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The Hungarian National Minority in Ukraine: Hungary's Foreign Policy, Bilateral Tensions, and Challenges (2014 to the Present)

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Hungary has been the only country in the European Union and NATO that consistently blocks aid to Ukraine and sanctions against Russia, which is aggressive. This is led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban, the ruling Fidesz party, and the Christian Democratic Party of Hungary, which has won four consecutive parliamentary elections since 2010. However, one of the main reasons Orban and the Russian leadership support Russia in this war of extermination is not only economic and geopolitical interests but also their policy of staying in power by mobilizing Hungarian society around historical narratives and maintaining a significant Hungarian diaspora abroad, mainly in neighboring countries, including Ukraine. The issue of the Hungarian national minority in Zakarpattia remains a primary source of interstate tensions between Ukraine and Hungary and requires greater attention.

Already in the era of glasnost in late 1980 and the democratization of the USSR (early 1989), the Hungarian intelligentsia of the Transcarpathian region organized within the Society of Hungarian Culture of Transcarpathia (Hungarian: Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális Szövetség; KMKSZ; hereinafter - KMKSZ). Over time, the organization politicized its activities. In the early 1990s, there was talk of creating a Hungarian autonomous territorial district within Berehove district. By the early 2000s, this had evolved into a project for the Prytysyansky district as an association of settlements with a dense Hungarian population in the Zakarpattia region.

The most influential historical narrative promoted by Fidesz since 2010 is the "Trianon trauma," which highlights the collective grief and sense of injustice in Hungary caused by the Treaty of Trianon (1920). This treaty drastically reduced Hungary's territory and population after World War I. As a result, Hungary lost two-thirds of its land, leaving about 3 million ethnic Hungarians living outside the new borders in countries such as Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine. The Hungarian government, especially under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz party, has actively used the Trianon trauma as a political tool both domestically and internationally. They depict Trianon as a historic injustice, fostering a sense of victimhood among Hungarians. This narrative foster national unity and patriotic sentiments, making it easier for the government to garner support.

Hungary has also implemented policies to integrate ethnic Hungarians beyond its borders into its cultural, economic, and political spheres. According to official documents, called *nemzetpolitika* (nation-politics), the aim is to protect Hungarians outside Hungary from neighboring countries'

nationalization efforts and to preserve Hungarian culture and language within these cross-border communities. Since 2010, the Fidesz government has granted Hungarian citizenship and voting rights to ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine and other neighboring nations.

Keywords: Hungarian national minority, Transcarpathian region of Ukraine, “Trianon trauma”, foreign policy of Hungary, national policy of Hungary.