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# Claimed Co-ethnics and Kin-State Citizenship in Southeastern Europe

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**ABSTRACT** The paper introduces the often neglected concept of ‘claimed co-ethnics’ in the analysis of citizenship policies. It argues that this is an interstitial category that further complicates the triadic nexus between national minorities, nationalising states and kin-states. The ‘claimed co-ethnics’ are defined as people who are recognised by the citizenship (or ethnizenship) conferring state as belonging to its main ethnic group, although they themselves do not embrace that definition. In addition to bringing the issue of claimed co-ethnics into focus, the paper elucidates how citizenship policies can affect groups that challenge the exact fit between ethnicity and nation, showing how national governments through particular citizenship policies and categorisation practices engage in the construction of these groups. The paper shows that the triadic nexus framework, which has had a strong influence on citizenship and minorities scholarship, needs to be revised to include unidirectional relations between the elements of the triadic nexus. The paper is based on the comparison between the cases of ethnic Vlachs (in the context of Albania and Greece) and Bunjevci (in the context of Serbia and Croatia).

## Introduction

Most nation states in Southeastern Europe (SEE) have proactive policies targeting their ethnic kin. Co-ethnics living in neighbouring countries have, more often than not, been given access to external citizenship either as full citizenship or other citizenship-related rights by kin-states.<sup>1</sup> The governments of the kin-states have, for various reasons (often-times instrumental), argued that they are responsible for the protection of their co-ethnics residing in the neighbouring countries and offered them the benefit of their country’s citizenship. In the context of state dissolution and various types of frozen conflicts or other forms of intrastate disputes, phenomena still common in many parts of SEE, this external citizenship has frequently caused tensions between kin and host states. Kin-states together with nationalising host-states and national minorities constitute a specific constellation of conflicting nationalisms, the so-called ‘triadic nexus’ (Brubaker, 1996) common to post-1989 Europe.

While there has been a proliferation of academic work on kin-states and their role in the successful politicisation of their co-ethnics abroad, it is important to bring into focus cases

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where the minority is not aligned with the kin-state. Often obscured in the analysis of citizenship policies, that illustrate well this non-alignment, are the 'claimed co-ethnics',<sup>2</sup> an interstitial category that further complicates the triadic nexus. These are, as I define them in this paper, minority groups that do not necessarily self-identify with the kin-state majority (especially in terms of political nationalism claims) but are nonetheless targeted by the external ethnic citizenship policies of the kin-state.

In addition to bringing the claimed co-ethnics issue into focus, the paper aims to elucidate how citizenship policies affect groups that challenge the exact fit between ethnicity and nation, showing how national governments through particular citizenship policies and categorisation practices engage in the construction of these groups. The paper also sheds light on the differences between legally espoused norms and policy-makers' socio-historically conditioned understandings of political membership.

In terms of contributing to the existing literature on external citizenship, the paper will show that the triadic nexus framework, which has had a strong influence on citizenship and minorities scholarship, needs to be revised and include a more nuanced analysis of other phenomena such as claimed co-ethnics. This paper argues that despite the fact that a lot of recent (constructivist) literature considers groups as socially constructed and a part of political processes, the triadic nexus framework has certain shortcomings. The paper's main arguments are based on the comparison of two cases, Aromanians/Vlachs in Albania, and Bunjevci (sg. Bunjevac) in Serbia. Both well illustrate a number of relevant issues and include both temporal variation and variation across the elements of the triadic nexus model.

### Co-ethnics and Kin-States: Theoretical Considerations

The constructivist literature holds that just like nations, diasporas and co-ethnics are not naturally occurring groups, but primarily political projects (Bauböck & Faist, 2010; Brubaker, 2005; Brubaker & Kim, 2011). Many analysts initially saw these politicised groups as a challenge to the concept of the territorial nation-state (Basch, Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1995; Tölölyan, 1991) or having a potentially negative influence on homeland politics through 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson, 1998). More recently, it has been claimed that co-ethnics need not be a liability for the kin-state, but can instead be a resource that can be nurtured and ultimately exploited (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003), thus leaning towards an instrumentalist explanation<sup>3</sup> of kin-state intervention including the externalisation of citizenship regimes. It is worth pointing that there is a growing consensus in the literature on diaspora and transnationalism that diasporic communities are primarily marked by their migrant origins while transborder ethnic groups are usually created from the shifting of borders or the dissolution of states and empire (Waterbury, 2010). Furthermore, the relations between kin-state and transborder co-ethnics are marked by geographical proximity, where co-ethnics often reside in neighbouring states. Thus, the dynamics of kin-state politics towards diaspora communities and transborder co-ethnics tend to have different manifestations. The focus of this article is on transborder co-ethnics rather than on emigrant diasporas.

The reasons for kin-state interventions vary, including domestic political concerns, communal solidarity, competing foreign policy goals and benefits from economic resources (King, 2010, pp. 148–151). Waterbury (2010) describes the ways policies can be manifested, through support for change of host state policies, funding of diaspora

community organisations, offering various forms of citizenship and related rights and extending the benefits of cultural and symbolic membership. The focus of this paper is primarily on full and formal citizenship. However, it touches upon the related issue of less-than-full external citizenship, known also as ‘ethnizenship’ (Bauböck, 2007) that targets co-ethnics or claimed co-ethnics alike.

It is worth returning to earlier literature that dealt with the issue of external citizenship targeting co-ethnics. Walzer (1984) was among the first authors that tried to conceptualise kin-state citizenship and its relations to the populations they recognised as belonging to its constitutive ethnic group. He based his analogy on kinship premises, likening them to that of family relations. According to him, those with strong ties to the way of life of the kin-state may be given access to citizenship. The potential candidates are then a ‘particular group of outsiders, recognized as national or ethnic “relatives”’ (Walzer, 1984, p. 41). The concept of ethnic relatives *prima facie* comes close to my understanding of claimed co-ethnics. Nevertheless, Walzer’s concept of ‘ethnic relatives’ is problematic on two accounts.

First, it reifies groups and ascribes qualities usually associated with immediate and recognisable kin such as family. This sort of reification is easily dismissed by most constructivist theories, such as those mentioned earlier, which are based on the work of Anderson (1983) and Brubaker (2004). The second, less obvious and more serious underlying problem of the ‘ethnic relatives’ concept relates to the self-identification of the ‘relatives’ themselves residing in the host country. Identification and recognition of group political claims in this context is conditioned by at least three relevant actors. These include the host state that legally and politically recognises the particular identity of an ethnic group; the kin-state and its policies; as well as the minority group members and ethnic entrepreneurs who claim to represent the minority. In terms of political self-identification, the claimed co-ethnics differ from what is usually considered as a kin-minority, a homonymous population to that of the kin-state ethnic majority who are both recognised as such and self-identify in that way and make political claims that are largely congruent with the nationalist projects of the kin-state. Some obvious examples are the ethnic Slovaks in Hungary or Germans in Denmark. These ethnocultural groups self-identify as different and have separate political claims to that of the ethnic majority of the host state and most often politically identify with the kin-state’s national project.<sup>4</sup> The concept of political identity, which can have numerous definitions, is understood here the way Smith (2004, p. 302) defines it as the

collective label for a set of characteristics by which persons are recognized by political actors as members of a political group ... There are many sources of such recognition, such as ... nation-state membership, ethnicity, economic status, language ... All these possible sources are only political identities when political actors treat them as such.

Finally, Walzer’s arguments are constructed on certain normative premises which are not the focus of this paper (which is instead driven by an empirical puzzle and led by the need to conceptualise the role of claimed co-ethnics in the triadic nexus constellation). This is especially pertinent since it is a common practice especially visible in Southeastern Europe, that states claim the existence of ‘relatives’ who (for the reasons explained above, I prefer to call claimed co-ethnics) are often offered a range of benefits including

various forms of access to rights in the kin-states, such as ‘ethnizenship’ or full formal citizenship.

### Claimed Co-ethnics and the Triadic Nexus

Who are then the claimed co-ethnics and does their visibility in SEE indicate that this is only a regional phenomenon? How do they complicate the triadic nexus and how are they different from the usual cases of minorities? To answer these questions, we must look at a definition of minorities which elucidates what can be conceptualised as a national minority and what its relation is to a kin-state. In the European context, Keating (2001, p. x) differentiates stateless nations such as Catalonia or Scotland from national minorities, given that the term ‘national minority’ more often refers to a ‘people within a state whose primary reference point is a nation situated elsewhere’. Stateless nations based on that definition are those whose national homeland is the sub-state entity nested within a sovereign state. We can see that there is a strong conceptual correlation between the political status of an ethnonational group in a sovereign state and the existence of a kin-state. As a result of a kind of double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1987) reasoning, both politicians and researchers of politics consider that a national minority should have an external homeland/kin-state or should politically identify with it. In general, social reality rarely conforms to categorisation, but we can think of a few other categories of non-dominant national groups within a state that do not make a reference to a nation situated elsewhere. One of them could be described as minority without a kin-state. The other category would be the claimed co-ethnics. Mostly descriptive rather than nomothetic, the following table captures some of the necessary characteristics and differences between the aforementioned and related categories.<sup>5</sup> These are cases of family resemblance exhibiting relationships between concepts with overlapping features (Wittgenstein, 2006, p. 45) and as such are not mutually exclusive (Table 1).

Based on the table presented above, we can see that some of the indispensable characteristics of a minority without a kin-state place it somewhere between stateless nations and national minorities. In brief, these are politicised (ethnic or cultural) groups that have a national political project within an existing state such as Sorbs (Wends), for example, in Germany or Ruthenians in Serbia’s province of Vojvodina and are not necessarily subjected to a national project of an identifiable kin-state. They do not necessarily possess a distinct institutionalised sub-state territorial homeland such as stateless nations. Claimed co-ethnics are in a similar situation to that of stateless nations and minorities without a

**Table 1.** Minorities and kin-states

	Distinct sub-state national territory (nested within a larger polity) <sup>39</sup>	Political claims by the group members	Political claims by external ‘homeland’/ kin-state	Self-identification with a kin-state/ external national homeland
Stateless <sup>40</sup> nations	YES	YES	NO	NO
Minorities without a kin-state	NO	YES	NO	NO
Claimed co-ethnics	NO	YES	YES	NO
Minorities with a kin-state	NO	YES	YES	YES

kin-state. They have or attempt to construct their own national project within the boundaries of the host state. Generally speaking, the claimed co-ethnics have their own political self-identification and do not identify with an external homeland.<sup>6</sup> The latter distinction differentiates the claimed co-ethnics from minorities with a kin-state, but the fact that an external kin-state considers certain groups to belong to its national project differentiates these claimed co-ethnics from minorities without a kin-state. This further shows the need to address the issue of claimed co-ethnicity and external kin-state citizenship as separate but at the same time closely related. Finally, the issue of claimed co-ethnics presented here which do make political group claims is not to be confused with cases of national indifference as discussed by Zahra (2010). In other words, they are not indifferent to national and identity politics, but rather their political project is not aligned with that of the (claiming) kin-state.

Let us return to the triadic nexus as proposed by Brubaker as ‘a triad linking national minorities, the newly nationalizing states in which they live, and the external national “homelands” to which they belong, or *can be construed as belonging*, by ethnocultural affinity though not by legal citizenship’ (Brubaker, 1996, p. 6). Brubaker understands the elements of the triad as fields rather than a socio-political reality. Fields are primarily relational and can be inhabited by various actors. It is the field of kin-state or national ‘homeland’ that can cause certain problems for the model once it encounters the issue of claimed co-ethnicity. Applied in this case, the relation between the field filled by the national homeland element and that of a national minority would be unidirectional, since the homeland considers its own national project to be congruent with that of the claimed co-ethnics, an occurrence best illustrated by Figure 1.

Using Brubaker’s terminology, one can argue that the kin-state endeavours to *construct* the claimed co-ethnics *as belonging* to the external national homeland. Linking the action of national homelands (or better ‘self-declared’, ‘perceiving’ or ‘claiming’ kin-states) to citizenship regimes, we get a particular kind of dynamic that was not sufficiently accounted for in the literature.<sup>7</sup> This interaction is further complicated by the externalisation of citizenship in which the kin-state confers ethnic citizenship to politicised ethnonational groups that do not identify with its own national project. By looking at actual cases of claimed co-ethnicity, we can establish if there are any similarities in the policies of kin-states and nationalising (host) states towards the populations of claimed co-ethnics.

### Claimed Co-ethnics in Southeastern Europe and Elsewhere

The potential number of cases of claimed co-ethnicity in Southeastern Europe and other parts of the world probably exceeds the scope of this paper, but some are worth



Figure 1. Claimed co-ethnics and the triadic nexus



mentioning as they illustrate specific features of the triadic nexus model. *Goranis*, for example, are a politicised ethnic group that are claimed by more than one kin-state. Goranis of Kosovo (and the neighbouring areas of Albania) are subject to ethnic politics of a number of different national projects and, in some cases, corresponding external citizenship policies. Goranis are predominantly Muslims speaking a sub-type of the Torlakian South Slavic dialect used in parts of Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia. Under current Kosovan legislation, they are formally recognised as a separate national community of Goranis.<sup>8</sup> In late Yugoslav censuses (1971 & 1981), they were largely declared as Muslims, although they preferred to be called *Goranci* (Duijzings, 2000, p. 27) in their own linguistic form. This could be one of the reasons why some Bosniak historians such as Imamović (2007) consider that Goranis constitute a part of the Bosniak nation. As Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) do not possess instruments of ethnic external citizenship, no external citizenship is currently offered to Goranis as a group. In the last ten years, Bulgaria, unlike BiH, has had pro-active external ethnic citizenship policies, the subjects of which are numerous ethnic groups including Goranis (Refki, 2012).

Despite the fact that Macedonia has restrictive external ethnic citizenship policies (Žilović, 2012), according to some sources, there are 15,000 Goranis residing in Kosovo and an additional 6,000 living in the Republic of Macedonia who have received Macedonian citizenship (Kardaku, 2012). Macedonian state policy is to consider Goranis as ethnic Macedonians and to demand that Kosovo offers a formal recognition of this Macedonian community, that is, Goranis (Petersen, 2012). Bearing in mind the fact that at the time of writing, Kosovan citizens need visas to travel to most European countries, Macedonian and Bulgarian citizenships is appealing, particularly since the latter permits employment in all the EU states (as of January 2014).<sup>9</sup> The example of Goranis shows the most capacious form of claimed co-ethnicity combined with the externalisation of citizenship.

*Vlachs* otherwise known as *Dacoromanians* in Serbia are an interesting case since they illustrate a kin-state role, in the case of Romania, which falls short of full externalisation of citizenship. Vlachs in Serbia are a recognised national minority and have their own national council managing various aspects of non-territorial autonomy. Since the Dacoromanian Vlach dialects exhibit proximity to the standard Romanian language, some have considered Serbia's Vlachs to constitute a part of the Romanian nation. Recently, Romania has adopted a pro-active policy regarding this and threatened to block Serbia's path to the EU unless Serbia recognises Vlachs as a Romanian minority.<sup>10</sup> The vast majority of Vlachs do not self-identify with Romania and some of their representatives have even expressed anti-Romanian attitudes.<sup>11</sup> This is an interesting case in which there is no possibility of external citizenship by the perceiving kin-state because of its citizenship law which primarily accords external citizenship to former citizens.<sup>12</sup> There is a soft type of 'ethnizenship' or quasi-citizenship which includes offering scholarships to study in Romania, support for cultural associations and financial support for religious institutions. It is not clear if the full externalisation of ethnic citizenship (irrespective of the previous possession of Romanian citizenship) would have had different outcomes in terms of political identification with Romania.

There are a few fuzzy cases which might not directly correspond to the definition and the conceptualisation of claimed co-ethnics, but share some characteristics with the ideal case as far as the role of the claiming kin-state is concerned. One of them is the

case of ethnic Macedonians and Bulgaria's external citizenship policies which enable all ethnic Macedonians residing in the countries of the region to acquire Bulgarian citizenship based on their claimed co-ethnicity. It must be noted that, in this case, one would have to declare their ethnicity as being Bulgarian, but using identity markers which can be interpreted as being either Macedonian or Bulgarian is sufficient proof of one's co-ethnicity. These would include ancestral school records or proof of membership in cultural associations. While this would not be a typical case of claimed co-ethnics because Macedonians are not a minority in the host state but a majority, the case of what is known as the Macedonian minority in Albania (which Bulgaria perceives as Bulgarian) could more closely conform to the concept.

Despite the fact that SEE seems to be teeming with examples of claimed co-ethnics and targeted external citizenship policies of various kin-states, the frequency and intensity of these policies should not lead us astray and have us conclude that this is a uniquely and exceptionally Balkan phenomenon. The case of Silesians (predominantly residing in today's Poland) and the policies of both the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the relevant periods post-1967, when separate citizenship regimes were introduced in the two countries, are illustrative. The historic province of Silesia (Pędziwiatr, 2009) and the people who self-identified as Silesians had a certain proximity to the German national project but could hardly be referred to as Germans. Silesians were claimed by Polish, Czech and German nationalists, in the former cases primarily due to linguistic similarity, while in the latter by way of their cultural and geographical proximity. Both FRG and GDR citizenship policies were partly successful in attracting Silesians to accept both countries' offers of citizenship on the grounds of claimed co-ethnicity, because of the ease of assimilation, the permeability of German culture and to some extent anti-Polish sentiment (exacerbated by Poland's non-recognition of a separate Silesian national minority) but above all, by prospects of relative economic affluence which German citizenship(s) would afford. Indicative of this is the fact that most of the time, and especially in the case of the GDR (Panagiotidis, 2012), Silesians chose to be registered as Germans in front of Polish authorities only if they intended to relocate to the GDR. The FRG further enabled Silesians to become FRG citizens without renouncing their Polish citizenship (Kovács & Tóth, 2007, p. 163).

### **Triadic Nexus Vicissitudes: The Cases of Aromanians and Bunjevci as Claimed Co-ethnics**

The individual case studies in this analysis are based on research on the Aromanian/Vlach population in southern Albania and the Bunjevac population in Serbia's autonomous province of Vojvodina. The empirical cases are illustrative of the claimed co-ethnics phenomenon. The studies involved not only a review of primary and secondary source materials, but also fieldwork, which included elite semi-structured interviews with political activists and prominent public figures who actively declare their Aromanian or Bunjevac identity in respectively Korçë, (Albania) and Subotica (Serbia), in January 2013. The individual case studies look at similar thematic issues such as self-identification/external identification of groups, internal political divisions, census data and identification by the home countries and the role of the external kin-state.

## Vlachs/Aromanians in Albania and Greece's External Citizenship Policies

### *Background (Religion, Ethnicity, Language)*

Aromanian Vlachs (primarily inhabiting today's south-eastern Albania, continental Greece and some areas of the Republic of Macedonia) are, just like Dacoromanian Vlachs (living in today's Serbia and mentioned earlier), speakers of an Eastern Romance language (called either Aromanian or Macedo-Aromanian) bearing some resemblance not only to the modern Romanian language but also to a smaller Meglenitic dialect spoken by a small number of Vlachs on the border between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece. They are known by exonyms such as Vlachs (*Βλάχοι-Vlachoi*, *Vlasi*) or *Cincars*, but most frequently use the endonym *Armânji*, *Rrâmânji* (Schwandner-Sievers, 1999). By reference to the ethnographic work of Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers (Schwandner-Sievers, 1999) and Kahl (2002), one can explain the historic development of the Aromanian political project(s) in the Balkans and the influence and connectedness of Aromanian Vlach elites with other national projects (especially Greek) in the Balkans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Orthodox Church, which the vast majority of Aromanian Vlachs adhere to, played an important role in both their self-identification and perception by others. Greece's historic policies of accommodation and especially successful assimilation of Vlachs in Greece itself (Mylonas, 2013, pp. 134–137) have probably contributed to this development. As a result, Aromanian Vlachs are largely nowadays integrated into the Greek national project as a distinct cultural and linguistic group within the Greek national corpus. Most of their representatives and their formal associations in Greece actively deny the claims that Aromanian Vlachs constitute a national minority. Illustrative of this stance is a letter sent to the Council of Europe by the umbrella organisation of Vlach associations in Greece refuting Romania's president Traian Băsescu's claims that Greece does not recognise a Romanian minority living there. The president of the umbrella Vlach organisation responded in the following words:

[n]o one is therefore entitled to characterise, in an arbitrary way, a large part of the Greek nation as a 'minority' in its own motherland, whose history, as a matter of fact, is plenty of examples of great Vlach-speaking national benefactors who dedicated their whole life, their whole achievements and their whole wealth to the freedom, prosperity and development of Hellenism and Greece.<sup>13</sup>

Vlach populations in Greece are well integrated into the Greek national project, despite Greece's notorious track record regarding minority rights, something that can be illustrated by the thriving Panhellenic Federation of Cultural Associations of Vlachs.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the association serves a peculiar role in its attempts to create a (Vlach) Greek diaspora in neighbouring countries.<sup>15</sup>

### *Greek Citizenship Law and Practices*

Greek citizenship law has been, in general terms, rather inclusive towards its co-ethnics abroad, especially since the 1980s. However, ethnic Greeks living in Albania did not enjoy the full benefits of Greece's expansive policies of external citizenship until 2006 when the law was amended to offer full citizenship to ethnic Greeks in Albania. The reasons for such restrictive policies could be partly explained by the 'fear at the time,

that acquiring Greek citizenship may cause the withdrawal of their Albanian citizenship and consequently represent the definitive historical extinction or statistical death of a Greek minority in Albania' (Christopoulos, 2013, p. 9). The fears of the Greek government were somewhat vindicated as the censuses show a steady decrease of self-declared Greeks in Albania.<sup>16</sup> One can agree with both Christopoulos (2013) and Anagnostou (2011) that the fact that Albania did not recognise dual citizenship until 1998<sup>17</sup> is an important factor in the Greek external ethnic citizenship policies, but it was definitely not the only cause for the change. Other important factors were the fact that by 2006, a significant number of ethnic Greeks had already moved to Greece living on 'κάρτα ομογενούς/karta omogenous'<sup>18</sup> and the fact that the ethnic reciprocity policies were failing because of this development.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Vlach issue became more prominent as this ethnic group is more numerous. According to some sources (Winniffrith, 1995), it numbers up to 200,000 persons, several times larger than the officially recognised Greek minority in Albania and was therefore perceived as being easily lured by the offer of external ethnic citizenship.<sup>20</sup> In terms of practices of according citizenship, it is important to stress that unlike some other cases, for example, Bulgaria mentioned above, the Greek authorities do not ask Aromanian Vlachs to declare themselves as Greeks or to speak Greek in order to claim citizenship, thus lowering the threshold for the acquisition of citizenship and expanding the numbers of potential applicants. Rather, the Greek state uses the so-called *Vlachometro/Βλαχόμετρο*, the 'Vlachmeter', that includes either testing one's Aromanian language skills or showing proof of Vlach identity issued by one of the Vlach associations in Albania (Tsitselikis, 2003, p. 33). Interestingly enough, although Aromanian language skills are sufficient for an Albanian citizen to prove his/her Greek co-ethnicity, Greece does not recognise Vlach as a distinct language, but rather calls it an oral idiom without written form.<sup>21</sup>

### *Demography, Self-identification, Censuses and the Legal Minority Framework in Albania*

The issue of political recognition (or the lack of it) of Aromanian Vlachs in Albania is controversial in terms of their legal recognition as a national minority, census figures and relations with the self-declared kin-states. One of the main reasons why Aromanians are not recognised as a national minority is justified by the fact that there is no homonymous kin-state of Aromanians unlike the cases of other recognised minorities including Greeks, Macedonians and Serbo-Montenegreins.<sup>22</sup> Despite the fact that Albania is a signatory of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Roma and Aromanians were not being accorded the same protection of the convention, but are 'treated as ethno-linguistic minorities with lesser rights' (Palermo & Sabanadze, 2011, p. 121). Albania's 'government's approach is to recognize only those minorities with a "kin-state"' (Palermo & Sabanadze, 2011)—Greeks, Macedonians and Serbo-Montenegreins—as national minorities. These policies lead to a particular form of unevenness which disparately affects national minorities without kin-states.<sup>23</sup> This is an obvious example of a double hermeneutic where the existence of a *homonymous* external kin-state is a precondition for the legal recognition of a national minority. Furthermore, the Albanian government reserves the implementation of minority rights exclusively within the so-called 'minority zones' thus limiting the breadth of this protection. Moreover, there is a feeling expressed by Aromanian Vlach activists, independent researchers, journalists

and other minorities' organisations that the census figures do not reflect the reality on the ground and the entire 2011 census, which was the first one after 1989 that included ethnic self-declaration, was dubious and lacked transparency.<sup>24</sup> These allegations are not surprising bearing in mind the official state policies towards Vlachs.

### *Intra-Vlach Divisions*

The existing political divisions among the Aromanian Vlach population in Albania can be generally covered by the three most visible political identification tendencies and relevant manifestations thereof: The pro-Greek and Vlach-only, which form the vast majority and occasionally overlap in some respects and the pro-Romanian, the latter being by far the less numerous stance. All of the factions promote their Vlach ethnic background, but differ on how they define their national identity. Namely, the pro-Greek politicians would concur with the majority of Vlachs in Greece that they are nationally Greek with Vlach linguistic and cultural traits. The pro-Greek body among politically active Vlachs in Albania are oftentimes activists of the 'Omonoia' human rights organisation which is allegedly strongly influenced by Greece and represents its interests in Albania.<sup>25</sup> The Vlach-only ethnic entrepreneurs such as the prominent intellectual Theodhoraq Ciko would, on the other hand, claim that they are both nationally and ethnically Vlach and deny having Greek (or Romanian) national consciousness. Ciko, for example, traces the Albanian Vlach population's roots to antiquity and Alexander the Great.<sup>26</sup> All of my pro-Greek or Vlach-only interlocutors confirmed having Greek citizenship. However, even the pro-Greek politicians (in addition to claiming the survival of their Greek identity) agree that the economic benefits and practical reasons which Greek citizenship carries, such as pensions, right to education and employment in the EU, are the main motivations for the acquisition of Greek citizenship.

The last group, and most likely the least numerous, is of Vlachs claiming Romanian national identity such as the Korçë-based orthodox priest Dhimitraq Veriga. Veriga substantiates his pro-Romanian arguments by the proximity of Aromanian Vlach and the standard Romanian language.<sup>27</sup> Unlike Greece, Romania does not offer full citizenship but soft types of ethnizenship, rights to study in Romania, access to some social services, financial support, and so on. Recently, Romania has intensified its demands for the recognition of what it calls the Romanian/Aromanian minority (*SETimes*, 2010)<sup>28</sup> or Macedonian Romanians in Albania. Interestingly, just like Greece, Romania does not recognise the existence of a Vlach/Romanian language, but nevertheless uses tests in Aromanian in order to identify individuals who can claim Romanian ethnizenship-associated rights such as the right to free university education including a scholarship/stipend (Nitsiakos, 2010, p. 433).<sup>29</sup>

### **Summary**

Greek citizenship policies towards Aromanian Vlachs in Albania went from being somewhat restrictive in the 1990s to more expansive from the mid-2000s. Declared Vlach rather than Greek identity is sufficient proof for the acquisition of Greek citizenship unlike some other cases when the claimed co-ethnic applicant would at least performatively have to declare the identity of the external nation-state's dominant ethnic group. Obviously, the integration or incorporation of Aromanian Vlachs in Greece and their prominent role in

the Greek national project was an important factor that conditioned the sociohistoric understanding of Greece's policy-makers based on the Greek case<sup>30</sup> where the vast majority of Vlachs have a strong Greek national identity. However, one cannot avoid noticing the instrumental purposes of extending Greek citizenship to Vlachs, thus strengthening Greece's claims about the larger numbers of ethnic Greeks than officially declared in Albania's censuses. The claimed co-ethnics largely accept Greek citizenship irrespective of their declared national identification since the threshold is very low, but the benefits are still significant.

### **Bunjevci in Serbia/Vojvodina and Croatia's External Citizenship Policies**

#### *Background (Religion, Ethnicity, Language)*

In the case of the Bunjevac ethnic group in Vojvodina (Serbia), there is very little secondary literature apart from that produced by the group itself. There are two dominant interpretations of the population's past, a pro-Croat version such as that espoused by Žigmanov (2009) that claims that Bunjevci are just a 'sub-ethnic' group of Croats and a Bunjevac-only (Mandić, 2009) version which argues that there is a distinct ethnic and national identity of Bunjevci living in Vojvodina and parts of today's southern Hungary. These divisions correspond entirely to the political divisions within the ethnic Bunjevac population in Serbia. What both historiographies agree on is that the ancestors of the Bunjevci in today's Serbia migrated to the region around the northern Vojvodinian town of Subotica in the seventeenth century from the hinterland of the Adriatic littoral. This population speaks a dialect of the Serbo-Croat language (or language group) and is predominantly Catholic. Although it is not my aim to analyse the 'ethnogenesis' and historical development of this ethnic group, a few points are worth mentioning. Historically, this population was strongly influenced by two (often overlapping) national projects, the Yugoslav and the Croat. The territory this population inhabited was part of the Hungarian counties under the Habsburg monarchy unlike the autonomous Croatia-Slavonia. This could be one of the reasons why, despite the attempts of national integration by Croatian nationalists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they were only partly successful. Žigmanov<sup>31</sup> even argues that Hungary consciously promoted a separate Bunjevac identity and allowed formal identification as Bunjevac in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century censuses.

#### *Croatian Citizenship Law and Practices*

Some have argued that citizenship legislation and practices in Croatia since the establishment of the independent state in 1991 were used to bolster a form of 'transnational nationalism',

a nationalism that, by taking Croatian ethnicity as its core, aimed not only to homogenise the national population through the exclusion of non-Croats, but also to include all ethnic Croats into Croatian citizenry, regardless of their place or country of residence. (Ragazzi, Štiks, & Koska, 2013)



Croatian citizenship law did not change significantly up until 2011, but the administrative practices employed in the post-2000 period (after the end of Franjo Tuđman's ethnocratic rule, when the European integration and democratisation processes were accelerated) have been altered both by the (re)admission of non-ethnic Croats and by a more thorough screening of ethnic Croat applicants. The privileges and facilitated access offered to ethnic Croats were not curbed, not even by the latest law adopted in late 2011.<sup>32</sup> What have changed gradually are the practices regarding citizenship admission since 2000, a development that was sanctioned by the 2011 law. Compared to the 1990s, much more stringent rules were introduced to prove that one belongs to the Croatian nation. One's 'declaration of ethnic membership in legal transactions, allegation of such membership in particular public documents, protection of rights and promotion of interests of Croatian people and active participation in Croatian cultural, scientific or sport associations abroad' (Ragazzi et al., 2013, p. 16) has, since 2000, been a necessary precondition for the application.

Part of the rationale behind these changes can be found in the misuse and manipulation to which this very vague and expansive ethnic citizenship regime was susceptible. In the 1990s, it was, arguably, in the interest of the Croatian government to extend Croatian citizenship to as many ethnic Croats (or claimed ethnic Croats) as possible in Serbia as a way of reciprocating Serbia's support for the ethnic Serb rebellion in Croatia. Reciprocity in ethnic relations continued after the end of the war and could be illustrated by the opening of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) consulate in the Croatian city of Vukovar where a significant ethnic Serb population remained after the town's integration into the Croatian state as well as the opening of Croatia's consulate in Subotica, a town where the largest population of Bunjevci in Serbia resides.<sup>33</sup>

These general developments have had an influence on the Bunjevac population and their acquisition of Croatian citizenship. In the 1990s, identifying as Bunjevac or simply as Catholic with a South Slavic surname<sup>34</sup> was usually considered valid proof of one's Croat national identity. In the 2000s, however, the treatment of applicants who self-identify as Bunjevac changed and Bunjevac national self-identification became detrimental to one's application for Croatian citizenship. In other words, based on some of the negative responses of the Croatian state institutions, self-identifying as Bunjevac after 2000 was considered a reason for rejecting an application for Croatian citizenship. In most cases, Croatia's interior ministry in the post-2000 period rejected those applications on the grounds that it does not recognise the 'artificial Bunjevac nation'<sup>35</sup> and considered that applicants did not sufficiently prove that they belong to the Croatian nation. A large number of Bunjevci of either national identification possess Croatian citizenship though. Most of my interviewees mentioned the practical benefits Croatian citizenship carries including visa-free travel in the period when Serbian citizens needed visas for most European countries, and currently the benefits of EU citizenship as the main reason for their application.

#### *Demography, Self-identification, Censuses and the Legal Minority Framework in Serbia/Vojvodina*

Since 1945 and based on the relevant decree, should one declare Bunjevac ethnicity before a state official, the official concerned would enter 'Croat' instead of 'Bunjevac' in all the official documents, thus precluding one from formally identifying as Bunjevac.<sup>36</sup> The

Yugoslav state policy was to rebuff the existence of a separate Bunjevac nationality (*nacionalnost*) and rather strengthen the national projects of the constitutive nations (*narodi*), in this case Croatian, and to account for groups with perceived ethnocultural proximity to be an integral part of the larger nation in question. Since the 1991 census, one can declare Bunjevac ethnicity in all formal occasions and be considered as such. This change of official policy is often ascribed to (the then president of Serbia) Slobodan Milošević's desire to divide the Croat national community in Vojvodina and weaken the potential influence Croatia could have had on them. According to a similar argument, many Croats also preferred to declare themselves as Bunjevac in order to avoid being stigmatised as Croats, thus increasing the number of self-declared Bunjevci in the 1990s. These factors are true to a large degree, but are definitely not the only ones for national identification as Bunjevac. There have been grass-root demands for the recognition of a separate Bunjevac nation. In the last three censuses, the number of self-declared Bunjevci varies between 16,000 and 20,000. The Serbian state and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina recognise Bunjevci as a distinct national community which established its own national council as a form of national cultural autonomy.

### *Intra-Bunjevac Divisions*

Amongst the population that is identified as Bunjevac, there are some who declare their ethnic and national identity to be Bunjevac, while others declare their nationality to be Croat with Bunjevac as a 'sub-ethnic identity'.<sup>37</sup> These correspond to two officially recognised (by the Republic of Serbia and the AP of Vojvodina) national councils, both with their seats in Subotica, the Croat National Council and the Bunjevac National Council. Formal recognition and the financial benefits of establishing a national council should certainly not be neglected in this case. National councils not only receive funds from the state/autonomous province but have extensive powers over cultural and educational institutions. By providing structural, formal and financial support, the host state recognises these divisions and arguably sustains them.

### **Summary**

During the 1990s, Croatia's citizenship policies towards Bunjevci of both Croat and Bunjevac national self-identification were of an expansive nature; one's Catholic background was usually considered sufficient for the acquisition of Croatian citizenship even if they publicly and officially declared themselves as Bunjevac. After 2000, despite the fact that the legal norms were not changed, these claimed co-ethnics could only attain Croatian citizenship if they declared as Croats and submitted proofs of that. A simple statement of one's ethnicity is no longer sufficient and a verifiable document where one declares their Croat ethnicity persistently over a certain period is now a necessary condition for the application. There is an obvious change from the practices of extending citizenship to Bunjevci in the 1990s and 2000s. This corresponds to the interests of the different governments and changing foreign policy prerogatives. This case clearly illustrates a departure from policies where claimed co-ethnicity still exists in sociocultural aspects (Croatia considers all Bunjevci to be nationally Croats, the Bunjevac nationality being 'artificial'), but formally, Bunjevac national self-identification is not considered as proof of one's co-ethnicity with the kin-state majority.



## Conclusion

The comparison of the two cases of claimed co-ethnics, Aromanian Vlachs in Albania and Bunjevci in Serbia (Vojvodina), is fruitful in the sense that they are typical of claimed co-ethnicity and related citizenship practices in Southeastern Europe. The comparison also demonstrates the need to incorporate the concept into the general literature on minorities and kin-state citizenship.

The cases show useful variation in which the Greek-Vlach case moves from restrictive to extremely expansive and the Croatian-Bunjevac case has a diametrically opposite trajectory. The changes can be partly explained by instrumental uses of external citizenship serving foreign policy prerogatives. With the easing of tensions between Croatia and Serbia starting in 2000s, there was little to gain by extending citizenship to larger swathes of the population. Conversely, in the Albanian case, with the increased migration of ethnic Greeks to the kin-state, Greek governments sought to increase the number of people given access to Greek citizenship, including ethnic Vlach but nationally Greek population and also claimed co-ethnics with Vlach-only national identification. Further, and in line with the previous argument, in the Greek-Vlach case, declaring Vlach ethnicity and proving knowledge of the Vlach language is sufficient for the acquisition of Greek citizenship. In the Croatian-Bunjevac case, the same was true in the 1990s, but the declaration of Bunjevac ethnicity is a cause for rejection of the citizenship application since the mid-2000s. The other cases briefly mentioned in the paper fall somewhere in between the two based on these criteria. In the cases of Aromanian Vlachs in Albania and Bunjevci in Serbia, the policies of the host nationalising states towards these populations are significantly different. While Albania does everything to not recognise the Vlach population as a national minority, Serbia has proactive policies and supports the Bunjevac national project. In both cases, these policies are designed to obviate the role of the (claiming) kin-states manifested by the extension of their ethnic citizenship, in this case Greece and Croatia. Despite different constellations in the triadic nexus model, the results in the political identifications within the named populations of Vlachs and Bunjevci are remarkably similar. This is a relevant corrective to the concept of claimed co-ethnics which should be limited to those that nationally identify as Bunjevac and Vlach rather than to the entire, named ethnic group that includes those who do indeed identify with the national project of the kin-state (in these cases as Croats and Greeks).

In terms of the existing literature referred to in the paper, Walzer's concept of 'ethnic relatives' when applied to these cases bears more resemblance to the understandings and perceptions of ethnic entrepreneurs of the kin-states rather than to a usable analytical category.

Brubaker's triadic nexus constellation, on the other hand, could be further developed to take into account somewhat more marginal but still important cases of claimed co-ethnics and their role in the relations between host and kin-states as well as their relevance in the study of citizenship and minorities. In particular, the cases highlighted here show that sometimes within the relational context of the triadic nexus fields, the relations within the triad can be unidirectional. In the case of claimed co-ethnics, the external national homeland or the self-declared kin-state unidirectionally perceives and accords citizenship to a population that does not necessarily consider itself a part of that nation. In the analysed cases, the affected population's responses to kin-state's citizenship policies are frequently driven by the concrete benefits the citizenship brings rather than by their national

identification as these cases of claimed co-ethnics illustrate. Building on the constructivist literature that demonstrates how the externalisation of citizenship policies can strengthen groupness of kin-minorities, the paper shows that by extending kin-state citizenship to claimed co-ethnics, governments of kin-states include already politically mobilised groups such as Aromanian Vlachs or Bunjevci into the Greek and Croatian national projects, respectively. Thus, the kin-states consider entire named ethnic groups that accept its citizenship as their co-ethnics irrespective of the fact that many of them have a separate national project. This has probably led analysts to conflate the categories of political practice (an entire ethnic group) with categories of analysis (co-ethnics and claimed co-ethnics). Thus, the concept of claimed co-ethnics serves the role of a corrective in this case as well. This conclusion can be further generalised beyond the cases mentioned in the paper.

Another point that could be developed in future research relates to undirectionality within the triadic nexus. It relates, in particular, to the cases in which a national minority considers itself as belonging to the ethnic group of an external state while the latter's policies do not correspond to those claims such as Egyptians in Kosovo.<sup>38</sup> All of these should make us reconsider definitions of minorities and show the complexity that external citizenship based on ethnic affiliation can produce. Finally, these sorts of constellations contribute to the unevenness of citizenship in which there is no clear fit in how the actors (states, national minorities) define their respective national projects and the oftentimes discretionary citizenship acquisition procedures.

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## Notes

1. For a detailed account of externalisation of ethnic citizenship in the region, see Žilović (2012) or a similar paper dealing with East Central Europe by Pogonyi, Kovács, and Körtvélyesi, 2010.
2. My grateful thanks to Rogers Brubaker who suggested using the term 'claimed co-ethnics' instead of 'perceived co-ethnics' as I have done in previous versions of this paper. As the issue that I am trying to deal with is primarily about political claims-making and less so about perceptions, I have changed the term accordingly.
3. Authors in international relations (with realist inclinations), such as Stephen M. Saideman, have made more explicitly instrumental arguments. Saideman's view is that ethnic ties (affective motives) are the basic drivers of ethnic interventions insofar as governments seek to respond to genuine concerns that their constituents feel for ethnic kin over the border. However, strategic choice or instrumentalism also comes into play when governments face too many constraints to engage in ethnic interventions or when the elite's core constituency changes so that the previous constituents' cross-border affective ties

- are no longer important to the elites. This paper acknowledges the importance of the instrumental use of external ethnic citizenship, but does not consider it as the only explanation of the phenomenon.
4. I do not intend to reify the groups or to say that there are no intra-transborder-minority struggles over this, especially in various historical contexts.
  5. The table is not exhaustive and one could imagine other categories defined by the above criteria.
  6. The reference here as in most of the paper is to political elites and ethnic entrepreneurs and their politicisation of identity and groupness rather than to individual, personal national identification. Certainly, as I will argue later, there are different and competing visions of a named peoplehood both historic but also contemporary.
  7. Brubaker in *Nationalism Reframed* (1996) does argue that 'although national minority and homeland nationalisms both define themselves in opposition to the nationalizing nationalisms of the state in which the minorities live, they are not necessarily harmoniously aligned.' (p. 6) However, this non-alignment needs further elaboration and the issue of claimed co-ethnics can illustrate it well.
  8. See Krasniqi in this issue.
  9. Serbian citizens with residency in Kosovo could not travel visa-free to Schengen countries at the time of writing.
  10. This is despite the fact that it does not offer ethnically based external citizenship (see EUDO citizenship report on Romania <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/docs/CountryReports/Romania.pdf>) but rather one based on former citizenship. Serbian Vlachs as a group never possessed Romanian citizenship in the past so there are no grounds for the extension of external citizenship based on current legislation.
  11. See the statement by Dragan Balašević Vlach National Council vice-president titled 'Vlachs are not Romanians, the Vlach language is not Romanian' [*Vlasi nisu Rumuni niti je rumunski jezik vlaški*] <http://www.nacionalniasavetvlaha.rs/reagovanjabalasevic2.html> (retrieved March 21, 2013).
  12. Cf. the case of former Romanian citizens in Moldova. See EUDO <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/citizenship-news/86-pressrelease>
  13. Michalis Mageirias, the president of the Panhellenic Federation of Cultural Associations of Vlachs, in a letter to the Council of Europe, 19 February 2011.
  14. Nikolaos Mertzos, the President of the Society of Macedonian Studies, in a speech at the annual Vlach New Year manifestation: 'We are more Greek than the Greeks themselves' [*Είμαστε περισσότεροι Έλληνες απ' τους Έλληνες*], 20 January 2013, Thessaloniki.
  15. At the same event, Michaelis Mageirias demanded a stronger involvement of the Greek state and extension of Greek citizenship and related rights to Vlachs living in neighbouring Albania and the Republic of Macedonia.
  16. From 1989 until 2011, the number of self-declared Greeks according to censuses conducted in those years decreased by over half from 58,758 in 1989 to 24,243 or under 1% of Albania's population in (see <http://www.instat.gov.al/>).
  17. Since the adoption of the changed citizenship law in 1998 Albania tolerates dual citizenship. See Krasniqi November 2012, p. 10.
  18. This was a type of identity card given by the Greek state to its co-ethnics especially in the countries where its co-ethnics could not acquire external Greek citizenship. This ID card was a quintessential example of ethnizenship as it gave the bearer rights usually associated with citizenship, but short of full citizenship. Other countries have or had such documents, Hungary (based on its 2002 status law) and Croatia just recently introduced the so called 'Croatia card' serving a similar purpose, although until now there are no clear instructions on who can qualify as the recipient of this card.
  19. There are strong indications that the Greek state has often tied the status of Albanian migrants and seasonal workers (legal or illegal) in Greece to that of the Greek minority in Albania. See Green, (2005). Also Tsitselikis, Baltisiotis, Telloglou, & Christopoulos, 2003.
  20. The actual number is probably smaller.
  21. *Τ άκης Καμπύλης 'Μία Γλώσσα Χωρίς Μία Λέξη.'* [Takis Kampylis, A language without a word] (last accessed February 12, 2013) [http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_columns\\_2\\_28/06/2009\\_320247](http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_columns_2_28/06/2009_320247).
  22. Although these are currently two separate states, at the time of the adoption of minority rights legislation, they were one.
  23. The unevenness of citizenship in these cases is rather ambiguous and the Albanian state does not officially discriminate against these two minorities, but the existence of differentiated rights, in effect, limits the rights of Romany and Vlach minorities as compared to other minorities with kin-states.

24. See also the declaration of Albania's minorities not recognising the results of the 2011 census <http://www.unpo.org/article/13466>
25. One of the prominent political activists of the (splinter) Omonoia organisation in Korçë, Naum Disho, exhibits strong pro-Greek attitudes, both in speeches and in my interview with him. His identification is primarily Greek and then Vlach. He considers being Vlach as a sub-ethnic category. Disho was sentenced to a year in prison for constructing a path at the Boboshtica cemetery leading to a cross erected to commemorate the Greek soldiers who died in the Greek-Italian war in 1940–41. His trial was seen as the politically motivated targeting of a vociferous pro-Greek Vlach by nationalists in Albania. See also Albania 11 January 2012.
26. Interview, Korçë 21 January 2013.
27. Interview, Korçë 22 January 2013.
28. To my knowledge, similar claims have not been advanced by the Romanian state in respect to Vlachophone Roma anywhere.
29. This is a common practice and was confirmed by most of my interviewees.
30. This could be seen as a spillover effect of the Greek nation building project on the territory of today's Greece.
31. Interview with Tomislav Žigmanov, director of the Department for culture of Croats of Vojvodina, 24 January 2013, Subotica.
32. In fact, the 2011 Law on Modifications and Amendments of the Law on Croatian Citizenship formally broadened the rights of ethnic Croat kin including ethnizenship rights based on the so-called 'Croatia Card'.
33. Interview with Ivan Sedlak, the President of the Bunjevci National Council in Vojvodina/Serbia, former minister without portfolio in the FRY government in charge of minority issues.
34. My interviewees confirmed that it was sufficient to present the Croatian authorities with a statement issued by Catholic Church as proof of one's religious creed in order to be eligible for Croatian citizenship.
35. Some of the applications for Croatian citizenship after 2000, based on ethnic principles for acquisition were rejected in the cases in which the applicant at any given moment or situation officially declared (usually in censuses, in school or university records etc.) their ethnicity as Bunjevac even on one occasion when they could have otherwise declared their ethnicity as Croat. I was given access to a number of rejected applications whose names are known to me, but due to the sensitivity of the matter, I cannot publicly state who they are.
36. Odluka br 1040/1945, Glavni narodnoslobodilački odbor Vojvodine/GNOOV/, 14 May 1945, Novi Sad.
37. Most of my interviewees used the term sub-ethnic, meaning ethnic as opposed to national.
38. See Krasniqi in this issue.
39. This is a necessary condition for the definition. Admittedly, there are cases of territorial autonomies for minorities with a kin-state, but the existence of territorial autonomy is not a necessary condition for the definition of a national minority while a territorially defined sub-state unit is necessary in the definition of stateless nations.
40. Some authors include in the category of stateless nations those ethnic and national groups dispersed across states without a named kin-state such as, for example, Roma. See Jenne 2000, pp. 189–212. Unlike Jenne, I refer here to stateless nations as most of the literature on territorial politics would, by inclusion of a territorial reference in a usually nested and plurinational setting where a sub-state unit plays a role of nation-state (e.g. Kurdistan in Iraq), but, where there is no external, homonymous nation state. Other authors, when referring to what Keating calls stateless nations, use the term 'minority nations'. See Kymlicka (2001); Bauböck (2001).

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