorism that originated in the cities and villages of the West Bank. Demarcating this line between Israeli citizens and Palestinian terrorists involved a division of a particular space. To many Israelis, especially religious and right-wing nationalists, this space is the Land of Israel, which encompasses the undisputed territory of Israel, within the state's original borders, and occupied Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank. Most Israeli Jews, including the government in its formal communication, refer to the West Bank with its historical Jewish name: Judea and Samaria. Israeli settlements that are scattered across the West Bank, containing more than 200,000 Jewish Israelis at the beginning of the construction, added another layer of controversy to the 'anti-terrorist' fence.

Physical separation of the parts of Jewish national territory – Jewish homeland – and a sizable number of Israeli citizens from the State of Israel constitutes the contradiction between the geographies of security and nationalism that emerged with the fence project. The case study will answer three central questions regarding the contradiction: How did this contradiction appear and what are its sources? How was the contradiction resolved in the process of policy-making? And, how has the physical presence of the fence on the ground materialized and territorialized this contradiction in practice?

These three questions divide and organize the case study of the Israeli fence in the West Bank into three respective chapters. The first chapter provides a conceptual introduction to the multiple territories (national, political, security) of Israel and the forms of nationalism associated with each territoriality. The genealogical account of changing and shifting territorial discourses regarding Israel's statehood, security and nationhood, centered around the question of Israel's eastern

border, aims to explain the discursive origins of Israel's security territory demarcated by the anti-terrorist fence. It also underscores the contradiction and the break this fence would create with the prior territorial politics and widely accepted understanding of national territory.

The second chapter is an account of the politics of resolving the contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood. This chapter contextualizes the territorial concepts introduced in the first chapter within the politics of the fence. This chapter shows that in contrast to initial public expectations that the route of the fence would become Israel's political border, the government attempted to de-politicize the meaning of the barrier and turn it into an already existing territorial framework of occupation and the settlement.

The final chapter confirms that Sharon's vision of the fence, as an element within Israel's continuous frontier politics, has materialized on the ground. Rather than setting a definite boundary that would mark the spaces of security and nationhood, the fence has become a tool for Israel's deepening and expanding territorial control of the West Bank.

The case study of the Israeli fence in the West Bank as a whole serves to make a broader argument about Israel's territorial nationalism. Several authors have previously identified the concept of the frontier as the dominant form, vision and practice of territorial nationalism in Israel (Hughes, 2020; Kemp, 1999; Kimmerling, 1983; Shafir, 1984). These authors have interpreted Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories as a middle-ground territorial politics between the full withdrawal to the pre-1967, the Green Line border, and the complete annexation of the occupied territories and the relocation of its eastern boundary along the Jordan River. Instead of choosing between the two – The Green Line or the Jordan River – as Israel's eastern political, security and national border, the successive governments have practiced frontier politics in the West Bank: gradual civilian and military expansion of territorial control at the expense of the local Palestinian physical, economic and political exercise of authority over the land.

Within the empirical context of the security fence, I have re-conceptualized this tension between the two forms of 'national territory' as a contradiction between the geographies of security and nationalism. The security discourse of the fence represents an addition to the long-established frontier politics and a new physical manifestation of Israel's frontier nationalism rather than a

movement towards defining the country's eastern border. Despite the common understanding of the fence as a boundary between Israel and Palestine, by selectively legitimating and delegitimating the Green Line as a border, the fence further contributes to blurring the boundary between Israel and the Palestinian territories and reproduces Israel's frontier nationalism. Such a design and an operation of the barrier maintains its security function (demarcation of the land and restriction of the Palestinian access into Israel) and allows a continuous Israeli practice of unbounded territoriality towards achieving the nationalist goal – full military, civilian and eventually political control over the entire Land of Israel.

5.2 Genealogy of Border

Introduction

This chapter traces a history of the question of Israel's eastern border with the Palestinian territorial entity and its predecessors. The goal is to map out discursive formations that structured key Israeli decision-makers' geopolitical reasoning about Israel's statehood, territory and its eastern border. Essentially, this chapter identifies territorial discourses of security and nationalism that shaped Israeli geopolitical reasoning at different critical junctures of modern history.

The chapter is divided into three parts, each constituting a critical historical juncture/period. The first part deals with the emergence of the border question in the years before the establishment of Israel, starting with the politicization of the idea of partitioning the British Mandate of Palestine and ending with the appearance of the Green Line border with Jordan's West Bank. The second part covers the decade following the Six-Day/June War in 1967 and the Israeli debates and indecision regarding the West Bank territory between the policies of withdrawal, annexation, military occupation and civilian settlement of the land. The third part examines the period of the Oslo peace process and the political division of Israeli society over the two-state solution.

In each episode, I pay special attention to influential cartographic plans of war, defense, land settlement and peace-making, but also to central political slogans, tropes and storylines that

articulate the main Israeli decision-makers' geographic visions of nationhood and security. English-language academic literature, mostly by Israeli historians, geographers and political scientists, serves as the main source of data for this chapter.

Partition (1937-1949)

When British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour promised the Zionists "a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine" in 1917, he did not provide a territorial definition. At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the Zionist Organization proposed a territorial plan for the future "Jewish national home," which extended well beyond the Jordan River (Biger, 2004, pp. 74–79; Gilbert, 2012, p. 9). To David Ben-Gurion, one of the leaders of the Zionist Organization at the time, this map was based on strategic and economic reasoning instead of historical and Biblical arguments. The latter would have suggested a much larger territorial entity – "from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates" – which did not stand a chance of being accepted by leading powers. Yet, the Paris Peace Conference rejected the 'modest' Zionist proposal too (Biger, 2004, pp. 58–60). The British decision to establish the Emirate of Transjordan (later, Kingdom of Jordan) east of the Jordan River in 1921 formalized the territory of the British Mandate for Palestine between the river to the east and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. The decision significantly influenced Jewish spatial imaginaries of the Land of Israel. It created a new territorial paradigm within which the maximalist territorial claim was limited to the Jordan River as the eastern border of the future Jewish state

(Behar, 2011; Gil-Har, 2000). Some, known as the Revisionist Zionists, opposed to such reduction

of the Land of Israel and stuck with the expanded territorial vision, which included both sides of the Jordan River (Havrelock, 2007). These were forerunners of today's governing party Likud, but the party has long distanced from this territorial claim. Only the most extreme right-wing fringe articulates this territorial vision today (Burston, 2019).

The idea of Jewish statehood was mostly dormant during the first decade and a half of the British rule in Palestine. During this time, the Jewish population was steadily growing, mainly along the Mediterranean coast and the north-eastern region of Galilee. The question of Jewish statehood and its territory and borders emerged suddenly in 1936-37 in response to a widespread Arab rebellion across Mandatory Palestine, partially directed against the growing Jewish presence. In response to this security and political challenge, the British administration established the Royal Commission, chaired by Lord Peel, to study the origins of the revolt and recommend solutions. The Peel Commission report in July 1937 put forward the partition of Palestine as the most optimal long-term territorial solution to the emerging Arab-Jewish territorial conflict.[62]

The Peel Commission Plan proposed dividing Mandatory Palestine into three territories: Jewish and Arab states and a smaller British-administered central area stretching from the coastal city of Jaffa to Jerusalem. The Plan allotted most of the coastal area of Palestine and the northern region of Galilee to the Jewish state, but this amounted to only about one-fifth of Mandatory Palestine. These were areas where the absolute majority of Jewish-established towns and smaller settlements were located, but the territory included as many Arabs as Jews. The plan suggested the transfer of these Arab residents to the proposed Arab state to homogenize the Jewish state and make space for future Jewish immigration (El-Eini, 2015, p. 326). The commission excluded the mountainous region of Palestine, the area currently known as the West Bank, from the future Jewish state, where hardly any Jewish settlements existed at the time.

The Peel Partition Plan is significant for three main reasons. First, it popularized the concept of territorial partition as opposed to a unified Arab-Jewish state across entire Palestine. Second, it normalized the particular nature of these proposed states as demographically homogeneous entities, achievable via population transfers. Third, it created a specific territorial template for partitioning the land into national territories, limiting the Jewish state to western and northern regions and excluding Jerusalem and other important Biblical sites.

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[62] The concept of territorial partition was itself a tried and tested British imperial practice, functioning like a SOP across the colonial territories in response to ethno-religious conflict (Sinanoglou, 2019).

The plan caused a split within the Zionist leadership between the proponents, who prioritized a state with a Jewish demographic majority, and the opponents, who prioritized territorial wholeness of the Land of Israel. The term *Greater Israel* emerged in this period as a synonym for the Land of Israel (*Eretz Israel*) between the sea and the river, and as an alternative to a territorially modest Jewish state proposed by the Peel Commission. Ian Lustick writes that the "image of attaining so purely Jewish a state [as the one proposed by Peel] fired Ben-Gurion's imagination" and led him to accept the territorially modest statehood (Lustick, 2019, p. 142). Zionism's original goal and the categorical imperative was a state with Jewish demographic predominance to end a centuries-long status of Jews as "a minority everywhere and a majority nowhere" (Lustick, 2019, p. 141). At the 20th Zionist Congress convened in August 1937 to discuss the Peel Partition Plan, Ben-Gurion convinced the territorial hardliners to accept the plan by framing the proposed Jewish state as "a critical stage on our way to fulfilling Big Zionism": the state's expansion across the entire Land of Israel (Behar, 2011, p. 103).

Two maps, drawn by the Jewish Agency, chaired by Ben-Gurion, illustrate the competing territorial narratives of Jewish nationhood in the pre-statehood period. The first, drawn in 1938, was a counter-proposal to the British government and a modification of the Peel Partition Plan. The map only slightly expands the eastern border along the main perimeter to widen the narrow coastal strip and adds the western part of Jerusalem, where most of the city's Jews lived, to the proposed Jewish state. The map excludes the Palestinian areas with a large Arab population and prioritizes a state with a Jewish majority (Katz & Sandler, 1995). A spatial analysis of the Jewish settlement in Palestine after the publication of the Peel Partition Plan further confirms that the demographic logic of statehood guided the process. Most of the new settlements were established within the boundaries of the proposed Jewish state and in the vicinity of Jerusalem, which already had a sizeable Jewish population. The settlements near Jerusalem would link the city with the coast. The primary goal of the settlement was to strengthen the demographic majority within the limited territory rather than expand the settlement geography and risk a demographically homogeneous statehood (Katz, 1994).

The second map, drawn in 1946, was a response to a British-American recommendation against partitioning Palestine and a proposal for a binational state. The Jewish Agency countered with a

new partition plan with even more expanded territory under Jewish control (70% of Palestine). However, the Jewish Agency's additional territorial claims did not cover the Biblical lands of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). Cartographic gaze, instead, was directed at the thinly populated southern areas of the Negev and the coast of the Dead Sea. These areas would add further strategic advantage (access to the Sinai Peninsula and the Red Sea) and natural resources. The Zionist leaders described this territory as "a viable Jewish state in a suitable portion of the Land of Israel" (Ben-Dror, 2014, p. 22). In 1947, Ben-Gurion presented this territorial vision of statehood before the UN Committee on Palestine as a formula: "the existing Jewish settlements, supplemented by the uninhabited areas of Palestine." Such a state would have included larger territory than the earlier 1938 plan envisaged but would fall short of the whole Land of Israel. Ben-Gurion justified this formula to other Zionist leaders by insisting that "we need a Jewish state" (Ben-Dror, 2014, p. 28).

The UN partitioned Mandatory Palestine in November 1947 into Jewish and Arab states. Jerusalem was designated to become an UN-administered district. The UN Partition Plan incorporated many of the Zionist demands and allotted almost three-fifths of entire Palestine to the Jewish state. The UN decision led to Palestinian Arab riots, which turned into a full-scale offensive of neighboring Arab countries against Israel in May 1948, following Israel's declaration of independence and the British departure from Palestine. But in this intervening period, the Jewish leaders and military forces enacted a program of ethnic cleansing, known as Plan Dalet, to both gain physical control of the areas allotted by the UN to Israel and expel Arab residents from there. Military operations, carried out in April-May 1948, also aimed to capture Jerusalem and create territorial-demographic contiguity between the city and the major Jewish population centers on the coastal plain (Khalidi, 1988; Pappé, 2006).

During the subsequent war and armistice talks with the neighboring Arab countries, and despite enough military power to occupy entire Palestine, Ben-Gurion limited Israel's territorial claims to the Negev desert in the south, Galilee in the north and a narrow strip between the coastal plain – where most of Israel's main cities, including Tel Aviv, were located – and the densely populated Arab area of the central mountainous region (West Bank/Judea and Samaria). To the Israeli government, border modification along this narrow strip was an "essential security measure" (Ben

-Dror, 2012, p. 893). The eventual armistice line of 1949 between Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan became known as the Green Line, initially marked on the negotiation map with a green pencil.

While negotiating with Jordan, Ben-Gurion resisted calls from military commanders, particularly Yigal Allon, to occupy Judea and Samaria. The Biblical-nationalist quest for Judea and Samaria contradicted with Ben-Gurion's careful modification of Israel's eastern border aimed at gaining some strategic depth along the coastal plain while preventing the inclusion of a large Arab population inside the Jewish state. In the aftermath of the war, when asked why he did not "liberate the whole land," Ben-Gurion cited a "danger" of "a million Arabs in the State of Israel" (Katz & Sandler, 1995, p. 163).[63] The Israeli leadership and the Knesset were satisfied with the agreement. Still, Menachem Begin, the leader of a newly-formed right-wing revisionist party Herut (forerunner of Likud), harshly criticized the government's territorial policy as "giving away an enormous chunk of the homeland" (Ben-Dror, 2012, p. 896).

Occupation (1967-1977)

Israel did not formally recognize the 1949 armistice lines as its international borders. To this day, the Israeli Constitution does not define the country's territorial boundaries. Although in everyday speech, the Green Line became "border" in the first years of independence, its meaning as a national border defining Israel's national territory did not take root among the public. Counterintuitively, the main reason that prevented the redefinition of the Green Line into the national border was IDF's border security practice aimed at sealing the line against the Palestinian infiltrations from the West Bank. To deal with the issue of infiltrations, IDF started military

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[63] According to the UN Partition Plan 1947, 500,000 Jews and 400,000 Arabs would have ended up living in the Jewish state with another 100,000 Jews in the internationally administered district of Jerusalem (El-Eini, 2015, p. 366). After the 1948-49 war, an Arab share in the Israeli population decreased dramatically as a result of the mass expulsion (known as the Nakba). Approximately 150-180,000 Arabs remained in the enlarged territory of post-war Israel compared (Abu-Sitta, 2010, p. 139). The narrow strip along the coastal plain that Israel acquired in the armistice negotiations covered 400 square km and 20,000 mostly Arab residents (Ben-Dror, 2012, p. 896). Two largest Arab towns within the strip, Tulkarm and Qalqilya, with combined population of about 14,000 before the 1948-49 war, were left on the Jordanian side of the Green Line (Abu-Sitta, 2010, pp. 34, 100).

incursions and border patrols deeper inside the West Bank. Routine breaching of the border by security forces simultaneously functioned as a territorial ritual and a meaning-making discursive practice. Instead of promoting the meaning of the Green Line as a marker of the national territory, IDF's 'border wars' had the opposite effect. They redefined the Green Line as a frontier to be breached (Kemp, 1998; Morris, 1997).

The practice of offensive border security against the Palestinian infiltrations established, what Palestinian geographer Ghazi Falah calls, Israel's "buffer zone mentality," which normalizes military expeditions beyond the border as a defensive measure (Falah, 2004). This particular spatial mentality led to the widely shared idea that the Green Line was an 'indefensible border' and Israel needed a 'defensible border' further to the east, ideally along the Jordan River, to acquire strategic depth against a renewed military attack from Arab neighbors (Bar-On, 2000; Morris, 1997). Ben-Gurion himself seemed dissatisfied with the new borders that his decades-long effort had created, complaining that "our border is the worst conceivable… extremely long and meandering… lacking any natural defense" (Bar-On, 2000, p. 110). Therefore, already in the first decade of statehood, Israel's security geography started to align with the maximalist territorial vision of nationhood with the Jordan River as a territorial marker of the 'defensible border' and the Land of Israel.

Israel's victory in the 1967 June (Six-Day) War extended its military control over the entire Palestine/Land of Israel and beyond. The UN Security Council's Resolution 242 introduced a principle of "land for peace" to end the military occupation through diplomacy: Arab recognition of and peaceful coexistence with Israel in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from the territories it had occupied in June. And while the Arab countries resolved at the end of that summer not to recognize Israel, Israel's political class was split between those who advocated for retaining and annexing the newly occupied territories, and those who supported the "land for peace" formula. The former group viewed the West Bank not as "occupied Palestinian territory" but as "liberated Judea and Samaria." The latter regarded the territory as "a nice dowry," which came with "an unwanted bride" of Palestinian demography (Lustick, 2019). Besides ensuring a more peaceful and secure regional environment for the country, "land for peace" could prevent 1.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza from becoming the citizens of Israel. The split was not just

between the governing left-wing Labor (Mapai) and the right-wing opposition Herut but also within the Labor itself (Tessler, 2009, pp. 411–412, 466–468).

This was reminiscent of the debates over the Peel Partition Plan between the "Land of Israel" camp and the "demographic majority" camp but with a crucial distinction that this time the statehood was not under question and the geography of state's security had changed, exemplified in the discourse of "defensible borders." This time, the strategic-military discourse of defensible borders lent an appearance of pragmatism and rationality to territorial expansion and delegitimated limited territoriality. Crucially, the seemingly rational, politically neutral and purely strategic spatial vision of security was itself constituted by the broader cultural idioms and nationalist affects. For example, Moshe Dayan, Labor's Minister of Defense and a celebrated military general, who became a leading voice in articulating strategic visions for managing the occupied territories, famously declared in the wake of the Six-Day War: "We've returned to Anatot and Shiloh [*Biblical holy places*], never to leave them again" (Shapira, 1997, p. 670). Later he published a book titled "*Living with the Bible: A Warrior's Relationship with the Land of His Forebears*." Another Labor minister and a former military commander, Yigal Allon, who played a crucial role in designing Israel's policy in the West Bank, defined "defensible borders" along the Jordan River as a "vision of Greater Israel from strategic viewpoint" (Kemp, 1999, p. 86).

Within weeks from the Six-Day War, Allon and Dayan presented their plans for resolving the dilemma between withdrawal and annexation. Allon's plan envisaged annexation of the sparsely-populated eastern strip of the West Bank – the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea coast – as a security zone. This would become Israel's eastern "defensible border." This 15 to 25 km wide strip from north to south, covering almost a third of the West Bank's area, would then be populated by Jewish settlements. The rest of the West Bank (excluding the Greater Jerusalem Region), or about 60% of the area, would be returned to Jordan. According to Allon, this plan was a compromise middle ground between the two contradictory policy options: withdrawal or annexation. In an op-ed in *Foreign Affairs*, Allon presented this plan as a way to "preserve [Israel's] Jewish character" while acquiring "strategic depth" via "absolute Israeli control over the strategic zone to the east of the dense Arab population." Beyond "this desert zone [which] is almost devoid of population," Allon argued that "Israel should not annex an additional and significant Arab population" and instead,

"leave almost all of the Palestinian Arab population of the West Bank under Arab rule" (Allon, 1976, p. 47).

Dayan's plan, also known as "Five Fists," proposed building Israeli settlement complexes on the hilltops outside of the five main Palestinian urban centers: Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron. Each "fist" would consist of a military base, a town, a few agricultural settlements, and a road connecting them with the Israeli territory inside the Green Line. In contrast to Allon's linear defense along the Jordan Valley, Dayan's "five fists" would have created a network of military-civilian blocs embedded deep in the Palestinian populated areas along the West Bank's central mountainous ridge. Proximity to the main Palestinian population centers would have allowed the Israeli military to react quickly to any security escalations originating across the West Bank and, therefore, to reduce the security function of the Green Line border (Arieli, 2017, pp. 19–20).

While maintaining control over the territory, Dayan intended to grant autonomy to the West Bank Palestinians. In contrast to Allon's "territorial compromise" of partial annexation, Dayan intended a "functional compromise": territorial control without formal annexation to deny Israeli citizenship to local Palestinians. Both Allon and Dayan sought to reconcile demographic and territorial visions of nationalism. Allon divided the West Bank into strategically valuable sparsely populated areas and demographically problematic densely populated areas, which guided his selective annexation. Dayan would divide territory from its residents, assuming responsibility for the former but not for the latter. Although historian Mark Tessler quotes Dayan saying that "If it threatens the essence of our Jewish state, then I prefer a smaller one with a Jewish majority," Dayan's rejection of annexation was not an endorsement of withdrawal either (Tessler, 2009, p. 470). Dayan's Palestinian autonomy would "lack geographical borders, as though referring to a population detached from the land upon which it lived" (Kemp, 1999, p. 88).

Despite different approaches to the problem of territorial and population management, both plans delegitimized the Green Line as a political, security and national border of Israel, leaving only a demographic meaning to it. Instead, these plans legitimized Israel's strategic, administrative and territorial-political expansion into the West Bank. Israeli sociologist Adriana Kemp has observed that the Allon-Dayan rivalry transformed the larger national(ist) disagreement about

withdrawal/annexation into "an instrumental debate over how to rule [the occupied territories]" (Kemp, 1999, p. 83). In other words, while the Israeli polity was seeking to decide where to draw the eastern border, along the Green Line (withdrawal policy) or the Jordan River (annexation policy), the Allon-Dayan duo normalized a different territorial approach, a policy of continuous occupation and settlement. Instead of a border, they established a frontier in the West Bank without a clear boundary for Israel's sovereign territory. And rather than a clean break from the pre -1967, the frontier politics normalized through the Allon-Dayan plans was a continuation of the earlier discursive practice of blurring the Green Line via routine security breaches and military raids inside the West Bank (Kemp, 1998, 1999).

The Labor government 'decided not to decide' between annexation and withdrawal and carried out multiple, small-scale practices that expanded Israel's territorial control over the land without annexing it. East Jerusalem had been merged with West Jerusalem already in June 1967 by extending the latter's municipal boundaries, rather than Israel's sovereign borders (which it formally and legally did not have). The Palestinians of East Jerusalem would be exempt from Israeli citizenship. The government granted them the status of permanent residents without voting rights in the national elections (Lustick, 2019). For the rest of the West Bank, the government established the Military Governorate, which transformed the Green Line into an internal administrative boundary between Israel's sovereign and occupied territories. It did not disappear, but its political function substantially changed (Newman, 2013b). Between 1967 and 1975, the new military administration turned a quarter of the West Bank land into a 'closed military zone,' off-limits to Palestinians, mostly in the Jordan Valley in line with the Allon Plan (Etkes, 2015).

The closed military zones were used to establish settlements, initially in the Jordan Valley and the vicinity of Jerusalem but later in other areas, including near Palestinian cities and villages. The government's settlement and security policy soon provided an administrative, legal, territorial and political framework for non-state religious-nationalist groups to settle in other areas of the "liberated patrimony" of the Land of Israel (Tessler, 2009, p. 467). Despite the government's more territorially limited plan of the settlement, informally based on the Allon Plan, it still provided necessary logistical support to the religious settlers who defied the state-sanctioned geography of the settlement (Berger, 2016; Gorenberg, 2007).

The settlers found a more loyal political ally in Likud's Ariel Sharon, also a former military commander, who advocated for widening the settlement geography to enhance Israel's security and strategic depth. Sharon opposed a linear vision of defense offered by Allon along the Jordan Valley. After Likud came into power in 1977, Sharon became a minister and the head of the Ministerial Committee for Settlement, the post previously held by Allon. The same year Sharon presented a new plan which would create two 'vertical' security/settlement strips in the east (along the Jordan Valley) and the west (Along the Green Line) of the West bank. 'Horizontal' chains of settlements and highways would link the two 'vertical' strips. These horizontal lines would divide the Palestinian populated central region into smaller enclaves, surrounded by Israeli security zones and settlement chains from all sides. The western security zone would further blur the Green Line as Israel's political, security and demographic eastern boundary (Arieli, 2017; Weizman, 2017).

Sharon's plan offered a more expansive and invasive blueprint for a long-term settlement of the West Bank than the previous plans. Still, it did not recommend annexation of the entire territory. Likud accelerated frontier politics in the West Bank but maintained the principle of territorial expansion and exclusion of the Arab population from citizenship (Lustick, 2019). Within the first ten years of the Likud leadership, the settler population grew from about 4,400 settlers in 31 settlements across the West Bank to 60,000 across 110 settlements (Hareuveni, 2010).

Separation (1992-2000)

The outbreak of Intifada in 1987 – the Palestinian uprising against the continued occupation which lasted for six years – put an end to the policy of blurring and erasing the Green Line. Sporadic violence (mostly stone-throwing) against Israeli settlers and citizens created a "geography of fear" when many Israelis stopped traveling to the West Bank (Yiftachel, 2002, p. 237). The Likud government enacted border control, set up checkpoints and resorted to periodic full closures of the West Bank along the Green Line. The new practice of border security ended the virtually unrestricted Palestinian mobility into Israel since 1967. The Green Line revived as a quasi-political and security border after twenty years of openness (Newman, 2010).

The principle of "land for peace" and the policy of territorial withdrawal from the occupied territories acquired a new rationale within the new security environment of Intifada. According to the new reasoning, the end of occupation and the separation from Palestinians would address the root cause of violence and provide a physical mechanism in the form of a demarcated border to keep the violence out. Furthermore, the new territorial discourse of security overlapped with demographic nationalism, which stipulated the separation of Israel from the West Bank to maintain the Jewish majority inside Israel. The Intifada created a mutually co-constitutive relationship between border (the Green Line), security (geography of fear) and nationalism (Jewish majority within the limited territory), and popularized the idea of separation (Newman, 1995, 2002; Waxman, 2008). The share of Israelis supporting withdrawal from the occupied territories increased during the Intifada from 43% in 1986 to 60% in 1993 (Waxman, 2008).

The Labor started to articulate the territorially limited nationalism and the diplomatic program "land for peace" more vocally than in the post-1967 period. Its leader Yitzhak Rabin endorsed the two-state solution of the territorial conflict and initiated the peace talks with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Oslo. The Intifada provided a security rationale for the political argument towards the two-state solution. Prompted by the death of an Israeli teenage girl, stabbed by a Palestinian in May 1992, Rabin declared that Israel must "take Gaza out of Tel Aviv." This became the year's election slogan and a condensed articulation of the program of separation, which contributed to the Labor's victory (Makovsky, 2004).

The choice of Tel Aviv and Gaza as metonyms that stand in for larger entities is not random and neutral; it emphasizes a particular meaning, identity, or trait which is more specifically associated with the metonym and, therefore, reframes the meaning of that larger entity (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Such metonyms, just like metaphors, historical analogies and visual images, allow the practitioners of geopolitics to narrate complex social world into coherent, easy-to-understand stories through which then wider public acquires geopolitical knowledge and convictions (Ó Tuathail, 2002).

By promising to keep "Gaza out of Tel Aviv," Rabin distilled his vision of Israel's geopolitical problem and presented an appropriate course of action towards its resolution. Gaza, a small but overpopulated Palestinian urban center, was simultaneously a Hamas stronghold and the source of

terrorist activities during the Intifada. “Gaza” described Palestine as a dangerous place requiring separation to secure Israel from short-term (terrorism) and long-term (demographic) threats. In this regard, the two-state solution represents a security policy as well as an updated spatial configuration of the Israeli nationhood.

Likud’s PM Yitzhak Shamir, meanwhile, maintained before the Knesset audience in 1991 that “territorial wholeness” [of the Land of Israel] was an “a priori principle” and “beyond argument” (Yiftachel, 2002, p. 234). Besides emphasizing Jewish historical and religious link to Gaza, Judea and Samaria and the meaning of these territories as “homeland,” the Likud campaign also relied on the security discourse of “defensible border,” emphasized the strategic importance of the West Bank and defined the Green Line as an indefensible border (Waxman, 2008). The campaign included maps that depicted the proximity of the future Palestinian state – necessarily defined as a terrorist state – to major Israeli cities. One campaign poster read: “Today Kiryat Shmona, tomorrow Tel Aviv,” recasting Israel’s main city as a victim of Katyusha rocket attacks (Newman, 1995, p. 31).

After the electoral victory in 1993, Rabin went on to sign the peace agreement with the PLO’s Arafat in September 1993. To facilitate a gradual Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza and an eventual extension of the Palestinian Authority’s control over these territories, the negotiating sides agreed on a complex division of space into three areas: A, B and C. The ideas about Israeli security that guided the spatial division of the West Bank into distinct territories were “a throwback” to security-settlement plans that dominated territorial discourses in the post-1967 period (Newman, 1996). Palestinian urban areas would constitute Area A, where the Palestinian Authority – pre-state Palestinian administration headed by Arafat – would manage civilian affairs and security. Rural Palestinian areas made up Area B, where Israel would control security and the PA would be limited to civilian matters. The rest of the West Bank, about 60% of the total, would fall within Area C. The territory included the Jordan Valley, as well as highways that connected numerous smaller patches of A and B, natural parks, and Israeli settlements. Here, Israel’s Ministry of Defense, represented by its Civilian Administration in Judea and Samaria, would remain the ultimate authority on all matters until the eventual establishment of the Palestinian state within the mutually agreed borders. As part of the military withdrawal from Gaza’s Area A, Israel

started to build a fence around the strip in 1994. The fence was the first materialization of Israel's separation from Palestine (Gregory, 2004; Peters, 2013a).

Throughout the 1990s, the peace process divided Israeli society into roughly equal camps of supporters and opponents. Despite such polarization, Jewish Israelis held a consensual view regarding the Palestinian threat to Israel, encompassing both the safety of Israeli citizens and the state's Jewish identity (Hermann & Yuchtman-Yaar, 2002). At the end of 1994 and the beginning of 1995, a series of terrorist attacks in Israeli cities shocked the Israeli public as the death toll from Palestinian violence exceeded 100 since the signing of the Oslo agreement. Rabin relied on this consensus over security threats, strengthened by the affective force of terror and death, to make a case for "separation as philosophy." He declared that territorial separation by a "clear border" between Israel and Palestine was necessary to protect "Jewish residents of the state of Israel" from "terrorism" and prevent "1.8 million Arabs" in Gaza and the West Bank from weakening Israel's Jewish character and strengthening Hamas. Under threat was not just individual lives but the survival of Israel as a "Jewish national home" (Makovsky, 2004, p. 4). Rabin then set up an inter-ministerial commission to determine the location and the functioning of the separation barrier, but his assassination in November 1995 ended the fence project. Shimon Peres, who became the interim PM, advocated for close integration between Israel and Palestine, rather than separation, as a foundation for peaceful coexistence.

The settlers, represented by the YESHA Council (a coalition of the settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza), interpreted Rabin's separation policy as "cutting the country into two… under the excuse of security" (Fletcher, 1995). The council's chairman Israel Harel promised to remove any fence that would divide the Land of Israel. The religious-nationalists experienced the Oslo period as "[t]he collapse of the 'Greater Land of Israel' dream" (Newman, 2013a, p. 265). The sense of ongoing loss led to the rise of religious-nationalist violence against Palestinians but not only. One of the members of the religious-nationalist movement, who murdered Rabin in November 1995, claimed that "Rabin had no right to relinquish any part of Jewish historical and God-given homeland. He is, therefore, a traitor who deserves death" (Yiftachel, 2002, p. 238).

Ariel Sharon, at the time one of the leaders of the opposition, criticized Rabin's separation fence as a "silly" policy (Sharon, 1995). During one of his meetings with settlers, he argued against

building walls around Israeli settlements to deter Palestinian attacks, because "If you put up a fence, you put a limit to your expansion." Instead, he suggested, "we should place the fences around the Palestinians" (Weizman, 2017, p. 133). His opposition to the fence was part of his general rejection of the two-state solution. In October 1998, Sharon announced his opposition to any Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank as part of the peace process and publicly called on the settlers to "run and grab" as much land as they could because "everything we take now will stay ours. Everything we don't grab will go to them" (BBC, 2014).

Facing the threat of Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria and heeding Sharon's call for expansionism, settlers doubled down on settlement-building. The hope was to either prevent the anticipated separation by making the Palestinian space non-contiguous or expand the lived geography of Israeli settlements so much that the eventual boundary would leave minimal land to the future Palestinian state (Kershner, 2016). Netanyahu's Likud government (1996-1999) stalled the withdrawal process and encouraged the settlement expansion. Despite Israel's commitment under the Oslo framework not to establish new settlements, the government gave tacit support to smaller outposts, made up of a handful of caravan homes. At least 40 new outposts appeared across the West Bank in the Likud years (Peace Now, 2020). By the turn of the century, the settlement population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, had exceeded 350,000 (Hareuveni, 2010).

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the emergence and evolution of Israel's eastern border and the structure of territorial discourses that gave meaning and physical form to this boundary. Its initial appearance in the form of the Green Line was the result of David Ben-Gurion's geopolitical reasoning and his practice of politics, diplomacy and war. Ben-Gurion prioritized a territorially limited state with a Jewish majority over a territorially larger entity where Jews would be in the minority.

The tensions between the two visions of nationhood remained after the independence, initially manifested in the discursive practices of border security that breached the Green Line and prevented the crystallization of Israel's 'geo-body' within the state's original borders. The occupation of the West Bank further strengthened the public understanding of these areas as part of

the national territory – Judea and Samaria – rather than the temporary occupied foreign lands that should be returned to its prior owner. Civilian expansion swiftly followed the military, blurring the pre-1967 border and integrating the land into Israel gradually, one settlement at a time. The presence of a large Palestinian population, however, prevented the successive governments from formally annexing the West Bank and officially expanding the state's eastern border to match the Land of Israel spatially. Yet, in practice, by militarizing the Jordan Valley, Israel relocated its security border along the boundaries of Biblical homeland.

The first Intifada destabilized the overlap between security and national territories and created strong public support against the occupation and the deepening/expanding settlement. This allowed Labor's Rabin to articulate a policy of separation from Palestinians and Palestine, as a vision of new Israeli nationhood and security, centered on the existence of a clear, demarcated border based on the Green Line. The return to the politics of borders and bounded territoriality met a strong challenge from the right-wing opposition. The opponents had gotten accustomed to the frontier politics that allowed constant territorial expansion and the pursuit of the Land of Israel dream. By the turn of the century, the two competing forms of politics, nationalism, territoriality and geopolitical storylines acquired distinct physical and visual symbols: Rabin's separation fence – planned but unbuilt – along the Green Line and Sharon's mushrooming settlement outposts on the hilltops of Judea and Samaria.

5.3 Politics of Fence

Introduction

Following the discursive-argumentative perspective on practical geopolitical reasoning, this chapter defines the fence as a public policy devised to solve a particular problem. From this perspective, I study practical geopolitical reasoning of the key Israeli decision-makers who influenced the construction of the West Bank barrier between 2000 and 2005. In this chapter, I identify how politicians mobilized existing territorial discourses of nationhood and security to argue for or against the fence.

I have divided the chapter into four parts. The first part describes the geopolitical context between 2000 and 2002 in which Israel's eastern border emerged as a kind of problem that required a physical barrier. This part identifies how Israeli politicians and the public defined the problem and formulated solutions. Here I emphasize how existing territorial discourses of nationalism and security informed the political meanings/definitions of the border problem and the type of solutions offered. The second part focuses on a brief period in the middle of 2002, when the Israeli government decided to build the fence. During this time, the main lines of argumentation for and against the fence crystallized into geopolitical storylines. These new storylines of the fence rehearsed and updated established nationalist and security discourses of territory/border. The third part focuses on the construction period and the government's navigation between the competing storylines of the fence in 2002/2003. This part traces the process of geopolitical accommodation that shaped and modified the government's initial geopolitical strategy, and with it, the physical and spatial form of the fence and its route. The final fourth part focuses on the decisions by the Israeli government that allowed to reach the discursive closure of the border problem. The discursive-analytical account ends in 2005 when the government approved the final full route of the fence and decided to withdraw from parts of the occupied territories selectively.

I rely on three main types of data in this chapter. First, an essential source of data is the *Haaretz* articles of the period, and to a lesser degree, the bimonthly settlement reports by the Foundation of Middle East Peace. Occasionally, I have used other English-language journalistic sources, Israeli or international, to gather information on specific events. Second, research reports, academic articles and books written about the barrier provide further information about material/spatial elements of the fence and political decisions regarding the fence and its route. Third, I have used the governmental documents, decisions and resolutions made about the fence and accompanying maps available via the official website of the Israeli government.

Problem Definitions and Geopolitical Strategies (2000-2002)

Labor's Ehud Barak, who become prime minister in 1999, revived Rabin's concept of separation [*hafrada*] and popularized in a slogan: "They are there and we are here." A firm believer in the

principle that “good fences make good neighbors,” Barak engaged in the negotiations with the Palestinians to agree on a border that would separate the two states and ensure a peaceful resolution of the conflict (Makovsky, 2000). “Separation by means of clearly marked and fenced borders with controlled passageways will promote a healthier relationship,” argued Barak ahead of the Camp David summit in the summer of 2000, while “the alternative is a bi-national state prone to conflicts and internal rifts such as Belfast or Bosnia, or being an immoral and ostracized apartheid state” (Makovsky, 2004, pp. 6–7). These analogies served him to argue against the religious-nationalist opponents of the two-state solution and reframe the nationalist dream of the Land of Israel as a dangerous idea for Israel’s security and identity.

The outcome of the Camp David Summit, which ended without agreement, strengthened Barak’s case for separation but this time unilateral rather than mutually agreed one. According to the popular Israeli narrative, Barak made a “generous offer” to Arafat; The Palestinian leader rejected it and confirmed that Israel has “no partner for peace” (Peters, 2013b). The Al-Aqsa Intifada, which started in October 2000, strengthened the Israeli’s public’s growing conviction in the “no partner” thesis, which in turn raised the urgency of unilateral separation in the form of physical barriers along the Green Line. In November, Barak decided to construct a series of obstacles along the northern section of the Green Line border (Lein, 2003). Barak’s fence had a double – security and political – function: to contain Palestinian Intifada and unilaterally set a boundary that could serve as a basis for the future border (Makovsky, 2004). The second dimension of the fence meant that the Israeli settlements beyond the barrier would have to be evacuated. Most of the large settlement blocs, though, would remain on the ‘Israeli’ side (Kershner, 2005, p. 73; Sontag, 2000).

Barak’s separation plan did not materialize because the combination of the failed peace process and the rising violence of the Intifada ended his premiership in February 2001. Sharon, Likud’s candidate, became the new prime minister with the mandate to restore security (BBC, 2001; Benn, 2005). Sharon quickly rejected the separation barrier either as a political strategy to solve the territorial conflict or as a security measure to secure Israeli citizens from Palestinian terror attacks (Makovsky, 2004; Rynhold, 2004). According to Uzi Dayan, national security advisor to prime ministers Barak and Sharon, the new PM preferred offense to defense (Kershner, 2005, p. 58).

The 9/11 terror attack in New York and America's Global War on Terror provided Sharon with just the kind of discursive shift globally that allowed him to pursue a program of 'wiping out terrorism'[64] on his terms. Reece Jones describes this shift as "black-and-white clarity of the war on terror" (Jones, 2012, p. 89). Describing Arafat as "our Bin Laden," and following the major terror act in Netanya in March 2002 (the deadliest month for Israeli citizens during the five-year-long Intifada with 135 Israeli casualties), Sharon unleashed a military offensive, (ironically) named Operation Defensive Shield. Within weeks, IDF invaded Palestinian cities and reversed the Israeli withdrawals from Area A under the Oslo peace process. IDF killed almost 500 Palestinians and detained 7,000 during the operation (UN, 2002).

Meanwhile, defensive plans to increase of IDF and Border Patrol forces along the Green Line and to install physical barriers along the north-western section – drawn up by NSC chief Uzi Dayan in the summer of 2001 – were gathering dust (Lein, 2003). Barak warned his successor early in 2001 that "[w]hen there are seventy dead Israelis, you can resist the fence, but when there are 700 dead Israelis, you will not be able to resist it" (Makovsky, 2004, p. 7). Sharon was skeptical of the effectiveness of the barrier as a security measure and wary of religious-nationalist reaction, especially within his government coalition (Kershner, 2005, p. 57). But the drastic rise in violence in the summer of 2001, particularly suicide bombings in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and the public shock it created, reduced the politics of fence and separation to anti-terror affect. Public support for the fence grew in proportion to these shock events.

A non-partisan movement "Fence for Life" – established two weeks after the June 1 terror attack in Tel Aviv's night club – started an active campaign for the fence to "end the bloodshed in our population centers" (Fence for Life, 2011a). "Fence for Life" held a series of protests, including in front of Sharon's house, and met President Moshe Katsav to present their initiative of the fence. Despite their strong advocacy for a separation/security barrier, they also addressed the potential criticism and concerns of the religious-nationalist bloc in their proposal. They narrowed down the meaning of "unilateral separation" by distancing it from the policy of the recognition of Palestinian

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[64] At a meeting of the Likud central committee in 1990, Sharon famously exclaimed "Who's for wiping out terrorism? Raise your hands!" as a gesture against the policy of then-PM Shamir (D. Landau, 2013, p. 295).

sovereignty and the settlement evacuation. Their proposal avoided specifying territorial dividing lines that this fence would create but instead adopted a population-oriented language, locating the barrier "between the Palestinian and the Israeli population centers." The fence would leave "large Israeli concentrations of population in Judea and Samaria and the strategic divide in the Jordan Valley" within the barrier's "protected zone." Furthermore, their proposal claimed that "there is no reason why the Israeli government should not decide to expand the protected area after the fence is completed," thus proposing a potential to accommodate the settlers and territorial maximalists (Fence for Life, 2011b).

"Fence for Life" is representative of a broader trend of the period in which the climate of fear and insecurity produced a siege mentality among Israelis and unified them around the image of the anti -terror fence. The fence became primarily perceived as a physical mechanism against suicide bombers. It became less divisive as it started to appear less as a policy of peacemaking and nation-building, the dominant framing during the Oslo period, and more as an anti-terror measure (Waxman, 2008). A public opinion survey in December 2001 on the matters of security by the influential Steinmetz Institute for Peace (Tel Aviv University) concluded that "the political camps are losing their significance as far as assessments of the security situation go" (Yaar & Hermann, 2001). The shock and fear of terror formed an 'affective political community' and legitimized the policy of the fence (Hutchison, 2016). By May 2002, 74% of Israelis viewed the fence as a significant deterrent against terror attacks (Yaar & Hermann, 2002).

The Intifada had more far-reaching effects on the Israel society and politics than simply legitimating the fence. Many scholars of Israeli politics have identified the Second Intifada as the critical geopolitical context which thoroughly weakened the "political struggle defined by the terms 'Greater Israel' and 'territorial compromise and Palestinian state'" (Tamir, 2002). Contentious issues of territory and nationhood, too, started to become understood through the prism of security, and more specifically, the Palestinian terrorism. For example, between June 2001 and May 2002, the share of Israelis who viewed the West Bank settlements as a security liability grew by 21 percent, reaching a 54 percent majority. The issues that were understood to have been sustaining Palestinian terrorism and undermining Israeli security, such as settlement evacuation, Palestinian statehood, and the division of Jerusalem – highly controversial or outright

taboo only a couple of years earlier – gained support (Yaar & Hermann, 2002).[65] The new centrist consensus sided with the territorial vision of nationhood previously associated with the left but redefined it as a unilateral security policy (Steinberg, 2013; Tamir, 2002; Waxman, 2008). Although introduced by Barak, his policy of unilateral separation started to gain broader support only several months after his departure.

Sharon's initial response to the congealing public support behind the fence was to establish a "closed military zone" just beyond the Green Line, up to 2 km in width, as a substitute to a physical fence. As announced in early September 2001, a few days before 9/11, the security strip would be heavily patrolled and Palestinian entry in the area would have been highly restricted. Public security minister from Likud, Uzi Landau, described this as a "functional separation" to distinguish it from the physical separation barrier advocated by the Labor. In response to the plan, Labor's Haim Ramon accused Sharon of "sacrific[ing] the security of Israelis just so that no one will draw a line" (Hirschberg, 2001).

The growing number of terror attacks at the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002 and the increasing discourse of anti-terrorist globally further solidified the meaning of the fence as a counterterrorism measure. Subsequently, the idea of a fence became more acceptable to Sharon personally but also easier to pursue as a public policy and justify against the religious-nationalist opposition. On 20 February 2002, "under heavy public pressure and criticism that grew stronger with each of the many funerals of the past few days," Sharon gave a televised "address to the nation," which signaled the end of his rejection of the fence (Benn, 2002b). This was a month before the Netanya terror attack, which prompted the start of Operation Defensive Shield at the end of March 2002. In the national address, Sharon announced the plan to set up "buffer zones with fences" to achieve "security separation" from the Palestinians and "contribute to the security of all Israeli citizens, everywhere" (Benn, 2002a).

The term "security separation," originally coined by President Moshe Katsav (Likud), suggests a territorial policy aimed at isolating Palestinians from Israel without isolating Israeli settlers. Public

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[65] The surveys were conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Institute for Peace at Tel Aviv University as part of its long-term Peace Index project.

Security Minister Uzi Landau, self-described "father of the plan," explained in a *Haaretz* op-ed that the plan would "make it much harder for Palestinians to move freely from Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip to Israel and vice versa - without any impairment to the daily lives of Israel's citizens, including those living in Judea and Samaria" (U. Landau, 2002). "Security separation" was Sharon's attempt to address the Labor's criticism and incorporate physical barriers in the security strategy without promising to establish a new political border and evacuate settlers. In his speech, Sharon emphasized the plurality of "fences" and buffer zones" as opposed to a more border-like continuous single line of the separation barrier, and rejected a possibility of settlement withdrawal (Benn, 2002b). Minister Landau adds that the "arrangement should not be construed as a partition of the Holy Land… the buffer zone's contours are not intended to encourage any expectations that this zone could become a border between Israel and any future entity". He insisted not to call Sharon's plan separation and suggested an alternative name: unilateral terrorism -isolating barrier zone. To underscore the difference with Barak's unilateral separation, Landau described Sharon's unilateral terrorism-isolating plan as "They are over there, but we are both here and there" (U. Landau, 2002). The new fence project was Sharon's first step toward reimagining and reframing the solution proposed and politicized by the Labor a decade earlier from a separation barrier to a security/anti-terrorist fence and from a linear boundary to a spatially complex territorial order.

On 16 April 2002, during the height of Operation Defensive Shield, the Cabinet decided to establish a barrier to "improve and reinforce the readiness and operational capability in coping with terrorism" (Lein, 2003, p. 7). The wording shows that the government's intended meaning of the fence as an element within Israel's war on terror. In contrast to the Labor's political-sovereignty discourse of the separation barrier, Sharon defined the fence as "only another counterterrorism measure" (Benn, 2005). Minister Landau made this point when he described the barrier zone as a "defensive component" complementing the "offensive component": "a constant war on terror until the final defeat of Palestinian terrorism's infrastructure" (U. Landau, 2002). Around this time, the Israeli government officials stopped referring to the fence as a "separation barrier" [*Geder HaHafrada*]. They renamed it as "anti-terrorist fence" and "security fence" [*Geder HaBitaḥon*] (Kershner, 2005, p. 81).

Geopolitical Storylines (May-June 2002)

Sharon's plan of "buffer zones with fences" included a 15-20 km wide strip along the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea in the east. In the west, the security strip would stretch 5 km in width along the Green Line, with one exception where the zone would extend by 20 km to include a large Israeli settlement of Ariel. Altogether these "buffer zones" contained 400,000 Palestinian residents (FMEP, 2002a; Verter & Alon, 2002). Effectively, the fences would encircle the central mountainous ridge where almost 90% of the West Bank Palestinians lived. Meanwhile, 98% of Israeli settlers would have remained in the Israeli security zones. Conceptually, it was identical to Sharon's older plan form 1977. According to different estimates, it would have left almost half of the West Bank area (slightly less than Area C, which comprises about 60% of the occupied territory) on the 'Israeli' side (Makovsky, 2004; Weizman, 2017).

Despite broad public support, Sharon's fence received harsh criticism from the left and the right, for different reasons. From the left, the fence project attracted the accusation of annexing additional Palestinian territories beyond the Green Line. From the right, the plan sounded like partitioning the Land of Israel and materializing the two-state solution. Both lines of criticism, although representing contradictory territorial visions of Israeli nationhood, coincided in their opposition to the barrier on the premise that it would become a political border. To both criticisms, the government responded by arguing that the barrier was not setting a political, sovereign border but simply defining the security zones. Rather than a long-term solution to the territorial conflict between Israel and Palestine, the barrier was a short-term, temporary security measure to deter Palestinian terror. But to a large segment of the Israeli public, who supported the fence in principle, a short-term security function was not enough; they wanted not just protection from ongoing terror but a long-lasting solution based on the separation of Palestinians from Israel.

These arguments solidified into geopolitical storylines between April 16, when the Israeli government first decided to go with the fence option, and June 23, when the Cabinet formally approved the plan. These storylines challenged the government's meaning of the fence as an anti-terrorist measure and framed the fence in relation to the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a

political border.

Fence As Partition

The settlers provided the most forceful challenge to Sharon's anti-terrorist fence from the right. They moved the issue from the security discourse towards the discourse of national territory. The settlers perceived the fence as a political border that threatened to divide the Land of Israel. "A fence is a fact on the ground. Like settlements. Only in the opposite direction. A fence declares, through the means of facts on the ground: until this point is ours, and from there and beyond does not belong to us," wrote Uri Elitzur, a settlement leader, in *Yedioth Ahronoth* in June 2002 (FMEP, 2002b, p. 7). Some framed their opposition to the fence in security and strategic language. They faulted the security rationale of the fence, citing "rockets, Katyushas and mortars, which a fence can't stop" or seeing it as an obstacle to IDF operations inside the West Bank (Shragai, 2002). Israel Harel, former head of YESHA Council, accused Sharon of gifting a "strategic victory" to Arafat by giving away all the "deterrence capability" the IDF had gained through Operation Defensive Shield, as well that achieved in the Six-Day War of 1967 (Harel, 2002). The argument redefined the Land of Israel as a theater of operations that Israel needed to control thoroughly to prevent terror attacks in Israeli cities and achieve security. Others rejected any distinction between the security and political nature of the fence and criticized the project from a nationalist perspective. Daniella Weiss, the mayor of a small settlement Kedumim, declared in early June that "any plan for separation in the Land of Israel contradicts the idea of the Greater Land of Israel" (Shragai, 2002).

Sharon's own Likud party agreed to the "just a fence" approach, or "security separation." Yet, many Likudniks feared that once installed, the barrier would have a political effect on the settlements remaining beyond it. It would leave no other choice to these settlers but to relocate west of the fence. This would result in a de facto two-state solution (Galili, 2002a). To make a point against such a scenario, the Likud Central Committee adopted a declaration in May which rejected Palestinian statehood. Outside of Likud, the National Religious Party cautiously accepted the security fence project but remained wary of its political effects. The party's leader Effi Eitam

expressed the unease during the Cabinet discussion of the plan in April, warning that the western buffer zone could turn into Israel's eastern border. To this, Sharon replied that, as "a security arrangement," the fence would not "demarcate a political border" but "reduce[s] the risk of infiltration and terror attacks" (Alon, 2002).

Fence as Annexation

The left-wing parties, Labor and Meretz, and social movements, such as Peace Now, generally agreed with the idea of a security/separation fence. In principle, separation as philosophy was indeed a Labor idea, but they identified the Green Line as the basis for the border, with some minor modifications. With the onset of Intifada and frequent terror attacks, their support for the fence grew. As one Meretz MK, Amnon Rubinstein, declared in early June 2002: "every day that goes by without a fence brings us a sea of tears" (Zrahiya & Barzilai, 2002).

The leftist opposition to Sharon's vision of separation centered less on the fence but more on the territory it marked inside the West Bank, i.e. security/buffer zones. The left opposed territorial deviations of the barrier's route from the Green Line and unilateral redrawing of the West Bank's map. In March, after the details of Sharon's counterterrorism buffer zone plan became publicly know, the Meretz leader Yossi Sarid described it as an "annexation plan" (Verter & Alon, 2002). One Labor leader Haim Ramon criticized what he viewed as a plan to "occupy territories" inspired by the National Religious Party and its leader Effi Eitam within Sharon's coalition government: "Instead of getting out, we are going in" (Verter, 2002).

A Labor leader and Foreign Minister in Sharon's coalition government Shimon Peres particularly opposed the eastern security zone in the Jordan Valley, which would take up 22% of the West Bank. During the Cabinet meeting to approve Sharon's fence project, Peres insisted that there was no security rationale in including such a large area with only "700 Israeli families who must be defended with all our might". Peres accused the right-wing politicians of using the war on terror as a pretext to "conquer" more Palestinian territories. He further defined the map as "a wink toward a political change, in contravention of all the existing agreements" and the one that would cause Israel "great diplomatic damage" (Haaretz Service, 2002). Sharon and Defense Minister Ben-

Eliezer defended the eastern security plan on the security grounds. “This map details the [physical] obstacles. It is not a political map, but a security map”, argued Sharon against Peres’s objection, while Ben-Eliezer suggested viewing the map though “security glasses” (Haaretz Service, 2002).

Fence as Necessary Separation

The third, and most popular, criticism of Sharon’s fence plan was rooted in the Rabin-Barak vision of unilateral separation. This geopolitical storyline did not challenge the fence per se, nor its security function, but Sharon’s limited meaning of it. To the Labor, the fence should not only protect Israeli lives but also secure the Jewish majority in the State of Israel. Toward this end, and in direct opposition to the partition storyline, unilateral separation argued that the fence should become a basis for a more far-reaching change in the Israeli policy in the West Bank: the end of occupation and withdrawal of settlements.

Ehud Barak (2002) published an op-ed in *The New York Times* in April in which he situated the fence as a focal point for a policy of unilateral separation:

> Israel must embark on unilateral disengagement from the Palestinians and establish a system of security fences. Israel's very future depends on this. Only such a border could secure a solid Jewish majority inside Israel for generations to come, and in so doing, secure Israel as a democracy and its identity as a Jewish state.

The demographic argument, central to Rabin’s vision of separation, inherited by Barak, attracted more and more attention within the context of Intifada. Demography became directly linked to the problem of terrorism. During Operation Defensive Shield, an influential professor of geography Arnon Soffer (University of Haifa) sent a letter to PM Sharon, in which he explained the urgency of separation. He warned that each day, as IDF eliminated one or two terrorists, 400 Palestinian children were born within the territories controlled by Israel, “some of whom will become new suicide terrorists!” (Galili, 2002b). Sofer’s policy suggestion was similar to Barak’s: dismantle deeper-lying settlements in the occupied territories and separate 219,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem from Israel.

One of the leaders of the Labor, Haim Ramon, articulated this vision in an interview with *Yedioth Ahronoth* in May (Reproduced in FMEP, 2002b, p. 5):

> Between the sea and the Jordan River, there are today 53 percent Jews and 47 percent non-Jews. Within five to ten years, the situation will worsen to the point where the Palestinians will be in the majority. In a situation where Israel has no partner to an agreement, [Israel must] establish a separation fence and create a temporary border along what was once the Green Line. A 400 km border in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, that no one can cross without permission of the state of Israel. This is the solution, including the evacuation of all settlements in the Gaza Strip. The IDF will leave there and defend Israel from the border.

This storyline contradicts with the annexation narrative. It does not object to Israeli territorial expansion inside the West Bank but limits this to large settlements or those along the Green Line. Most of the plans articulated by the Labor politicians include about 15% of the West Bank territory on the 'Israeli' side, which would contain 75-80% of the settlers.

Others within Labor and in more left-wing Meretz objected to such territorial expansion but, in principle, supported unilateral separation. Peace Now, an influential Israeli organization dedicated to the end of Israeli occupation and the two-state solution, started a social campaign under the slogan "A Border for Israel Now" in the spring of 2002, which called for such a unilateral separation along the pre-1967 borders (Galili, 2002a). By mid-2002, the Intifada had boosted the popularity of this vision – security fence, separation and settlement withdrawal – within the wider Israeli public too and to some extent, within IDF, as the settlements started to be perceived as a security burden (FMEP, 2002b; Yaar & Hermann, 2002). In 2002, a series of demonstrations, gathering at times 60 to 80 thousand protesters, demanded the dismantling of settlements and an end to the occupation (FMEP, 2002a, 2002b).

Yet, Labor's another leader Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, the Defense Minister in Sharon's coalition government, disagreed with such far-reaching politics but agreed with 'far-reaching' territorial extension of Sharon's preferred buffer zones across large parts of the West Bank (Verter, 2002). Sharon, too, consistently denied any plan to withdraw settlements from the areas beyond the fence/security zone and instead planned to add new settlements in the western security zone

(FMEP, 2002a).

Table 3. Geopolitical storylines of the West Bank barrier (2002)

Fence Storylines	**Anti-terrorist Fence**	**Unilateral Separation**	**Annexation**	**Partition**
Position	Supportive	Supportive	Critical	Critical
Border	Security	Political, Security, National	Political	Political
Preferred Route	5 km east from the Green Line	Modified Green Line	The Green Line	The Jordan River (No fence)
Discursive Coalition	Sharon's government, IDF	Labor, Meretz, Peace Now, IDF	Meretz, Peace Now	Settlers/YESHA, Likud, National Religious Party

Geopolitical Accommodation (June 2002-May 2003)

On 23 June 2002, the government formally approved the fence (Resolution No. 2077) but postponed the approval of the Jordan Valley buffer zone to bring Shimon Peres on board. The text of the resolution did not provide a clear geographic picture of the barrier route. It transferred the prerogative to determine the precise course of the barrier to the prime minister. The resolution was primarily a general political decision in favor of the fence without specifying its territorial effect. The document omits the word "separation," defines the barrier as "a security provision," and explicitly rejects its meaning and function as a "political or other border" (Government of Israel,

2002). No publicly available maps were published.

The text of the resolution allowed contradictory interpretations. It stated that barriers would "reduce the entry of terrorists from Judea and Samaria to carry out terror attacks in Israel" and, therefore, implicitly defining their location along the Green Line. Moreover, the text does not mention any plan to protect the West Bank settlements (Kershner, 2005, p. 20). Defense Minister Ben-Eliezer specified months later, after leaving the Sharon government, that the basic idea was to follow the Green Line, which contradicts Sharon's preference for broad security zones (Rappaport, 2003).

On August 14, the Cabinet approved the first segment of the fence project, 116 km in length. The main part would run along the Green Line from its north-west tip towards the south, covering most of the boundary between the northern half of the West Bank (Samaria) and Israel's coastal plain. In addition to this long stretch, phase one included two shorter lines of concrete walls north and south of Jerusalem, separating the city from Ramallah and Bethlehem, respectively, and creating "Jerusalem envelope," as known in Israeli security-speak. At this early stage, the government did not present any plan to build a fence inside Jerusalem.

In some areas, the barrier's route would stray deeper into the West Bank territory for 5-6 kilometers, in line with Sharon's description of the western security zone. Elsewhere it would stick to the Green Line. Many of these deviations aimed to include nearby Israeli settlements on the west side of the fence. According to Sharon's advisor Lior Schillat, the PM had prioritized the inclusion of settlement blocs (Magid, 2020). The government justified the inclusion of settlements on security grounds. The fence would protect Israeli settlements inside the West Bank, which otherwise would have become terrorist targets. The August route left approximately 20,000 Israeli settlers west of the barrier, leaving ten times more on the eastern side (Lein, 2003). In other cases of deviations from the Green Line, the government cited topography and strategic space.[66] And in some minor cases, politically controversial symbolism of a barrier along the Green Line played a role in the relocation of the route eastwards.[67]

The area left between the Green Line and the fence was officially named "Seam Zone." Rather than creating a continuous border strip along the Green Line, as implied in Sharon's plan, the Seam Zone was a series of enclaves, connected via a thin line of the barrier where the fence route was identical to the Green Line. It suggests that the government did not fully share Sharon's extensive

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[66] *Topographic* justifications are based on the strategic vision of terrain, altitudes and verticality, which stipulate the planners to draw the route in a way that would leave strategically important locations, such as hilltops, on the Israeli side. This would allow clear and unobstructed view of the West Bank area. The logic contends that having a barrier precisely along the Green Line would put Israeli forces in inferior topographical position. They would face the danger uphill rather than downhill, which is the position the route aspires to create. The *strategic space* or *warning space* argument relies on the logic of buffer zones. They allow Israeli security forces the time and space to intercept a potential terrorist after he had already crossed the fence line but before reaching the Israeli territory (The Green Line) or an Israeli residential area (a West Bank settlement) (Lein, 2003; Lein & Cohen-Lifshitz, 2005).

[67] This right-wing understanding of the Green Line as a political border guided one of the early dilemmas of route planning in May 2002, regarding the twin Palestinian towns Baka al-Gharbiya (*Baka West*), in Israel, and Baka al-Sharkiya (*Baka East*), in the West Bank, physically merged but administratively separated by the Green Line. The barrier between the two and along the Green Line would have required the demolition of several houses. Sharon decided to route the barrier east of Baka al-Sharkiya, keeping the twin towns merged but separating the eastern twin from the rest of the West Bank. Defense Ministry Director General Amos Yaron, in charge of this stretch of the barrier, explained that "the separation fence is not meant to reconfirm the Green Line" (Barzilai, 2002). According to Uzi Dayan, by the time, the former national security advisor to Sharon, the prime minister "just wanted to please his right-wing coalition partners from the National Religious Party and show them he was not sticking to the Green Line" (Kershner, 2005, p. 63).

buffer zone plan but nor did it adhere to the internationally recognized eastern boundary of Israel. The actual outcome of the route thus seems to accommodate the contradictory pressures in its geography. With additional modifications in the route due to political pressures, the route's first segment curved and bent further and by the time it was built a year later, its length increased from 116 to 145 km (Lein, 2003). Many in the IDF opposed these changes because the longer route was costlier to build and more challenging to defend (Rappaport, 2003).

The fence remained a hotly debated topic during the Knesset elections at the end of January 2003. By December 2002, the government had completed only 3 km, while the remaining 150 was still under construction. In mid-December, the regional council of Gilboa, inside Israel and neighboring West Bank's Jenin to the north, frustrated by the government's slow decision-making, started to build a 12 km long DIY fence to secure their towns and send the message to the government (Ratner, 2002). As Sharon dragged his feet not to alienate the settler-religious coalition, the Labor promised to build the fence swiftly during the pre-election campaign. Labor also promised to withdraw from the settlements in the name of demographic security (Eldar, 2003; Mitzna, 2003; Rynhold, 2004). Meretz shared Labor's separation plan but paid closer attention to the location of the fence along the Green Line (Sarid, 2004).

In the meantime, the settlers' YESHA Council, understanding that the fence could not be postponed indefinitely due to a large public consensus behind it, started to devise its own route of the barrier to include more settlements and more land on the Israeli side. Pinhas Wallerstein, a YESHA leader, explained the goal: "Maximum Jewish population, with minimum Arab population, over maximum area, and all as part of an effort to correct losses that the fence along the Green Line will bring about" (Shragai, 2003a). Some settlers viewed this barrier as a future border and had accepted it as long as their settlements would end up on the 'Israeli' side. Others agreed with the condition that the fence would remain strictly a security boundary. In any case, everyone regarded the Green Line as an unacceptable location for the fence: it would exclude settlements from Israel and symbolize the political distinction of the West Bank from Israel (Kershner, 2005; Rappaport, 2003).

YESHA presented its map to IDF in early February 2003. It proposed moving the route approximately 15-20 km east of the Green Line (Shragai, 2003b). The critical area of concern was

Ariel, the largest settlement in the northern West Bank, the unofficial capital of Samaria. Its mayor railed publicly against Sharon for "abandoning" the settlers, using the same Hebrew word that is used for leaving a wounded soldier behind, knowing full well that Sharon himself was abandoned in a battle in 1948 (Kershner, 2005, p. 62).

But crucially, even with such an expansive territorial proposal, the YESHA map would leave many settlements along the central mountainous ridge and east of it beyond the barrier. Daniella Weiss, Kedumim's mayor, led the charge against the YESHA's fence project and any division of Judea and Samaria in general. Describing fenced zones as "ghettos," she even refused to install security fences around Kedumim for ideological reasons. She would only support a fence that would enclose Palestinian residential areas (FMEP, 2002c; Shragai, 2003b). The right-wing fringe party Tekuma joined by declaring that "any fence that does not surround Arab cities that export terror is a political map and not a security fence" and accused YESHA of being "dragged along by petty politicians" (Shragai, 2003c).

In parallel to the domestic reactions and development centered around the fence project, a new international dimension also emerged that affected the government's fence policy. It was an American proposal, first outlined by President Bush in June 2002, and later formally presented by the Quartet on the Middle East (U.S., EU, Russia, and UN) in April 2003. The peace plan, more commonly known as the Road Map, envisaged the creation of a Palestinian state after the mutual ceasefire and the Israeli freeze of settlement expansion (Bennet, 2003a).

Sharon's task was to satisfy the diverse pressures and incorporate them into his security policy. In January 2003, just before the Knesset elections, he strengthened his credential as a protector from Palestinian terror with a photo op in front of a constructed section of the fence near Salem, at the north-western tip. His government also approved a new segment of the fence, stretching from Salem towards the east, ending at the triple border point between Israel, the West Bank and the Kingdom of Jordan. This line, demarcating the northern border of the West Bank, was less curvy and mostly followed the Green Line. This was Sharon's message to the general public that he was building the promised anti-terrorist fence (Eldar, 2003).

In December 2002, in response to President Bush's peace initiative, Sharon accepted a future Palestinian state, but the one limited to Areas A and B, demilitarized and surrounded by Israel, including the air space (FMEP, 2003a). However, during the election period, he consistently rejected Labor's calls to evacuate settlement (Verter, 2003). Following the election victory, Sharon broke this taboo, too. In April, he suggested that Israel could evacuate the settlements of Shilo and Beit El, which he described as "cradle of the Jewish people," and therefore, "agonizing," "painful concessions" in the face of "rational necessity" (FMEP, 2003b, p. 2). In May, Sharon expressed his willingness towards the "political settlement" of the conflict and argued before the Likud MKs that "3.5 million Palestinians under our occupation is bad for us" (FMEP, 2003c, p. 3; Rabinovich, 2011, p. 153). The "occupation" was and continues to be another taboo within the right-wing political circles that Sharon seemed willing to break (NYTimes, 2003). A factsheet on the West Bank and Gaza published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in three months earlier insisted that these territories were "disputed" rather than "occupied" (MFA Israel, 2003a).

Simultaneously, Sharon made steps towards accommodating settlers' interests. Shortly after suggesting to evacuate Beit El and Shilo, Sharon backtracked on this plan and declared that settlement evacuation was not on the horizon (Bennet, 2003a). In March, he agreed to incorporate the parts of the YESHA map into an updated route of the barrier. The new additions included the Ariel loop, pushing the route 20 km east of the Green Line; the eastern fence to demarcate the Jordan Valley buffer zone;[68] and secondary, depth barriers, in parallel to the section of the original fence that was along the Green Line.[69] These changes would advance the barrier close to Areas A and B and effectively enclose these Palestinian-controlled spaces. Such a fence provided a material basis for the future border between Israel and the territorially contracted Palestinian state, divided into several enclaves and spatially reduced to about half of the West Bank area (Benn, 2003a; FMEP, 2003c). The new spatial shape suggested that the fence project had distanced further from

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[68] The eastern fence would provide additional possibility to include some of the deeper settlements inside the eastern security zone, such as Shilo, Beit El and Tekoa, on the eastern side of the central mountain ridge.

[69] These secondary barriers several kilometers to the east would have ensured the inclusion of additional Israeli settlements in the Seam Zone, while separating the Palestinian villages within the same zone from the rest of Israel with the help of the primary, western, barrier on the Green Line. Furthermore, it would restrict Palestinian presence in the border areas overlooking (understood as 'threatening') the Ben-Gurion Airport and the main highway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

the Labor's separation and had become similar to Sharon's old 1977 settlement vision.[70]

In the first half of 2003, Sharon's discourse started to incorporate the center-left consensus on separation as a solution to the demographic threat to the Jewish identity of the state (Steinberg, 2013). Simultaneously, Sharon managed to "please" settlers and address their fear of abandonment by multiple changes in the route, "each time biting off more of the West Bank" (Rappaport, 2003). By maintaining about half of the West Bank under Israeli control while allowing a future Palestinian state in the rest, Sharon sought to reconcile the two competing nationalist visions of Israel, one centered on population and identity, and the other on land and religion. This task required "a maze of political and verbal maneuvers" and a careful balancing of "statements concerning anticipated concessions with contradictory pronouncements" (Rabinovich, 2011, pp. 152–153). An opinion survey by the Steinmetz Center in July 2003 shows that Sharon had united distinct discursive coalitions around his version of the fence. Not only 80% of the general public expressed support for the fence project but more importantly, the consensus spread almost equally among the voters of seven leading parties. Each supported a particular function and meaning of the fence, such as security from terror (popular among everyone), inclusion and protection of settlements (popular among the right-wing voters) and separation along the Green Line (popular among the left-wing voters) (Yaar & Steinmetz, 2003).

Discursive Closure (October 2003-February 2005)

Despite public support for Sharon's evolving fence project, the expanded territorial plan met harsh international pushback. The EU protested the new route as an "attempt to unilaterally establish facts on the ground." The U.S. pressured Sharon against the Ariel "finger" and the Jordan Valley fence (FMEP, 2003d, p. 4; Shragai, 2003c). The former, the U.S. officials argued, would "severely hamper the Palestinians' territorial contiguity and the viability of their future state," while the latter would "effectively imprison Palestinians between a fence to the east and a fence to the west"

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[70] According to Ariel's founder and mayor Ron Nachman, "The map of the fence is the same map I saw during every visit Arik [Sharon] made here [Ariel] since 1978" (FMEP, 2003c, p. 1).

(Haaretz Service, 2003; Kershner, 2005, p. 62).

In line with the American objection, Sharon ordered the IDF to revise the route of the barrier in the Ariel area in August. Ariel's exclusion, however, met strong domestic opposition, particularly from the religious-nationalist faction within Sharon's coalition (Benn, 2003b; Burston, 2003). Sharon and his office spent much of August and September negotiating with domestic and foreign partners-turned-critics and reconciling the competing U.S. and domestic right-wing pressures in a route that would satisfy all sides. At the end of September, the government agreed to postpone the construction of the Ariel "finger" until more favorable diplomatic circumstances, while keeping the promise to the settlement to be included inside the eventual barrier route (Benn, 2003c). The most crucial point that this debate over the fate of Ariel in August/September of 2003 showed was how successfully had Sharon managed to approximate the territorial visions of distinct and contradictory discursive coalitions in Israel. The very fact that the opponent of Likud and the Israeli right in this episode was the U.S. administration, rather than the Labor, Meretz, or other Israeli political parties, shows Sharon's territorially expanded version of separation had become a near-consensus policy solution.[71]

On 1 October 2003, the Cabinet formally approved the full route (720 km) of the fence (Resolution 883). Unlike the June 2002 Resolution 2077, this one declared among its goals to "protect Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria" (Lein & Cohen-Lifshitz, 2005, p. 9). The outline of the Ariel "finger" remained in the plan, but its actual construction was shelved indefinitely (Myre, 2003a). For the moment, the government planned only a half-circle of a barrier on the eastern side of Ariel ("fingernail"), the two ends of which could link with the main line of the fence in the future. The IDF maps refer to these separate lines of fences as "special security arrangements" (IDF Mapping Unit, 2005). And to further underscore that Ariel and major settlement blocs would remain under Israeli control, the government also announced 600 additional homes to be built in the key settlements of Ariel, Maale Adumin and Beitar Illit (Myre, 2003b).

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[71] The Steinmetz Center survey in October 2003 found 83% support for the fence in general and 63% support for the route determined by the government. Only 19% favored the Green Line as a route. Only among Meretz voters did the Green Line option receive a majority (60%) (Yaar & Hermann, 2003).

The new plan also included short sections of the fence in the east, to demarcate the northern and southern ends of Jordan Valley from the rest of the West Bank. The two short sections in the north and the south "preserve[d] the option of building an eastern encirclement barrier," which was "Sharon's way of showing his settler constituents that he is not foreclosing any option" (Makovsky, 2004, p. 28). The new route would leave about 15% of the West Bank area (excluding the potential to connect the eastern fence lines) and 170,000 settlers (75% of the total, excluding the residents of East Jerusalem) on the 'Israeli' side. The plan left 74 settlements located deeper in the West Bank beyond the route (Makovsky, 2004).

Sharon quickly followed up on the approval of the new full route with another significant step towards reconciling different pressures and storylines. In December 2003, he announced the policy of "unilateral disengagement": a plan to evacuate all settlements from Gaza and four small remote ones in northern West Bank. Gaza allowed Sharon to draw a simple line of withdrawal that would have removed the largest number of Palestinians from Israeli occupation while ceding the minimum area of land and retaining maximum Israeli settlements under continuous Israeli control in the West Bank (Lustick, 2019). Sharon's right-hand man and deputy prime minister Ehud Olmert articulated this formula a few weeks before Sharon's public announcement of unilateral disengagement. According to Olmert, disengagement meant to address the 'demographic problem' and prevent the transformation of the Palestinian struggle against occupation into "a struggle for one-man-one-vote," which would "mean the end of the Jewish state" (D. Landau, 2003).

Sharon replaced the term 'separation' (*hafrada*) with 'disengagement' (*hitnatkut*) because it sounded more neutral in English but also less like a direct continuation of the leftist policy in Hebrew (Benn, 2005). Sharon framed this move as an alternative scenario should the American-mediated Road Map not succeed. But with the announcement, Sharon also attempted to prevent another peace initiative, the Geneva Accords, between Israeli civil society representatives and the Palestinian Authority. The Geneva Initiative designed a new interstate border along the Green Line, leaving only a handful of large settlements on the Israeli side (Bennet, 2003b; Steinberg, 2013).

In contrast to these peace plans and the Labor's unilateral separation, Sharon's unilateral disengagement created a border only around Gaza, but not around the West Bank. Sharon left the

West Bank frontier open for the settlements and continuous Israeli presence. Unilateral disengagement was Sharon's move to take the initiative and continue the management of the conflict on Israel's terms, rather than on the terms imposed by external actors (Bennett, 2004). According to Sharon's advisor Dov Weisglass, the withdrawal from Gaza and four small settlements in the northern West Bank was merely a "token" that allowed to retain the rest of the settlements, strengthen their position and "postpone the settlers' nightmare indefinitely" (Shavit, 2004). Indeed, Sharon argued in the Knesset that "this disengagement will strengthen Israel in its control over the territory, which is vital for our survival," referring to the West Bank (McGreal, 2004b).

By neglecting the fence's route as a guide for the geography of the settlement withdrawal, Sharon effectively disentangled the fence from the settlements. This was the critical difference between Sharon's disengagement and Labor's separation. Under Sharon, the fence remained a distinct policy, a security mechanism against suicide bombers, but unrelated to the existence of settlements. In contrast, in Labor's conception, the fence would define the limits of the Israeli settlements. And by separating the fence and the disengagement plan from each other, Sharon opened a possibility to agree to further American demands to approximate the fence's route with the Green Line without at the same time implying that the fence would have any 'political' effect on the outlying settlements. Essentially, unilateral disengagement allowed Sharon to redefine the fence as a security measure rather than a potential territorial limit to the Israeli presence in the West Bank (Myre, 2004).

Throughout the year 2004, the Gaza withdrawal was the focus of the strong right-wing backlash that Sharon received for his disengagement plan from the religious-nationalists, settlers and his Likud party. The West Bank fence did not feature as a central factor in shaping the fate of the settlements anymore (McGreal, 2004a, 2004b). In the meantime, the IDF adopted numerous small-scale changes in the route to respond to international pressures and the Israeli court orders based on Palestinian petitions. As a result of these changes, the fence route shed some of the curves, loops and controversial sections, most notably in the Jordan Valley but not Ariel, and aligned closer to the Green Line. The new route reduced the land "annexed" on the Israeli side by more than half from 225,000 acres (15% of the West Bank) to 100,000 acres (7%) (Barzilai, 2004; McGreal,

2005).

The government's Resolution 3283 formalized the new depoliticized route on 20 February 2005. On the same day, the cabinet finally approved the disengagement from Gaza and the four West Bank settlements. The two decisions, the fence route and the settlement evacuation, initially thought to co-depend on each other, became temporally aligned but spatially distinct (McGreal, 2005).

Conclusion

The chapter has traced the politics of the West Bank fence between 2000 and 2005 and the changing meanings attached to it. Initially, a symbol of Israel's separation from Palestine as part of the two-state solution, it acquired a new meaning – anti-terrorist barrier – and broader public support within the violent Intifada.

In 2002-2003, Israeli political discussions focused on the fence's location and meaning as a security-political border. The debates played out in the metal and concrete, as different geopolitical storylines and political pressures influenced the route of the fence in line with particular territorial visions of Israeli nationhood, each identifying a distinct territorial line as a location for Israel's new security-political border. The location and the meaning of the fence pre-supposed each other.

Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan destabilized this co-constitutive link between the meaning and location of the fence. By limiting the settlement evacuation program to Gaza, Sharon removed the politically consequential purpose from the West Bank fence. The message was that Israel's future political border would no longer be congruent with the fence's route. Instead, the geography of settlements would define such a boundary. Despite 'taking Gaza out of Tel Aviv' – a step towards territorially limited and demographically homogeneous Israel – Sharon endorsed the continuation of frontier politics: slow-moving civilian-military expansion into the West Bank. And despite the construction of the fence that physically divided the Israeli-Palestinian space, the country would remain in the liminal condition between the borders of the State of Israel and the

Land of Israel.

5.4 Border Materiality

Introduction

This chapter is a study of the new territorial order created by the fence. It is an account of geopolitical discourses materialized and territorialized on the ground. The central question guiding the discussion is, how, where and when does the fence enact boundaries? The chapter accounts for how the fence, with its physical-material presence and everyday functioning, has created different types of territory (national, security, political) or failed to do so. In doing so, I pay particular attention to a variety of infrastructural assemblages, constellations of human and non-human elements, that organize space into specific types of territory and enact the territorial discourses of nationalism and security in practice on the ground.

This chapter is divided into four parts, each addressing one particular meaning of the fence and a corresponding form of the territory it creates: a political border that separates Israel and Palestine; a security border that protects Israelis from Palestinian violence; a national border that creates ethnically homogeneous spaces; and a frontier that marks but does not restrict the expanding reach of the settlement.

I used three main types of data in this chapter: reports published by think-tanks, international organizations and NGOs focusing on the human rights in the West Bank and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general; news articles and feature stories on the everyday aspects and effects of the fence, primarily collected from *Haaretz*, but occasionally from other Israeli, Palestinian and international media; and maps published by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: Occupied Palestinian Territory (OCHAOPT), B'Tselem, Peace Now and Google Maps to make observations regarding the spatial relations of the fence with surrounding Israeli settlements, Palestinian towns and other physical infrastructures (checkpoints, highways, etc.).

Political Border

Israelis typically call the fence "security barrier," while Palestinians prefer "separation barrier." The word choice refers not just to the normative stance of the speaker but also to the function of the fence. Despite the initial idea of unilateral separation, today's barrier fulfills this mission only partially: it separates Palestinians from Israel but poses no legal or physical obstacle to Israelis – settlers or residents inside the Green Line – to move in and out of the fenced line. It is a tangible obstacle to mobility for Palestinians and completely intangible and often invisible for Israelis. Contrary to their initial fears, the barrier does not affect the integration of settlers in the Israeli society and economy. Two-thirds of them work in Israel (Arieli, 2020). Nor did the fence have any adverse effect on the settlement growth. Between 2002 and 2018, the settler population (outside of East Jerusalem) has almost doubled from 220,000 to 430,000 (Peace Now, 2020). Unilateral separation has turned into unidirectional separation.

An example of a triangle of towns – one west of the Green Line and two east of it – illustrates the double meaning. Kfar Saba, an Israeli town just west of the Green Line; Qalqilya, a Palestinian town, a couple of kilometers east of Kfar Saba, across the Green Line; and Alfei Menashe, an Israeli settlement, a couple of kilometers south-east of Qalqilya. In the 1990s, the apartments in Alfei Menashe were advertised with the slogan "5 minutes to Kfar Saba" to attract professionals working in the Greater Tel Aviv Area (which includes Kfar Saba). Alfei Menashe offered cheaper accommodation and other government-subsidized benefits while allowing fast and easy access to their workplace (Kershner, 2005). Highway 55, which connects Kfar Saba with Alfei Menashe and the settlements further to the east, was the central infrastructural feature making Alfei Menashe attractive for potential home-buyers. Qalqilya, meanwhile, has come to be linked differently with Kfar Saba. The Israeli anti-terror discourse framed its proximity as a danger rather than an attraction during the Second Intifada. A presentation by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2003 on the reasons behind the fence construction includes a slide with two clusters of buildings, specified as "Kfar Saba" and "Kalkilya," and a red arrow directed from the latter towards the former, which reads: "15-minute walk". The next slide replaces the red arrow with a pictogram of a fence and promises that "It will keep terrorists out of Israeli cities" (MFA Israel, 2003b).

The fence enacts these distinct meanings attached to the proximate locations of Qalqilya and Alfei Menashe with Kfar Saba (which functions as a metonym for the Greater Tel Aviv Region or Israel as a whole) in everyday life. Eight-meter tall walls have enclosed the Palestinian town on three sides and only an 800-meter long gap is left on the eastern side, facing the rest of the West Bank. Meanwhile, Alfei Menashe, which is further east from the Green Line, remains on the west side of the fence and true to its commercial slogan: 5 minutes to Kfar Saba. Qalqilya, on the other hand, is no longer a 15-minute walk away from Kfar Saba. The way the fence loops around these localities, it 'separates' Qalqilya from Israel but 'protects' Alfei Menashe from the Palestinian neighbors. As a result, the barrier's route challenges the conventional understanding of what constitutes "west" and "east" within this micro-geography.

For the outlying settlements 'left' beyond the fence's 'protection,' the barrier remains hollow, literally. Several highways that connect Israel with the settlements in the West Bank intersect the fence 'horizontally.' Where the fence meets a highway, it leaves short gaps for Israeli passengers to pass smoothly. Checkpoints that control these intersections, recently renamed as border crossing points run by the Border Police, allow check-free passage to drivers with Israeli car plates.[72] Public transport, which connects settlements with Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, allows the same unobstructed mobility (Visualizing Palestine, 2012).

Despite formal inclusion within the barrier's route, the government never constructed the Ariel "finger" and left the settlement beyond the main line of the fence, which runs closer to the Green Line. Despite the physical presence of the fence, Ariel, just like the settlements west of the barrier (Modiin Illit or Alfei Menashe), is fully integrated into the economy of Tel Aviv and functions as its suburb (Newman, 2018). Ariel has its own fence – "special security arrangement" – surrounding the settlement from three sides and open towards the west and Tel Aviv, reminiscent to Qalqilya's perimeter wall open towards the opposite direction. Via Route 5, also known as the Trans-Samarian Highway, one-fifth of the Ariel residents commute to Tel Aviv daily. The barrier leaves a 200-meter gap for the highway, which leads to a checkpoint located between the fence and

[72] Avigdor Lieberman, a Knesset member and a former Foreign and Defense Minister, and the leader of a secular nationalist Our Home Israel (*Yisrael Beiteinu*), is the most well-known settler, commuting daily between Nokdim, outside of the barrier's route, and Jerusalem.

the Green Line. Cars with Palestinian plate numbers are not allowed past the checkpoint, but the Ariel residents swiftly pass through on their way to Tel Aviv. Travel time between Ariel and Tel Aviv, with 45 km apart from each other by road, is about 35-40 minutes. The Greater Tel Aviv Area has effectively become a "seamless neighborhood" in total negligence of the Green Line and the fence (Kearns & Ruimy, 2015).

In contrast to the expanding metropolises of Tel Aviv and Jewish (West) Jerusalem, Arab (East) Jerusalem has contracted significantly as a result of the fence. In the past, it had close ties with Ramallah and Bethlehem, in addition to numerous smaller villages and towns in the same radius. Now, the barrier, which mostly follows Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, separates 320,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem from the Palestinians in Ramallah and Bethlehem and further across the West Bank (Ahituv, 2018). Those Palestinians residing outside of Jerusalem need a special permit to enter the city and can do so only via checkpoints (the Kalandia checkpoint between Ramallah and Jerusalem, and Checkpoint 300 between Bethlehem and Jerusalem) (Isaac, 2019). Passage through them often involves humiliation, frustration, anxiety and late arrival at the destination (Anonymous/Haaretz, 2018). Before the wall, East Jerusalem's annexation to Israel carried only administrative effect with little impact on social and economic relations across the municipal boundary. The wall around East Jerusalem has now turned this municipal boundary into a de facto international border for Palestinians.

Security Border

The primary territorial effect of the fence on the West Bank is that it divides the space into two unequal sizes. Almost 10% (incl. East Jerusalem) remains on the western, 'protected' side. This is the Seam Zone. It is not a contiguous strip because long sections of the fence follow the Green Line and deviate from it intermittently. In October 2003, following the first governmental approval of a full route, IDF declared the Seam Zone as a "closed military zone." Palestinians could no longer enter the area, or only with a special time-limited pass. Those who already lived inside had to acquire special permits to continue living in their own homes. Outside of East Jerusalem, which the government does not consider as part of the closed military Seam Zone because it is part of the

united Jerusalem's municipality, 32 Palestinian communities containing 11,000 residents have ended up west of the fence (B'Tselem, 2017b). In contrast to the restrictions on the Palestinian presence in the Seam Zone, Israeli citizens and permanent residents, settlers, or not, can enter the area without any prior authorization (Lein & Cohen-Lifshitz, 2005).[73]

While the fence demarcates the eastern side of the Seam Zoe and prohibits the Palestinian movement between the divided West Bank, the Green Line provides an invisible, administrative marker on the western side. The Palestinian villages in the Seam Zone are stuck between the two barriers – physical-military and legal-administrative – that limit their freedom of movement to this narrow strip. Despite being on the side of the fence known as the "Israeli side," they cannot freely cross the Green Line and enter Israel (Kershner, 2011). The Seam Zone is, therefore, the most radical change in the Oslo territorial system to date because it encompasses Areas A, B and C and flattens the distinction between them by subordinating the territory to a direct and closely-monitored Israeli control.

By leaving most of the West Bank and Israeli settlements outside of the fence's protection, the government left no other options but to keep its security presence beyond the fence throughout the entire West Bank. The Seam Zone's closed military area has been replicated beyond the fence on a smaller-scale in the form of "special security zones." These 400-meter wide zones surround outlying Israeli settlements and enclose them with fences (Shragai, 2003d). The more the Seam Zone's "closed military area" shrank as a result of the Palestinian and international pressure in the process of construction, the more of "special security zones" had been set up for outlying settlements to provide them with "local" rather than "national" anti-terrorist fences. Eyal Weizman (2017) calls them Israel's "extra-territorial islands."

In addition to fences, protection of these settlements and smaller outposts requires the presence and constant patrolling of IDF soldiers (Cohen, 2013). It is the geography of settlements, not the main barrier line, that defines the spatial arrangement of Israeli security forces in the West Bank.

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[73] Isabel Kershner underscores the heavy effect of the IDF decision on the Palestinian residents of the "closed military zone": "It is as if the Seam Zone residents woke up one morning and found themselves in a new fictional country where permits are the equivalent of bread and air, their fate having been determined by an unseen hand drawing a line on a map" (Kershner, 2005, p. 14).

Such “extra-territorial islands” of IDF protection have realized in practice the principle which the former Public Security Minister Uzi Landau announced in early 2002: “They are over there, but we are both here and there” (U. Landau, 2002). The security logic of the fence is that some citizens of Israel would be defended by the main barrier while the others with the help of IDF soldiers (Barel, 2003). This arrangement leaves the fence as only one element within a wider security infrastructure.

Checkpoints are another central technology of control within Israel’s security infrastructure. The Israeli state extends its indirect security-military grasp over the entire West Bank – including Area A, where the Palestinian Authority assumes security control – via a network of checkpoints that allow temporally and spatially flexible road closures. The physical infrastructure of fences, roadblocks and checkpoints enables Israel to fragment the entire West Bank into smaller spaces of different shapes and sizes at any given moment in response to a level of violence (Myre, 2006; OCHAOPT, 2006, 2018). These checkpoints serve to reduce the potential harm to the settlements beyond the barrier. Checkpoints serve this purpose by operating not at the entry/exit points of the Israeli settlement but closer to the Palestinian towns, spatially limiting the Palestinian freedom of movement to the boundaries of the Palestinian residential area while allowing much larger space of secure mobility to the settlers (B’Tselem, 2007, 2019).

Checkpoints are good spatial indicators of the geography of Israeli security in the West Bank. They show that it extends far beyond the fence. Between 2000 and 2020, the number and spatial concentration of checkpoints changed significantly. Their number grew from under 30 in 2000 to 67 in 2004, during the Second Intifada. The new additions appeared deeper inside the West Bank, while the older ones were located strictly along the Green Line or Jerusalem’s municipal boundary (OCHAOPT, 2004a, 2004b). Despite the end of Intifada and a decrease in violence, the number of checkpoints grew to 80 by 2007 and remained across the entire West Bank (B’Tselem, 2007). Since then, the number rose again up to 97 in 2017. In addition to permanent checkpoints, there are also partial checkpoints – staffed and enforced only intermittently – and “flying checkpoints” – random ad hoc traffic checks at different places across the West Bank (B’Tselem, 2017a).

Checkpoints recreate a security border where the fence is missing. The government eventually left the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea Area without an eastern fence, but a series of trenches,

roadblocks and checkpoints have restricted the Palestinian access to this 10-20 km wide strip. Much of the area is off-limits for Palestinian development and community use because Israel has declared it as a military buffer zone, dotted with a string of military bases, firing zones and nature reserves along the north-south axis (Hammerman, 2019; OCHAOPT, 2012). The closed eastern area today mirrors the closed military Seam Zone in the west and evokes the old Allon Plan of "defensible border" along the Jordan Valley. Altogether, half of Area C or about one-third of the entire West Bank is closed to Palestinians, but Israeli settlers are allowed inside these closed areas (Etkes, 2015).

Danny Tirza, the chief of the IDF planning department, who oversaw the construction of the fence, has defined the barrier as "a last line of defense against terrorist infiltrators" (Diker, 2014). This was Sharon's view of the fence, too, according to Tirza. Indeed, Sharon initially endorsed the barrier as part of a broader and more complex buffer zone plan. Despite numerous changes that Sharon's plan underwent between 2002 and 2005, the actual territorial order enforced by Israeli security forces in the West Bank today is reminiscent of Sharon's security vision. The fence contributes to a spatially expanded infrastructure of control but does not define or dominate it. It is merely 'a last line of defense' but not necessarily the most important one. The fence does not demarcate Israel's security territory inside and the dangerous pace outside. Instead, it joins a single military legal-material assemblage that blurs the line between Israel and the Palestinian territories. Spatially, it extends across the West Bank from the Green Line to the Jordan River and redefines the whole space as a military frontier. The fence does not manifest "a Maginot-line mentality," contrary to the claim (Arens, 2008). Instead, Israel's arrangement of security space is consistent with "buffer zone mentality" (Falah, 2004) within the Israeli geopolitical culture, which encourages to "move outside the fence," meet the enemy on its territory and create buffer zones beyond the existing borders (as in Lebanon) (Zertal, 2010, p. 184). The fence did not become the line that would spatially limit Israel's military presence in the West Bank. Instead, the occupation regime has recruited the fence as a material element – the last line of defense – to mark the military frontier in front (east) of it.

National Border

Growing settlements and their integration with Israel, together with expanded security regime in the West Bank, are evidence that the partition of the Land of Israel as a result of the separation/security fence has not materialized. Instead of the anticipated binary territorial division, the fence has contributed to a much more complicated and fragmented spatial form of multiple separations without one clear boundary between the Israeli and Palestinian spaces. In an attempt to avoid partitioning the Land of Israel, the fence project resulted in locally concentrated separations of Palestinian communities from each other and of Jewish settlements from Palestinians. The territory of the West Bank has become ethnically divided into numerous smaller pieces, what geographers David Newman and Ghazi Falah call "purified spaces" (Falah & Newman, 1995). Together, these purified mono-ethnic spaces create a territorial mosaic of an ethnocratic regime, characterized by "violent Jewish domination, strict separation, and ethnic inequality" (Yiftachel, 2006, p. 9). Geographer Oren Yiftachel has defined Israel's governing system since the 1990s as 'ethnocracy' because it enforces multiple visible and invisible borders between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians both inside Israel and in the Palestinian territories. The barrier has visualized and dramatized these ethnocratic borders.[74]

The two meanings of separation the settlers fear – a separation of Judea and Samaria from the State of Israel, and a separation of settlements from the Israeli society and economy – have not materialized. In the place of these two forms of separation, the curvy route of the fence produced has separated the neighboring Palestinian towns and villages from the settlements. The government intentionally left these Palestinian localities outside the fence, either due to demographic considerations or in anticipation of criticism over land grab and annexation. Many of these Palestinian towns/villages and Israeli settlements used to have mutually beneficial economic links before and the fence ended such ties (Kershner, 2005). And where social relations had been absent, the fence physically expressed the divide. Qalqilya and Alfei Menashe are prime examples of such a separation as both of them are almost entirely encircled by the fence/wall and the one-sided gap is left to connect each with their wider 'ethnic' society. The fence, therefore, categorizes

[74] While many critics refer to the fence as "annexation wall", emphasizing the land grab on a national scale, the Palestinian think-tank Applied Research Institute in Jerusalem (ARIJ) consistently refers to the West Bank barrier as a "segregation wall", shedding light on the separating effects of the fence inside the Palestinian society and between Palestinian and Israeli communities (ARIJ, 2020).

the localities along an ‘ethnic’ line and ‘corrects’ shared Israeli-Palestinian spaces by dividing them into smaller purified areas.

Furthermore, new, smaller fences have multiplied together with the main barrier line and have demarcated the purified ethnic spaces in the name of security. The most glaring example is the Road 4370, completed in 2019. Its aim is double: to facilitate Palestinian mobility between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank bypassing Jerusalem, and to allow Israeli settlers east of Jerusalem a quicker alternative road into the city. The road meets these two tasks by dividing the lanes along the route’s length with an eight-meter tall wall/fence. The two sides of the road have become ethnicized for Palestinian-only and Israeli-only use. Each side of the road eventually leads to different destinations. The road is now commonly known as the “Apartheid Road” (Hasson, 2019).

Photo 8. Israel's Apartheid Road. Source: Haaretz.

These locally meaningful fences, together with checkpoints, roadblocks, bypass roads, house demolitions and other physical obstacles that prevent intercommunal links, make up ethnocratic territorial order. The quest for the defensible border, which gave an initial reason to the occupation, is no longer the guiding principle. Instead, the daily enforcement of smaller separations between neighboring localities has entirely consumed the occupation regime and its infrastructure of control. The goal is to limit the encounters between Israelis and Palestinians and,

therefore, minimize the security risk that an integrated and open West Bank would entail. These localized separations have become the new raison d'etre of continued occupation. Separation is no longer one big geopolitical moment that would give birth to the two sovereign states. The everyday enforcement of security has turned the idea of separation into a spatial-temporal condition, a network of daily practices and an ethnocratic territorial order of Israel's occupation. The fence is the most visible element of the new separation regime.

Thus, on the local level, the lines of separation between local communities have become more clearly demarcated. In contrast, on the macro-, national scale, the concept of separation between Israel and Palestine (i.e. the partition of the Land of Israel) has become blurry. It is harder to establish and identify the boundary between Israel and Palestine as Israeli territorial control has acquired so many different forms inside the West Bank in the form of settlements, municipal areas, military zones, highway systems. These spaces are well-connected with the rest of Israel but disconnected from the Palestinian areas of the West Bank.

The transportation infrastructure of the last two decades has tried to create some contiguity between the disconnected parts and weave them together into unified national territories of Israel and Palestine. However, it is precisely the simultaneous condition of separation and connection that results in the blurring of the territorial borders between Israel and Palestine on a macro scale. It has contributed to "a bewildering and impossible Escher-like territorial arrangement" in the West Bank (Weizman, 2017, p. 182). The fence has not established a coherent spatial order of separation. It has further complicated the political concept of separation and destabilized the distinction between inside and outside.

Frontier

According to the annexation storyline, the fence facilitates an Israeli land grab in the West Bank and consolidates the gained territory under Israeli control. Such framing of Israel's territorial expansion focuses on the meaning of the barrier as a future political border, which would define, (de)limit the Israeli territory. Fifteen years after 2005, when the full route was approved, more than a third of the route remains unbuilt. By switching focus toward these unbuilt perimeters of the

anticipated future "political border," a new meaning of the fence and a new form of Israeli territorial expansion emerges. Within this meaning, the fence is an obstacle to expansion, rather than a tool for a land grab. From this vantage point, territorial expansion can be defined in terms of the unbounded territoriality of settler colonialism rather than the bounded/enclosed territoriality of annexation and the consolidation of gains (Hughes, 2020).

The evidence shows that different local contexts shape the meaning and function of the fence as a tool for territorial expansion. At times, the fence is an efficient expansionist tool, as it can limit the growth of Palestinian populated areas and allow Israeli settlements an unobstructed expansion. In other geographic contexts, it can restrict Israeli expansion. To facilitate additional territorial gains, these sections of the fence need to remain unbuilt.

In many areas, where the fence passes between an Israeli settlement and a Palestinian village, the route tends to stick to the boundaries of the Palestinian residential area, leaving no or little space between its peripheral buildings and the fence. In contrast, the Israeli settlement is allowed a much larger area: hundreds and sometimes thousands of meters from the houses at the edge of the settlements. Researchers at B'Tselem and Bimkom observed this spatial pattern already in 2005. When IDF planners, often in cooperation with the settlers, designed the route, their intention was not merely to include the settlements on the Israeli side, but also to leave enough space for further growth and expansion of these settlements. Simultaneously, the fence had to limit or further shrink the area belonging to a neighboring Palestinian town/village (Lein & Cohen-Lifshitz, 2005). Guided with this zero-sum territorial logic, the barrier allows a guaranteed extra space to Israeli communities. The fence in such sections has a double function: to include settlements on the Israeli side and limit Palestinian expansion. Towards this end, the fence represents just one of Israel's broader repertoires of spatial control, such as home demolitions, planning regime and building permits (OCHAOPT, 2009b). The essence of these practices is to fix the boundaries of Palestinian communities within Areas A and B, and 'protect' the borders of Area C from Palestinian 'intrusion' (Peteet, 2017).

In several cases, when the Defense Ministry could not justify such an intrusive route on the security grounds, the Israeli court ordered the relocation of the path further away from the Palestinian community. Modiin Illit, the largest settlement with a population of 70,000, was one of

those settlements, affected by the Court decision. Its mayor Yakov Guterman commented that "If they hadn't changed the route of the barrier, we could have reached 150,000 people. And if there was no fence in the first place, we could have reached a population of 200,000" (Farrell, 2011). His comment points towards the conflict between the security/separation function of the fence and the nationalist framing of it as a final border that would divide the Land of Israel and limit settlements to only a fraction of Judea and Samaria.

Gush Etzion, a large bloc south of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, represents a particularly important case of this contradiction. Here much of the route had been left unbuilt. In 2013, the Etzion settlers held street demonstrations against the completion of the fence in the area and even met with PM Netanyahu to make a case for leaving the section open. Their opposition against the fence rested on the assumption that it would "delegitimize inherent belonging" of the lands beyond the barrier's route to Israel and limit the bloc's expansion eastwards (Matar, 2013).

The controversy lies on the eastern edge of the bloc. Here the route of the barrier, according to the 2005 plan, runs just east of the settlement Efrat, leaving a large part of its municipal territory east of the route. This vast area, about 1.7 square km, lies just south of Bethlehem but inside the Efrat municipal boundaries that is Area C (OCHAOPT, 2009a, 2019). A new Efrat neighborhood on this land between Efrat and Bethlehem has already been planned and approved for construction but not yet built (Sudilovsky, 2020). If the barrier goes up, it will limit Efrat's eastward expansion.

In this particular local context, where the barrier's route runs closer to an Israeli locality rather than a Palestinian one, the bulldozer replaces the fence as a technology of choice in the hands of the state to limit Palestinian expansion. The Israeli planning regime in the West Bank limits the new Palestinian constructions to Areas A and B. It demolishes the ones 'illegally' built inside Area C. Two-thirds of the destroyed buildings were the ones that straddled the boundary between Areas A/B and Area C (OCHAOPT, 2015). The fence that is unbuilt can fulfill its strategy of expansion in ensemble with other material (bulldozer) and non-material (legal rules, permit regime) elements that keep the counter-expansion of Palestinian buildings in check and reserve space as 'Jewish' (Hass, 2019).

This case complicates the meaning of the fence as a tool for annexation. In many areas, the barrier does facilitate Israeli expansion by limiting or outright stealing land from the Palestinians; but at times, it can work against Israel's/settlers' expansionist plans. The gaps in the fence address this contradiction. The unbuilt sections facilitate expansion deeper inside the West Bank.

The unbuilt sections challenge the meaning of the fence as an anti-terrorist measure. Geographer Sara Hughes has found that many settlers in the outlying settlements oppose "fences around their communities, *even for security*, because they don't want to fence themselves in, implying that there is a limit to their territorial claims or future growth" (2020, p. 10). Not only the fence's presence but also its absence provides a glimpse into the materialization of territorial discourses of nationhood and security.

As a result, the barrier, including its open sections, structures the West Bank space in favor of the Israeli settlements: freezing Palestinian area in its current territory and allowing future expansion of the Israeli space. Besides providing security, it adds to the land under Israeli control, a task in line with the expanded territorial vision of Israeli nationhood. And it responds to this contradictory functions by leaving some sections of its route unbuilt. These open sections, in particular, reframe the meaning of the fence as a frontier, a temporary marker of the settlements' continuous eastward expansion.

Conclusion

The examination of different meanings and functions of the fence in practice has shown that it is a flexible infrastructure. It enacts unidirectional separation. It functions as a political border for Palestinians but not for Israelis. It can support and amplify security infrastructure by further restricting the space of mobility for Palestinians, but it does not define the space of danger and the area of security. These spaces both transcend the line of the fence and get further fragmented by other material and legal mechanisms of control. It can delineate territories into 'national' Israeli and Palestinian spaces, but this division is further replicated and multiplied on smaller scales on either side of the fence, which defies its meaning as the national border. Overall, the fence has

materialized competing territorial discourses of security and nationalism but also illustrated contradictions and tensions between them.

Attention to the material qualities and everyday functioning of the fence shows that the fence does not necessarily mean obstacle and barrier as its standard meaning suggests. At certain places and for specific categories of people, the fence is left open. These gaps serve a particular function and define the territory beyond the fence as an extension of Israel rather than merely a dangerous foreign place that needs to be sealed and walled off to secure Israel. In other areas beyond the barrier, Israel has deployed extra barriers and obstacles and, therefore, has rendered the fence as merely one element in Israel's infrastructure of occupation. The fence is a defensive structure but also a tactical tool for advancing territorial claims while securing existing territorial gains. As a security tool, it is a "last line of defense," but in the hands of settlers and religious-nationalists, it is a frontier post, a stepping stone towards achieving the dream of the Land of Israel.

Although the fence has impacted the West Bank and changed territorial arrangements, these changes are mostly felt locally rather than on a wider national scale. The fence has not set any meaningful, defining eastern border for Israel. It is merely a new addition to/edition of Israel's already existing blurred, unbounded territoriality that fits with the country's frontier nationalism and frontier politics in the West Bank. A better way to describe the fence than a border is to regard it as an element within a West Bank-wide Israeli frontier.

5.5 Conclusion

This study of Israel's security fence leads to three broader conclusions. First, the meanings of security, nationalism/nationhood and border are not fixed; they are relational, co-dependent on each other and on the way they get framed within politics and within a particular geopolitical context. Second, the politics of the Israeli fence in the West Bank among the Israeli political parties and the settlers is less about Israel's security policies and almost entirely about Israel's nationhood and its territoriality. Third, the fence exemplifies Israel's already existing frontier nationalism and further reproduces it on the ground by blurring the territorial divide between Israel

and the occupied territories rather than demarcating and creating a de facto border.

The Co-constitution of Security, Nationalism and Borders

I have conceptualized the politics of the fence as a competition/contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood and I have described various territorial lines and spaces as 'security,' 'political,' or 'national' borders/territories throughout the previous three chapters. The contradiction between security and nationhood is not an absolute claim. The contradiction refers to one specific territorial vision of Israel's security, which needed to be demarcated by Sharon's security fence, and one specific territorial vision of Israel's nationhood, which framed the demarcation as a partition of the Land of Israel.

Chapter Two has shown that these views were, at times, complementary. For example, the settlers, who generally adhere to the idea of the Land of Israel, eventually agreed to the fence if it would function strictly as a security measure. Others maintained their opposition and some of them advanced their own expanded version of Israel's security territory, one that identified the West Bank as a strategically important area. This security discourse of defensible borders, topographic heights and strategic depth complemented their nationalist case against the fence and for continuous Israeli presence across the entire Land of Israel.

At the other end of the political spectrum, many supporters of the fence also combined nationalist and security arguments to end the occupation, withdraw settlements from the West Bank and redefine the Green Line as Israel's political, security and national border. Those in favor of the fence closer to the Green Line would frame security, not in terms of defensible borders and strategic terrain, but in terms of the demographic balance of Israeli Jews and Palestinians within the state and the long-term survival of the state's Jewish identity.

The political salience of these territorial forms of security and nationhood is not predetermined or temporally static. Their salience, spatial fluctuation (i.e. where precisely the 'security' fence should go) and hegemonic status are not outside of politics. They are determined within the discursive struggle over the definitions of geopolitical problems and potential solutions to address

these problems. Political discourses define, redefine and territorialize space under the categories that for simplicity can be termed 'security/national territory' and 'security/national border.' These concepts are meaningful only in their specific discursive context and refer to a particular territorial discourse of security and nationalism. Security and nationhood intersect each other in different ways and each of these intersection defines borders in a specific way and at a particular location.

Elastic Geographies of Nationalism

Despite its immediate origins within the 'security' context of the Second Intifada and Sharon's framing as an 'anti-terrorist measure,' the primary disagreement regarding the fence was not concerned with the topic of security. Political parties did not focus on the merits of the fence as a security measure; its necessity seemed evident to most. The controversy of the fence derived from its second meaning as a political border.

The political disagreement over the fence was essentially a contradiction between two dominant forms of Israeli nationalism or two territorial discourses of Israeli nationhood. One supported the fence, not only because it would deter terrorists but, more importantly, because it would unilaterally separate Israel from Palestine, delineate Israel's eastern border and define Israel's national territory along the Green Line. The other opposed the fence because it feared for exactly such outcome and framed it as a partition of the Jewish homeland – Israel's national territory between the sea and the river. Sharon's government rejected these political meanings of the fence and insisted on its 'purely security' function. Yet, this position itself was not outside the politics of nationalism. The route of the fence takes into account these distinct political pressures and avoids exact alignment with any of the competing geopolitical visions of Israeli nationhood. In doing so, however, the government legitimated a third, more elastic vision of Israel's national territory, one that is not defined by clear boundaries and views physical barriers as temporary. A discursive structure, in which no single territorial vision has achieved political hegemony, enabled Sharon to advance an alternative that, to some extent, was a middle ground between the two but, at the same time, the opposite of both. Sharon's fence was neither a full retreat to the Green Line and nor an overextension and complete annexation of the occupied territories.

Eyal Weizman (2017) describes the fence as having 'elastic geography.' But the contradictory visions of 'national territory' and the meanings of 'political border' articulated in the geopolitical storylines of the fence, and Sharon's accommodation of these visions, illustrates that the concept of 'national territory' itself is elastic and flexible in Israel. At least two spatial imaginaries can legitimately claim to represent Israel's national territory. The Georgian case provides an opposite example, where one idea of national territory enjoys a hegemonic status and political disagreements concentrate on the security aspects of the government's response to borderization. The politics of borderization are about defining the best ways of defending and securing the 'unoccupied' part of Georgia. In the case of Georgia, security allows for more elastic geographic variations. At the same time, nationalism sustains the rigid, inflexible territorial conception of Georgia, identical to its internationally recognized Soviet-era borders. It is this inelasticity of the geography of nationhood that results in the consensus opposition to the fence. In Hungary, on the other hand, the geography of nationhood appears to be more elastic because the country has a long experience of peaceful functioning in different territorial forms, each of which can serve as a basis for 'national territory.'

Israel's Frontier Nationalism & Unbounded Territoriality

In the beginning, the fence seemed to suggest that for the first time since 1967, Israel would acquire a stable, fixed eastern border and resolve the contradiction between the two visions of national territory dating back to at least 1937. However, faced with the political pressures from all sides, Sharon accommodated the two contradictory visions of 'national territory' and reconciled the competing security and nationalist discourses within the ongoing fence project. Sharon's unilateral disengagement, which removed 7,800 Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip in August 2005, finally fulfilled Rabin's promise to "take Gaza out of Tel Aviv." But it did so literally, limiting the Rabin's program of separation strictly to Gaza, rather than adopting it as a general philosophy to guide Israel's policy towards the Palestinian territories, as Rabin intended. Despite similarities, Sharon's disengagement was the opposite of Rabin's and Barak's vision of separation. It was the opposite of the Oslo spirit, which aimed to create two states and a border. Instead, Sharon intentionally torpedoed the diplomatic initiatives that aimed at such an outcome.

By delinking the fence project from the settlements in the West Bank, Sharon shifted Israel's policy towards blurring the line between Israel and the occupied territories, including via the fence, rather than demarcating the territorial boundary as initially feared/hoped. Sharon did not intend to demarcate the border between Israel and Palestine with this fence. The fence, and the policy of unilateral disengagement, served to manage the situation and continue the occupation under a more favorable local and international condition. For this reason, the fence symbolizes the end of the Oslo paradigm. The 1990s was a period of border-seeking under the Labor leadership. The Labor leaders sought the unilateral separation of Israel from the occupied territories and a two-state solution of the conflict. Sharon's fence, contrary to expectations, prevented such a separation border and contributed to an alternative conception of the Israeli-Palestinian space.

The fence, with its geographic location and its physical properties, embodies the unbounded territoriality and frontier nationalism that tries to blur rather than set the boundaries. In terms of location, it does not follow the Green Line though neither does it entirely disregard it. It goes deeper into the West Bank but then moves back, both taking the land and expanding a more direct Israeli access to the West Bank and demarcating and walling Palestinian cities off, such as Qalqilya and Tulkarm. The route itself combines the competing nationalist desires and security imperatives. But in reconciling the two, the fence loses its meaning as a border. In terms of its physical qualities, the route's unbuilt one-third illustrates the nationalist desire not to be bounded by the fences and limited to the territories demarcated by them. The highways that intersect the fence line allow for such unbounded territoriality to be practiced daily by thousands of Israelis, thus cementing the idea of 'seamless neighborhood' and of a fence that is not a border.

This new elastic geography of security and nationhood that the fence created was not conceptually unique. It continues the decades-long Israeli practice of unbounded territoriality and frontier politics, manifested in the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the gradual settlement of the land without outright annexation. Instead of turning into Israel's eastern border and shaping the hegemonic geography of nationhood, the fence has become an element within a wider security-settler assemblage of occupation that has defined Israel's frontier politics and practices in the West Bank since 1967.

6. Summary of Findings

The three case studies have detailed a variety of ways the discourses of nationhood and security shape borders' meaning and physical form. At the same time, borders are not passive objects of discursive production; they, too, define nation and security, and the territories made by them. The meanings of these concepts are relational as they presuppose and depend on each other; and they are flexible and changing within a political context. It is within politics and via political discourses that the border becomes a location where a physical barrier would protect the nation from the outside danger. The geopolitical storylines that articulate such a vision re-constitute the meanings of border, nationhood and security. They marginalize contradictions between them and emphasize shared geographies. Border walls are a result of such temporally and spatially specific discursive entanglements of nationalism, security and border.

Border security requires nationalist justification. The storylines that justify border walls resolve the contradiction between the geographies of security and nationhood by framing border security policy in the nationalist frame. The political disagreement around the border fence is never framed as security vs. nationalism. Instead, the storyline would define the border wall as a national project of protection vs. anti-national effort aimed against the sovereignty of the state and the nation. These geopolitical storylines offer new meanings of nationhood, security and border. The substantive content and the geography of nationalism undergoes a shift within the political process. Nationalism gets reframed. But crucially, this discursive shift occurs in tandem with the new discourse of danger. Each shift in the form of nationhood is associated with a particular security discourse that territorializes nationhood in a specific way.

Each of the three empirical chapters can be read as a study of a particular form of nationalism as reproduced and remade in relation to the country's border and the fence along the border.

In Hungary, the central task of transborder nationalism has been to reach beyond the territorial borders of the Republic of Hungary, to overcome Trianon boundaries in practice by connecting

socially, culturally, economically and eventually, politically with Hungarians beyond the border. In 2015, Orban offered a different vision of nationhood. It was more territorially embedded within the state's political boundaries and focused on ethnonational homogeneity. The meaning of the southern border as a defensive bastion of Christian Europe against Muslim invaders reframed Hungary's geography as a "Christian nation in Christian Europe." This storyline enabled the securitization of immigration and justified the militarization of the border. Hungary's transborder nationalism was no longer relevant in this storyline. The shift from Trianon to Nandorfehervar territorialized the nationhood along the outer edges of the Schengen Area.

In Georgia, territorial nationalism has been dominant since the late 1980s. It coexisted with ethnonationalism concerned with the purity of the nation. This aspect diminished over time and a Russian dimension emerged in its place to elevate a territorial conception of nationhood. The slogan "Georgia for Georgians!" has been replaced by a new national motto: "20% of Georgia is occupied by Russia". This geography of nationhood firmly identifies the Roki Tunnel as the border where nation and its territory need to be, first, de-occupied and then defended from Russia. The meaning of the borderization perimeter as an occupation line that divides the national land disqualified alternative geographies of security aimed at counter-building a defensive barrier.

In Israel, the two Intifadas and the shock of suicide bombings created a 'geography of fear' which spatially coincided with the territorially limited form of Israeli nationhood within the Green Line. The short-term danger of terrorism helped raise the political salience of the long-term threat of Palestinian majority within Israel. It contributed to broader support for Israel's separation from the Palestinian territories by the physical barrier. Rabin publicly rejected the Land of Israel as a national goal and promised to "take Gaza out of Tel Aviv" in the early 1990s. Sharon's security fence a decade later was made possible through such a shift in nationalist discourse. However, Sharon's insistence that the West Bank barrier would not become a political border and would function purely as a security measure meant to reproduce the third form of Israeli nationhood associated with the geography of frontier and unbounded territoriality.

These shifts in nationalist discourse are necessary conditions to fix the meaning of the fenced perimeter as a dual security-national border. Where such duality has not been achieved – in Georgia – the fence acquired a negative connotation, something that divides rather than protects

national territory, homeland, geo-body. Therefore, the fence's location in relation to national territory is the central factor deciding whether politicians can construct a convincing nationalist justification for border security. If a hegemonic view defines the physical barrier as a problem for territorial integrity, nationalism would challenge border security policy as something that worsens, rather than solves, the nation's geopolitical problems. It is important to note that the meaning of national territory itself changes within the political discourses that attempt a nationalist justification for border security. However, such a nationalist justification has to be grounded within the existing geopolitical vision of nationhood.

This was not possible in Georgia. No party or a politician could risk the gambit of constructing a security barrier as a necessary temporary measure against "creeping occupation." This would have implied the abandonment of the territory of South Ossetia and a tacit acceptance of the reality of territorial disintegration. However, in the two other cases, such a discursive reframing of the national area and the meaning of border has been feasible. In Hungary, the enlarged geography of nationhood on a continental scale allowed to define the southern border as a defensive and a civilizational line. In Israel, the fence itself and the boundary it demarcated accommodated competing geographies of Israeli nationhood and absorbed different meanings associated with security and nationhood.

In all three cases, the shifts in the discourses of nationhood occurred in parallel with the discourses of security. Whether the barriers deter migrants or terrorists, the geopolitical storylines resurrected the original historical meaning of walls as military defensive fortifications. Orban used the invasion metaphor and reimagined the Nandorfehervar battle. Sharon used the global war on terror to build his anti-terrorist fence. And in Georgia and South Ossetia, not a metaphor but an actual war experience is at the front and center of the security discourses for and against borderization. War, as a metaphor, historical analogy, or shared experience, can resonate within a large part of society and can produce an affective political community. The war discourse can 'nationalize' security discourse, i.e. reframe a border security issue as a matter of nationhood.

All these discursive meaning-making and the approximation of contradictory geographies do not entirely fix the meaning and function of the border. Borders are more complex and multi-faceted phenomena than the walls. This study has shown that border-walling is only a part of changes that

have occurred at the boundaries. The other part involves opening up the very same borders. The walls do not only differentiate territories; they also separate the incoming people by allowing or prohibiting their mobility. Many border studies have pointed towards this dual nature of closing and opening of borders. Usually, these studies conceptualize this duality as part of ongoing neoliberal globalization, which has created the global elite, for whom borders are open almost everywhere, and an underclass of 'economic immigrants', whose mobility has been securitized and restricted (Brown, 2010; Sparke, 2006).

This dissertation has offered another account for such contradictory functions of the border, which has little to do with class and economy. Borders here operate within distinct geographies of nationhood, which contradicts border security and the corresponding vision of nationhood. While border security policy defines these boundaries as security and national borders, alternative discourses of nationhood maintain the opposite meaning of the boundary as a non-border, as a bridge between the peoples and places. As a result, the fenced perimeters remain virtually open for specific people, who are understood as part of the nation but residing beyond the state's territorial borders or territorial control.

Hungarians in Serbia and Israeli settlers in the West Bank freely commute daily to their work beyond the border and rarely notice the border wall's existence. Georgia's government fears Russian tanks beyond the "occupation line" but does not prohibit ordinary South Ossetians from entering the territory under its control. These dual meanings of the border are practiced daily with the help of corresponding physical infrastructure. Walls, fences and barriers merge with highways, border crossing points and unfenced perimeters to create the border's security-nationhood assemblage. This dual purpose makes borders into filtering points that allow the governments to selectively enforce the border either as a technology of security or as a stage for nationalist politics.

This study has aimed to contribute to the academic literature on border walls, but it also responds to popular, media and policy discourses regarding the modern-day bordering practices. It has nuanced the common understanding that the rise of nationalism has contributed to the hardening of the borders across the world. This study shows that nationalism has many faces. By focusing on territorial discourses of nationhood and security, this study has identified forms of nationalism that do not necessarily require closed borders and the reification of existing political boundaries.

Territory and borders are flexible concepts within nationalist discourse and politicians can change territorial forms and the meanings of borders by switching between distinct forms of nationalism. This study has rejected the rise of nationalism as an explanation for new border walls. Instead, it suggests paying attention to changing geopolitical context, which enables the salience of new forms of nationalism at the expense or in competition with older ones.

This theoretical statement has policy relevance. Across the world, border walls have become highly affective symbols that create right-wing discursive coalitions under the nationalist slogans, such as Trump's "Build the wall!" or the Brexit promise to "Take back control." These slogans have framed the opposition as anti-national, divorced from the needs of 'real people.' Opposition to the border walls becomes understood as un-patriotic and suggests political loyalties with foreign, faraway places and peoples. This dissertation's three case studies provide a possibility to refute such a discursive opposition between nationalism vs. multiculturalism. Instead, politicians can develop geopolitical storylines against the wall that articulates alternative geography of nationhood and the vision of nation's protection. As a flexible discourse, nationalism can be deployed not only to justify but also to delegitimize border closures and fortifications. Politicians can emphasize the broader geography of the nation and security, which cannot be achieved via border walls. In Britain, while Brexit meant to 'take back control' of the UK's border with the continental EU, it increasingly seems to require a customs border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, which would diminish the British government's control over this portion of its sovereign territory. Simultaneously, exit from the EU considerably increased the possibility of Scottish independence.

While such a competition between alternative forms of nationalism is a viable political strategy, the outcome of this political process is an open-ended question contingent on a variety of contextual factors: the rhetorical skills of the political rivals, the geopolitical culture of the society, the media environment, the nature of territorial issues and the geopolitical setting within which country operates. However, to defeat the xenophobic nationalism associated with the border walls does not necessarily mean the victory of a liberal, more tolerant form of nationalism. The most viable nationalist strategy against the border wall and the associated nationalism that reifies the existing borders can be the frontier or transborder nationalism that could pave the way for

territorial revisionism and expansionist fantasies.

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