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SLOVAK – UKRAINIAN PART OF SCHENGEN AREA. HISTORY, SECURITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE.

Abstract

This paper deals with the origins, security, history of the Slovak-Ukrainian border, which in 2007 became the part of the Schengen Area. Which can be considered part of the civilizational boundaries, as well as a significant geopolitical phenomenon. We focused on this part of the Schengen border in particular, as it has been through many changes in the last century. These conditions have many impacts on everyday life of inhabitants of border area. We try to approximate the impact of borders through a partial analysis of a questionnaire survey, questions of satisfaction with the place and with life in in border villages. We also pay attention to the border definition and the national border specifically, since we regard it as a significant socio-economical phenomenon, which affects its neighbouring areas.

Key words: Border, Schengen, Quality of life

Introduction

Border as a geographical term has been studied for a long time, and there exist a variety of borders as such. Humane geography uses the term ‘state border’ most frequently. Academics define state border as a strong socio-economic phenomenon, which significantly influences its surrounding regions. The border should not be understood as an isolated spatial element, since it causes a ‘bordering effect’, thus determining the border-neighbouring region. Border then is an inseparable part of the spatial differentiation.

In modern, united and borderless Europe there is little interest in examining how the border influences the life of its citizens, since borders are no longer seen as barriers, and as such have become the place for development and cross-border cooperation. The Schengen border seems to be the perfect place for research that

focuses on how the border influences common lives of its inhabitants. It is this part that has turned into a barrier, after Slovakia joined the EU, and thus influences the life of its dwellers even more.

The aim of our paper is to zoom in on the Schengen border as a significant geographical and socio-economic phenomenon. We focus on diversity of perception of this border by the people who live nearby. We analyse the questionnaires distributed in selected bordering municipalities, pointing out the significance the border bears. The questionnaire includes questions that focus on the dis/satisfaction with where the people live, and with life in general, and also possibility of moving out, if given the chance. Our outcome is presented separately; one for the Slovak and the other for the Ukrainian side of the border, and we also emphasise the variety and differences among the respondents.

Methodology

In order to point out the differences in perception of the Schengen border on its both sides we try to establish the basic border elements and how they work, based upon the analysis of the sources available. The most important analysis is the one that deals with the questionnaires distributed in the municipalities of Lekárovce a Storožnica.

The questionnaire analysis used in this paper is a partial analysis of the outcomes arrived at in the author's dissertation, which dealt with the impact of the Schengen border on quality of life. The questionnaire uses two fundamental and one additional question. The question that deals with the satisfaction with life on the border aims to find out whether people living in this region perceive it as a good/bad place for living. Moving-out question provides extra information that completes the picture.

First two questions have been scaled from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most satisfied and 1 the least. The additional question had four options – definitely yes, probably yes, probably no, definitely not.

State border

When examining the quality of life and the border the most influential type of border is the state border. Simple and succinct state border definition is provided by Rumpel (in Baar et al. 1996), who defines the state border as a contract-

defined line on the maps and in terrain, which thus separates the area of one sovereign state from another sovereign state, or from an area that is not liable to sovereignty of any other state, e.g. 'unbound' sea.

There are many state border definitions, and the most common characteristic they all share is the understanding of its core element; that it defines the area in which a particular state realises its authority – sovereignty. In other words, the area determined by a state border applies certain rules, laws and procedures which might not necessarily be applied in the space outside the area. When talking about the political borders one must mention necessity of cooperation at the borders, which, if successful, can eventually result in abolishment of border control, which does not delete the border itself, only allows for a looser regime when crossing.

Slovak-Ukrainian border

The borders of the Slovak Republic went through various stages of development and divide the areas with various degree of development. Our aim is the analysis of the Slovak-Ukrainian border and thus we will not focus on the borders Slovakia shares with other countries.

When the Slovak Republic entered the Schengen Area, only a small part of the Slovak borders became a bridge, not only between Slovakia and the Ukraine, but also the whole of Schengen Area of EU and its eastern partners. The Slovak border also becomes a civilisation border. According to the Huntington (2001) world civilisation division the Western-Christian and Eastern-Christian border runs somewhere along the medieval borders of Poland. With the Ukraine being located at the very area as a sovereign state, this is, by Baar (2002), integrated to the Eastern-Christian civilisation, which eventually makes the eastern border of Slovakia the civilisation border.

This border of Slovakia and the Ukraine separates two different countries, which, on many levels, cannot be compared. At the intrastate level the border separates the administrative parts of the Eastern Slovakia, namely Prešov and Košice autonomous counties and the Transcarpatia district of the Ukraine. When analysing the regions it is possible to state that these border regions are belong to the most economically underdeveloped ones (cf. Angelovič 2010, Angelovič, Klamár, Benč 2011, Matlovič, Klamár, Matlovičová 2008, Yehorova 2011).

Schengen agreement

The Schengen border represents a significant sign of the united Europe. There are no obstacles in the Schengen Area that would prevent free movement of people, services and capital across the borders of the countries within the area. Abolishment of the inner borders enforced stricter controls at the outer borders. The Eastern border of the Schengen Area can be called the poverty border, since these regions represent the poorest areas of the EU. The borders then can help the development of the regions through cross-border cooperation, which is one of the main incentives why we study this particular section of the Schengen border.

The Schengen border is a result of the Schengen Agreement, which was named after the Luxemburg town of Schengen, where, on June 14, 1985 a treaty between France, Germany and Benelux countries was signed, and these countries thus agreed upon continual abolishment of controls of the peoples crossing their mutual borders, which also included more thorough controls at the outer borders. This document is usually labelled as a First Schengen Agreement, as on June 19, 1990, a supplementary agreement was signed, known as the Schengen Agreement (Schengen II).

The First Schengen Agreement did not require ratification and was provisionally carried out. The Second Schengen Agreement, however, requires the ratification. The Schengen I consisted of 33 articles and contained short-term and long-term measures, which, in the Schengen II are more detailed and elaborated (Schengen Agreements).

The Schengen II became legitimate in September 1993. However, France and Germany did not manage to comply with the conditions for abolishment of inner borders, which were appointed in the memorandum, attached to the final act. Hence, the Agreement was only put into effect on March 26, 1995. The inner border controls then ceased to exist only by 1995. In the Amsterdam Agreement (Protocol B) of 1997 the signatory powers agreed upon the Schengen Agreement integration into the EU law. The agreement thus became a part of the Amsterdam Agreement, which was realised on May 1, 1999. The future EU candidates were also to become part of the Schengen Area. Nevertheless, this is not done automatically and the countries are allowed to approach the Schengen Agreement upon complying with the agreement conditions (Schengen Agreement).

The main aim of the Schengen agreements is maximisation of the liberty of movement of people across the borders within the Area. This aim anticipates agreement of common arrangements that would secure safety within the Area and

public order in all the member states. It is implicitly inherent that the outer borders require enforcement, which, eventually, adds a barrier function to the borders as such. This process had also been applied at the Slovak-Ukrainian border.

History of slovak-Ukrainian border

Slovakia and Transcarpatia have been for centuries parts of the Austria-Hungary and the border between them had only had an administrative function. After the Austria-Hungary ceased to exist as a state, it was difficult to know which country should get Transcarpatia and where its actual borders lie. It was around this time the current Slovak-Ukrainian border had been formed.

Transcarpatia, according to the General covenant from November 7, 1918, was attached to Czechoslovakia in the second half of 1919. This attachment was stated in the small Saintgermain treaty between the countries of so called Treaty and the Czechoslovak Republic (ČSR) on September 10, 1919. The Transcarpatia borders were determined by a number of international treaties – Versailles treaty in article 81, Saintgermain treaty in article 53, Trianon treaty in article 48 and partly also in the Northern treaty. Despite the agreement and designing of the border, the border between Slovakia and Transcarpatia remained a rather problematic one.

The Transcarpatia area, attached to Czechoslovakia, was 12 617 km², containing 487 villages and 604 593 inhabitants. The newly formed Czechoslovakia was supposed to become a state with the autonomy of the parts – countries, among which also belonged Transcarpatia. This autonomy, however, as much as Slovakia, had not been given to the countries until 1938 (Pop 2005).

It was a lengthy and complicated process to determine the border between Slovakia and Transcarpatia. When the border between Poland and Transcarpatia was established, it just continued on from the former Hungary border. Territorial jury of the Highest Council Agreement decided that the border between Slovakia and Transcarpatia to run along the Uh river course from north to south, until it reaches the town of Uzhorod. From then the border would run 2-5 kilometres to the east of the railway station Uzhorod-Cop. After the General Covenant had been announced on November 18, 1919, 32 villages located west of the current border were allocated under the administrative governance of the Transcarpatia. This was also declared and confirmed at the district announcement in 1920, which was applied only in Slovakia, though. The border with Romania was determined on

August 7, 1919, with Hungary on June 12, 1919, confirmed by the peace Trianon treaty on June 4, 1920 (Trávniček 1992).

In the 20s and 30s of the 20th century the border situation was reasonably quiet. Major changes took place after the Vienna Arbitration on November 2, 1938. Hungary gained the most fertile, south part of Transcarpatia, along with the towns of Uzhorod and Mukachevo. The remaining part of Transcarpatia gained a new name of the Carpathian Ukraine and on March 14, 1939 declared independence, which did not last for too long, as already on March 18, 1939 the whole area was attacked by Hungary. After the very eastern part of Slovakia was captured by Hungary, the border between Slovakia and Transcarpatia ceased to efficiently exist (Trávniček 1992).

The border line during the WWII did not change. It was clear in 1944 that the Hitler's Germany would fall and the authorities in charge already played with the idea of a new world order. Stalin, despite the fact he had formally agreed with the plans to re-establish the pre-Munich Czechoslovakia, considered the Transcarpatia territory as a part that should be attached to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). After some rough and not very fair political debates the Transcarpatia issues was resolved by the two party international treaty of June 29, 1945, where Transcarpatia was attached to the USSR. The ratification documents between ČSR and USSR were exchanged on January 12, 1946 at the Prague Castle. Since then Transcarpatia became a part of the USSR under the name of Zakarpattia Oblast of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Švorc 1996).

Following the political and economic changes at the beginning of the 90s the Ukraine declared its independence from USSR on August 24, 1991, and it became a sovereign state at the map of Europe. Zakarpattia Oblast was integrated into the Ukraine map as Transcarpatia. The border between Slovakia and the Ukraine has not changed since 1946. After Slovakia entered the EU, and later the Schengen Area, the border became a part of the Schengen border area on December 21, 2007. From that day on, there are no intra-state controls between Slovakia and Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and Hungary, with controls at the Slovak-Ukrainian border becoming more rigid and the border becoming a sort of a development barrier.

Security

Security, especially with the latest news in the Ukraine, is a very topical issue. The Schengen can be viewed from various angles.

Firstly, Slovakia is a member of NATO, and only two of its neighbours are not NATO members – Austria and the Ukraine. However, the situation on the border varies, since Austria is a EU member and also the Schengen. From the geopolitical perspective is thus the Slovak-Ukrainian border a significant element in various international treaties and also a part of broader defensive systems of the EU and NATO.

Secondly, the Schengen has clearly defined rules that concern its function, border crossing for both the people and the goods. This is something that directly influences the life of common people, not only security-wise.

There are many security levels in the Schengen. Direct control at the border-crossing points is just one of many ways of protection carried out at the Schengen border and within. However, the direct control at the border is the most visible one in the bordering municipalities, and as such causes a lot of controversy, which is the reason why we had decided to conduct our research in this territory.

Quality of life

Quality of life has become a very popular term these days, which seem to be the result of social, economic and value-oriented turbulences of the modern world, shifting from the traditional values to the postmodern perception of the world, full of gloomy, bleak and rather non-form structures. Quality of life has become the umbrella that covers both economic well-being and subjective satisfaction of an individual. Geography adds to these two elements [subjective/objective] others, such as spatial dimension, i.e. the place where an individual lives his/her personally happy life in reasonable wealth. Based upon this characteristics, the geographical space could be divided into several hierarchical levels, with each level need to apply different research methods in order to achieve relevant results (look in Ištók, Angelovič 2013).

Our research presents partial outcomes of assessment of quality of life of people living in the border-neighbouring regions. We chose the place-satisfaction and life-satisfaction analysis, since we consider it the subjective dimension of quality of life of the inhabitants living in the border-neighbouring regions. Quality of life seems to be an appropriate concept to measure how the border affects the life of commoners on daily basis.

Lekárovice

Basic municipality characteristics

Municipality Lekárovice is situated on both sides of the river Uh, located in the East Slovak Lowland, altitude of 99 – 109m. Municipality territory is of 1226 hectares and there were 962 citizens living in the territory by the end of 2012. As for administration, the municipality belongs to the Sobrance borough in the Kosice county.

(Švorc 1996). is the only municipality in Slovakia which was formerly the part of the USSR and then was re-affiliated to Czechoslovakia (Švorc 1996). After Slovakia entered the EU and the Schengen, the part of the territory not only became the state border but also the border of the whole EU. (Švorc 1996). Lekárovice inhabitants have freedom of movement to the Atlantict almost unrestricted, yet they cannot move too much further to the East. These are the elements that influence the quality of life, and hence we decided to carry our research here.

Quality of life

Quality of life in Lekárovice was assessed via the questionnaire distributed and finalised in January – March 2013. Only 5.1% of the citizens of the municipality, older than 16 years, took part, which in total amounts to 42 respondents [47.6% male vs 52.4% female].

Satisfaction with life

All the respondents answered the question that dealt with their level of satisfaction with their life, with the average of 5.1, which means the inhabitants are averagely satisfied with their lives. However, what was more interesting was that the men are less satisfied than woman, though the difference is not that significant [0.6 point].

Satisfaction with place

We also tried to find out if the inhabitants are happy with the place where they live. The inhabitants of this municipality are rather happy with the place they live in, averaging 6.8 on the scale 1 – 10, which is higher than their average achieved in the previous question. This time it was the men who were more satisfied with the place, scoring 7.2, whereas women had only 6.5.

So far the Lekárovce municipality scored mostly on the positive side, as a good and suitable place for living. This is declared not only by the average score of 6.8, but also by the responses concerning moving out from the village, if given the chance. Only 23.8% of respondents answered definitely yes, and probably yes got 11.9%, which sums up to 35.7% of those, who would leave. The remaining 64.3% opted for not moving, with 19.1% voting for probably not and 45.2% definitely not. This just emphasises the level of satisfaction of the inhabitants with their municipality.

Storožnica

Basic municipality characteristics

Storožnica municipality is located on the Ukrainian side of the border. Since it is a neighbouring village to Lekárovce, we decided to study both. There is no border-crossing in the village, and since there used to be a road connecting both the villages before the Schengen, it seemed like a perfect fit for our research.

Nowadays the village goes through a phase of growth and re-development, as it is located close to the city of Užhorod, and also sub-urbanisation processes. By the end of 2012 there were 2623 inhabitants in the village, which also provides a kindergarden, a school, a medical centre, a church and a variety of shops.

Quality of life

We used the same procedure as on the Slovak side of the border. Only 4.5% of the citizens of the municipality, older than 16 years, took part, which in total amounts to 118 respondents [48.3% male vs 51.7% female]. The age group of 26 – 35 was the most dominant and representative, and the education level was mostly matura/A-levels.

Satisfaction with life

Storožnica citizens are above-average satisfied with their lives, reaching the average score of 6.2. This time it was the male representatives who were happier, averaging 6.6, whereas women came only at 5.8. Men used values of 7 and 8 most frequently, 10 times each, whereas women used 5 most often, 15 times.

Satisfaction with place

Storožnica citizens are also very happy with the place where they live. The average value of 8.1 speaks for itself, and this is emphasised by the highest value

of 10 that was used by 36% of the questioned. Again, it was men who are happier, having achieved 8.3, in comparison to 'only' 7.9 by women, with both sexes opting for the highest mark of 10 most often.

The values tend to fall into the positive spectrum of the scale heavily; hence it is possible to state that Storožnica is perceived as a very good place for living. Only 13.6% of the respondents said they would definitely move, and 9.3% would probably move, if given the choice, adding up to total of 22.9% of those, who consider the option of moving out. In contrast, 50% of the respondents definitely rejected the move, and 27.1% would probably not move, which totals 77.1% of those, who do not want to move away from the village.

Conclusion

The paper focuses on the Slovak-Ukrainian part of the Schengen border. Our main aim was to point out the differences in perception of this border and the life in its neighbourhood.

The beginning of the paper deals with aims and methodology, and further we deal with the characteristics and the history of the Slovak-Ukrainian border. We also partly cover issues of security and quality of life.

We came to the following conclusions. The inhabitants of Lekárovce are less satisfied with their life than those living in Storožnica. This proves the point that the satisfaction level is not directly connected to the economic status, since the inhabitants of Lekárovce live in better macro-economic conditions than those in Storožnica.

The inhabitants of Storožnica perceive their village as a better place for living, which is indicated by a 1.3 point difference in favour of the Ukraine-based municipality. This is only strengthened by the response to moving-out question, which was again favouring the Ukrainian village. This, however, could be well influence by the position of both the municipalities. Whereas Lekárovce can be seen as a periphery of the EU, on the contrary, Storožnica is located closest to modern Europe, and hence can benefit from the economic advantages of the Schengen border, not to mention its position and closeness to Užhorod. Positive response of the Ukrainian inhabitants is thus massively favoured, when their position within the whole geo-political system is concerned, and as such is the source for optimism.

All in all, the people on the Ukrainian side of the border are happier and more satisfied with both the place and life in general. This issues requires appropriate

attention, and not only on the local, but also on both the regional and the national level. We dare say Slovakia does not do too much to improve the situation in the border-neighbouring regions, especially in the Schengen region, which, from the quality of life perspective, has turned into a periphery.

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