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Politicization of Ethnicity: The Moravian-Silesian Movement in the Czech Republic and the Silesian Movement in Poland—A Comparative Approach

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Abstract

Ethnoregionalism in Europe is a phenomenon usually studied in the context of Western Europe. Still, in Central and Eastern Europe, there are some social and political movements that can be categorized as ethnoregionalist. The phenomenon started to play a role even before the Great War and in the interwar period, but was suppressed during the times of socialist regimes. It resurfaced immediately after 1989 during the times of transformation of political systems to fully democratic systems when problems of decentralization, authority, and division of power became openly discussed. In this article, I compare two such movements in the context of their political potential. The Moravian-Silesian movement in the Czech Republic and the Silesian movement in Poland have both similarities and differences, but the article mostly focuses on the evolution of these movements.

Keywords: ethnoregionalism; region; Upper-Silesia; Silesia; Moravia

For many years, scholars have been trying to develop a methodology for comparative approach to ethnic mobilization and ethnic conflicts, preferably one that allows risk assessment and predictions for the future in singular cases. The long-lasting and well-developed project Minorities at Risk was one of such attempts. Recently, it was transformed in order to cover more minorities in different stages of their evolution. A new stage of the project, called All Minorities at Risk (AMAR), was presented in 2016 (Birnie et al. 2016). It aims to research the conflict potential of ethnic groups. In this stage, all socially relevant ethnic groups are to be covered, regardless of their politicization or emergence of political movements. This approach was inspired by James Fearon's theory:

Ethnicity is *socially relevant* when people notice and condition their actions on ethnic distinctions in everyday life. Ethnicity is *politicized* when political coalitions are organized along ethnic lines, or when access to political or economic benefits depends on ethnicity. Ethnicity can be socially relevant in a country without it being much politicized, and the degree to which ethnicity is politicized can vary across countries and over time. (Fearon 2006, 853; italics in original)

The criteria for socially relevant groups used by the project are as follows:

- Membership in the group is determined primarily by descent by both members and nonmembers.
- Membership in the group is recognized and viewed as important by members and/or nonmembers. The importance may be psychological, normative, and/or strategic.

- Members share some distinguishing cultural features, such as common language, religion, occupational niche, and customs.
- One or more of these cultural features are either practiced by a majority of the group or preserved and studied by a set of members broadly respected by the wider membership for so doing.
- The group has at least 100,000 members or constitutes one percent of a country's population (Birnir et al. 2015, 112).

In Poland, there were three groups included in AMAR: Germans, Poles, and Silesians. In the Czech Republic, there were four groups: Czech, Moravian/Silesian, Roma, and Slovaks. The Moravian/Silesian group consists of two subgroups: Moravians and Silesians (Birnir et al. 2015, appendix).

The political potential of the ethnoregionalist movement can be seen in three aspects:

1. Electoral success: the potential to gain the assumed support of voters, preferably one which enables the electoral committee to gain seats.
2. Office success: The potential to gain seats as the result of elections or to be appointed to the positions of authority within the political system.
3. Policy success: The potential to influence the policy-making process in order to change the political, social and economic situation of the represented population.

This definition is influenced by the study of Oscar Mazzoleni and Sean Müller (2016).

The political potential of both the Moravian-Silesian ethnoregionalist movement and the Silesian ethnoregionalist movement are rarely studied in the literature. There are studies on the Moravian-Silesian ethnoregionalist movement in Czech Republic by Hloušek (2015), Strimska (2000), and Springerová (2010) on one hand and studies on the Silesian ethnoregionalist movement in Poland by Gerlich (1992, 2010), Sekuła (2009), Szmeja (2014, 2017), Wanatowicz (2004), and Wódz (2012, 2015) on the other; still, no comparative study has previously been ventured to compare these two ethnoregionalist movements. The geographical proximity of the regions of origin of both movements, cultural proximity of the inhabitants of said regions, and similarities in history of both movements make it possible to attempt at the study within the chosen methodological framework.

Study

In this article I assess the political conflict potential of two groups: Silesians in Poland and Moravians-Silesians in the Czech Republic throughout the following time periods: 1990–1999, 2000–2009, and 2010–2017. The research questions that motivate my inquiry are:

1. Can we conclusively determine variables that influence the evolution of ethnoregionalist movement?
2. Can we develop a holistic methodology to compare two different ethnoregionalist movements?
3. Can we apply conclusions drawn from answers to these questions to a study of the Moravian-Silesian ethnoregionalist movement in the Czech Republic and the Silesian ethnoregionalist movement in Poland?

The hypothesis of the study assumes that chosen criteria presented in the AMAR Codebook (Birnir et al. 2016), slightly modified by the author, will explain differences in the evolution of two ethnoregionalist movements: in Polish Upper Silesia—*Górny Śląsk* (the Silesian movement) and in Czech Silesian-Moravian Land—*kraj slezsko-moravský* (the Moravian-Silesian movement).

Variables in the study are divided into five groups: Group I: characteristics, Group IIa: status, Group IIb: organization, Group III: external support, and Group IV: conflict behavior. Criteria

connected to violence and civil war were not used in the study due to lack of such actions in studied cases. Information about variables may be found in the AMAR Codebook; here only new variables will be described:

- Press: assess whether the movement is able to publish its own information in its own (or associated) media. The values are:
 - 0 – none
 - 1 – internet websites, forums, etc.
 - 2 – printed or electronic periodical, TV, radio, etc.
- Participation in an election: indicates whether organizations representing movement are able to take part in an election on any given level. The values are:
 - 0 – no
 - 1 – yes, but without success
 - 2 – yes, with limited success
 - 3 – yes, successfully
- Political action: indicates whether influential collective political behavior took place (protests, petitions, initiatives). The values are:
 - 0 – no
 - 1 – yes, but not influential
 - 2 – yes, influential
- Representation in a regional legislative: indicates whether the organization representing the movement has its representative in a regional legislative body. The values are:
 - 0 – no
 - 1 – yes, but not ruling/in the ruling coalition
 - 2 – yes, ruling/in the ruling coalition
- Representation in regional executive: indicates whether the organization representing the movement has its representative in a regional executive body. The values are:
 - 0 – no
 - 1 – yes, a partner in a coalition
 - 2 – yes, the dominant party

Ethnoregionalist Movements: The Moravian-Silesian Movement in the Czech Republic and the Silesian Movement in Poland

The Moravian-Silesian Movement

Ethnoregionalist movement in the Czech Republic is located mostly in the region of Moravia (land is a historical category used by scholars for historical parts of today's Czech Republic), but also part of the historical region (land) of Silesia is engaged in it. Historical regions in Czech are already quite strong. In the Preamble to the Constitution of the Czech Republic we can read: "We, the citizens of the Czech Republic in Bohemia, in Moravia, and in Silesia ..." (Constitution of the Czech Republic 1992). Still, the role of regions is quite marginal, and center-periphery opposition does not play an important role in the development of party system in the Czech Republic. However, it does not mean that there have been no attempts to change the status quo. Problems with the accurate description of the movement in the Czech Republic are based on the existence of two different groups: Silesians and Moravians. Due to that fact results, descriptions and conclusions will sometimes be divided into two.

The Moravian-Silesian movement is an example of ethnoregionalist mobilization. It is a social movement that was developed in the early 1990s in Moravia. The three main groups of goals of the movement are political, cultural, and social. The political goals encompass the autonomy for the region (today even federalization of the Republic), which was lost during communist times;

observance of existing cultural units; and more self-government. Also, further decentralization of finances is demanded. The regionalist goals were the most important in the beginning of the movement. They were chronologically the first to be raised, and the political goals were based mostly on the existence of historical autonomy status. Later other goals appeared, as well. The cultural (ethnic) goals are based on a recognition of separate Moravian nationality (oppressed by the Czech majority) and protection of its culture and traditions. This goal became more important during the process of evolution of the movement. Today, the Moravian-Silesian movement has a few social goals: promotion and protection of the family, reform of the health system, and protection of workers; still, they are rather subsidiary goals to regional and ethnic ones. The Silesian identity is different from the Moravian, and this distinction is sometimes stressed within the movement. Still, both regions and communities have similar features and, to some extent, act together within the movement. Furthermore, representatives of the movement sometimes claim to represent them both, and so it is sometimes (and in this article) called the Moravian-Silesian movement.

In 1968 during the Prague Spring, requests for restitution of Moravian autonomy were raised by the staff of the Moravian Museum in Brno, who, in a declaration adopted on April 2, 1968, required the renewal of the Moravian Province. This request was issued at the time when public debate about federalization of Czechoslovakia took place. The idea was backed by a regional branch of the communist party, the Regional National Committee of South Moravia. The Society for Moravia and Silesia (*Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko* [SMS]) was founded in mid-May 1968 (Hloušek 2015, 12). In Prague, the idea was ridiculed, and, with the invasion of the Army of Warsaw Pact, the idea was smashed along with the Prague Spring.

With the changes in the political system, which began in 1989 with the Velvet Revolution, the ethnoregionalist movement was raised again. The SMS had not been forgotten, and from its foundations the new Movement for Autonomous Democracy—Society for Moravia and Silesia (*Hnutí samosprávné demokracie—Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko* [HSD-SMS]) was created. HSD-SMS was officially established on April 1, 1990, and Boleslav Bárta, who had previously chaired the SMS in 1968–1969, became its leader. In 1990 the party got its representatives in the parliaments at the state (Czech) and federal (Czechoslovakia) levels. It took part in the creation of government and had a representative in the Executive branch. However, before long the leader of HSD-SMS was accused of collaboration with the communist government. In January 1991, HSD-SMS decided to leave the government as a sign of a protest against the lack of interest of the Executive branch in a renewal of Moravian autonomy (Hloušek 2015, 13). But one of its representatives in government, Bohumil Tichý, refused to resign and, consequently, the party split into two: HSD-SMS I and HSD-SMS II. The leader of the movement (Boleslav Bárta) died in 1991 and was replaced by Jan Kryčér, who opted for a less regionalist and more liberal and centrist program; he also tried to cooperate with the Green Party and the Moravian National Party (*Moravská národní strana* [MNS]). This strategy led to the election of representatives of HSD-SMS to the Czech National Council, which became the Lower Chamber of the Czech Republic Parliament after 1993 (Velvet Divorce). But by 1993 the party and the movement had only a marginal support of voters.

In 1994 the movement was renamed the Movement for Autonomous Democracy for Moravia and Silesia and later to Czech-Moravian Centre Party (*Českomoravská strana středu* [ČMSS]). This step was followed by a split in the movement, and Kryčér's opponents established in 1994 the Movement of Autonomous Moravia and Silesia—Moravian National Unification (*Hnutí samosprávné Moravy a Slezska—Moravské národní sjednocení* [HSMS-MNSj]). The consolidation of ČMSS and other small centrist parties led to the creation of the Czech-Moravian Centre Union (*Českomoravská unie středu* [ČMUS]). Hloušek (2015, 14) writes: "As a result of internal splits and feuds, three different Moravian lists run for the chairs in the 1996 Czech parliamentary election with no success whatsoever. Moravian politics moved to the fringe of Czech party politics and it has remained there ever since. Moravian parties did not fare much better in local, regional, and Senate election, their modest success was limited to Southern Moravia only."

Table 1. Time period 1990-1999.

AMAR Codebook (modified)	Silesian	Moravian-Silesian
I	10	9
Dominant group (0-1)	0	0
Population	ND	1 362 313/ 44 446 ¹
Proportion in country	ND	13.2%/ 0.4%
Proportion in regions	ND (33%) ²	ND
Regions	Śląskie; Opolskie	Jihomoravský; Moravskoslezský; Olomoucký; Zlínský
Language (0-2)	1	1
Custom (0-1)	1	1
Belief (0-2)	0	0
Race (0-1)	0	0
Concentration (0-3)	3	3
Rural-Urban (0-5)	5 ³	4
II	20,67	17,67
Kindred groups (0-3)	3 ⁴	3
Kindred groups in power (0-3)	1	1
<i>Year of lost autonomy (0-5)</i>	3	3
<i>Magnitude of change (0-3)</i>	3	3
<i>Status prior to change (0-4)</i>	3	3
Index of autonomy (m+s-1)/y (0-6)	1,67	1,67
	Autonomy	Autonomy
Separatism index (secession or autonomy) (0-3)	3	3
Active separatism among kin group (0-1)	1	1
Emigration (0-3)	2 ⁵	1
Displacement (0-3)	0	0
Political discrimination index (0-4)	2	2
Economic discrimination index (0-4)	1	0
Restriction on religion (0-3)	0	0
Restriction on use of language (0-3)	1	1
Level of political grievances – demands (0-3)	2	2
Level of economic grievances – demands (0-2)	2	1
Level of cultural grievances – demands (0-2)	1	1
Ila Group organisation	9	9
Group organisations (0-5)	1	2

Table 1 Continued

AMAR Codebook (modified)	Silesian	Moravian-Silesian
Autonomous status (0-1)	0	0
Press* (0-2)	2	1
Participation in elections* (0-3)	2	3
Political actions* (0-2)	1	1
Representation in central legislative (0-2)	1	1
Representation in central executive (0-2)	0	1
Representation in regional legislative* (0-2)	0	0
Representation in regional executive* (0-2)	2 (Wojewoda)	0
III	0	0
Kindred group support	0	0
Foreign support	0	0
Nonstate actors support (political)	0	0
IV	3	3
Intracommunal conflict (political)	0	1
	Regionalists-autonomists	Regionalists-ethnoregionalists
Intercommunal conflict (political)	1	1
	Against dominant group	Against dominant group
Protests (0-5)	2	1
Sum	42,67	38,67

¹Český statistický úřad, Národnosti v ČR od r. 1921. https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/narodnosti_v_cr_od_r_1921. (Accessed April 7, 2018.)

²Study conducted in 1996 in katowice voivodeship (circa 1/3 of Silesian Voivodeship) (Wanatowicz, 2004, p. 151).

³More than 75% of the voivodeship population lives in the cities, Silesian minority is concentrated in the cities of GOP (Upper-Silesian Industrial Area).

⁴There are Silesians in the Czech Republic, moreover many Silesians from Poland migrated to Germany since 1950 (Smolorz 2012).

⁵Circa 10,000 people per year.

Simultaneously, in 1990 another representation of Moravia was established: Moravian National Party (Moravská národní strana [MNS]). MNS built its program on an ethnoregionalist approach, recognizing not only the regional identity of the Moravian community, but also its national identity. Some of its activists supported the idea of an independent Moravia, and separatism was within the mainstream of the party's program. In 1996 the party split as well, and the Moravian National Unification platform was created, which later on merged with HSMS and created the HSMS-MNSj. After its electoral failure in 1996, two leading Moravian parties (ČMUS and MNS) merged in April 1997 into the Moravian Democratic Party (Moravská demokratická strana [MDS]), which was chaired by the former chairman of MNS Ivan Dřímál. At the same time, HSMS-MNSj still existed independently and formed a coalition with MDS in 1998. The last step toward an integration of the Moravian movement occurred in December 2005 when HSMS absorbed the MDS, and "as a symbol of newly achieved political unity of Moravian movement, a new name was selected for the party. Since December 2005 Moravian party politics is represented solely by the party called Moravians

Table 2. Time period 2000-2009.

AMAR Codebook (modified)	Silesian	Moravian-Silesian
I	10	9
Dominant group (0-1)	0	0
Population	173 153 ⁶	380 474/ 10 878 ⁷
Proportion in country	0,45%	3,7%/ 0,1%
Proportion in regions	3,1%; 22,8%	17,6%; 2,3%; 7,7%; 10,9%/ 0,1%; 7,9%; 0,1%; 0,1%
Regions	Śląskie; Opolskie	Jihomoravský; Moravskoslezský; Olomoucký; Zlínský
Language (0-2)	1	1
Custom (0-1)	1	1
Belief (0-2)	0	0
Race (0-1)	0	0
Concentration (0-3)	3	3
Rural-Urban (0-5)	5	4
II	17,67	16,67
Kindred groups (0-3)	3	3
Kindred groups in power (0-3)	0	0
<i>Year of lost autonomy (0-5)</i>	3	3
<i>Magnitude of change (0-3)</i>	3	3
<i>Status prior to change (0-4)</i>	3	3
Index of autonomy (m+s-1)/y (0-6)	1,67	1,67
	Autonomy	Autonomy
Separatism index (secession or autonomy) (0-3)	3	3
Active separatism among kin group	1	1
Emigration (0-3)	2 ⁸	1
Displacement (0-3)	0	0
Political discrimination index (0-4)	1	2
Economic discrimination index (0-4)	1	0
Restriction on religion (0-3)	0	0
Restriction on use of language (0-3)	1	1
Level of political grievances – demands (0-3)	2	2
Level of economic grievances – demands (0-2)	2	1
Level of cultural grievances – demands (0-2)	1	1
Ila Group organisation	4	5

Table 2 Continued

AMAR Codebook (modified)	Silesian	Moravian-Silesian
Group organisations (0-5)	1	2
Autonomous status (0-1)	0	0
Press* (0-2)	2	1
Participation in elections* (0-3)	0	1
Political actions* (0-2)	1	1
Representation in central legislative (0-2)	0	0
Representation in central executive (0-2)	0	0
Representation in regional legislative* (0-2)	0	0
Representation in regional executive* (0-2)	0	0
III	1	1
Kindred group support	0	0
Foreign support	0	0
Nonstate actors support (political)	1	1
IV	4	2
Intracommunal conflict (political)	0	0
	Regionalists-autonomists	Regionalists-ethnoregionalists
Intercommunal conflict (political)	1	1
	Against dominant group	Against dominant group
Protests (0-5)	3 ⁹	1
Sum	36,67	32,67

⁶Główny Urząd Statystyczny. Tab. 35. Ludność wg deklarowanej narodowości i obywatelstwa. Spis Powszechny 2002 [Population by declared nationality and citizenship. National Census 2002]. Warszawa: GUS 2003.

⁷Český statistický úřad, Národnosti v ČR od r. 1921. https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/narodnosti_v_cr_od_r_1921. (Accessed April, 7 2018.)

⁸Circa 7,000 people per year.

⁹Demonstrations and marches less than 10,000 people.

(*Moravané, M*)” (Hloušek 2015, 15). Since 2006 the new party has been a member party of the European Free Alliance.

A new shift in the Moravian movement is happening today. There are plans to create a new party, the Moravian Autonomous Movement (*Moravské zemské hnutí [MZH]*), which is envisioned to be more liberal and centrist, less nationalist, and rather strongly focused on regionalism and autonomy. The MZH aims at cooperation with the centrist parties within the Czech Republic and on the European level. Moreover, the movement supports the idea of four autonomous regions within the Czech Republic: Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and Prague. The party took part in the elections to senate in 2018, but with no success.

In the 1990 elections to Czech National Council, HSD-SMS got 22 mandates and in 1992 it got 12 seats. In the elections to Federal Council, it got seven seats. Later the new party, Moravians, took part in elections to Parliament (Senate or Lower Chamber) in 2006, 2010, 2016, and 2017 without success. The party also failed to gain any mandate in elections to European Parliament. It took part

Table 3. Time period 2010-2017.

AMAR Codebook (modified)	Silesian	Moravian-Silesian
I	10	9
Dominant group (0-1)	0	0
Population	846 719 ¹⁰	521 801/ 12 214 ¹¹
Proportion in country	2,20%	5,0%/ 0.1%
Proportion in regions	15,6%; 10,5%	21,8%; 3,8%; 12%; 16,3%/ 0,1%; 0,9%, 0,1%; 0,1%
Regions	Śląskie; Opolskie	Jihomoravský; Moravskoslezský; Olomoucký; Zlínský
Language (0-2)	1	1
Custom (0-1)	1	1
Belief (0-2)	0	0
Race (0-1)	0	0
Concentration (0-3)	3	3
Rural-Urban (0-5)	5	4
II	17,25	16,25
Kindred groups (0-3)	3	3
Kindred groups in power (0-3)	0	0
<i>Year of lost autonomy (0-5)</i>	4	4
<i>Magnitude of change (0-3)</i>	3	3
<i>Status prior to change (0-4)</i>	3	3
Index of autonomy (m+s-1)/y (0-6)	1,25	1,25
	Autonomy	Autonomy
Separatism index (secession or autonomy) (0-3)	3	3
Active separatism among kin group	1	1
Emigration (0-3)	2 ¹²	1
Displacement (0-3)	0	0
Political discrimination index (0-4)	1 ¹³	2
Economic discrimination index (0-4)	0	0
Restriction on religion (0-3)	0	0
Restriction on use of language (0-3)	1	1
Level of political grievances – demands (0-3)	2	2
Level of economic grievances – demands (0-2)	2	1
Level of cultural grievances – demands (0-2)	2	1
Ila Group organisation	12	4

Table 3 Continued

AMAR Codebook (modified)	Silesian	Moravian-Silesian
Group organisations (0-5)	2	2
Autonomous status (0-1)	0	0
Press* (0-2)	2	1
Participation in elections* (0-3)	3	1
Political actions* (0-2)	1	
Representation in central legislative (0-2)	0	0
Representation in central executive (0-2)	0	0
Representation in regional legislative* (0-2)	2	0
Representation in regional executive* (0-2)	2	0
III	1	1
Kindred group support	0	0
Foreign support	0	0
Nonstate actors support (political)	1	1
IV	4	2
Intracommunal conflict (political) (0-1)	0	0
	Regionalists-autonomists	Regionslists-ethnoregionalists
Intercommunal conflict (0-1) (political)	1	1
	Against dominant group	Against dominant group
Protests (0-5)	3	1
Sum	44,25	32,25

¹⁰Główny Urząd Statystyczny, “Tabl. 45 Ludność według identyfikacji narodowo-etnicznych oraz przynależności wyznaniowej w 2011 roku” [“Tab 45 Population by National and Ethnic Identifications and Belonging to Religion in 2011”]. In *Struktura narodowo-etniczna, językowa i wyznaniowa Polski. Narodowy Spis Powszechny 2011*. Warszawa: GUS 2015.

¹¹Český statistický úřad, Analýza. Národnostní struktura obyvatel [Analysis. National structure of citizens], Praha: ČSÚ 2014, p. 5.

¹²Circa 5,000 people per year.

¹³Under-representation of Silesians is still at least perceived by minority population, lack of any policy aiming at changing that (Kijonka 2016). On the contrary, regional and ethnic initiatives in political field are stigmatized as dangerous and radical, threatening Polish State.

in elections to regional bodies in 2008, 2012, and 2016 without electoral success. In elections in 2006 to local bodies, the party gained 76 seats. In elections in 2010 to local bodies, it gained 56 seats. In elections in 2014 to local bodies, it gained 71 representatives (Český Statistický Úřad 2019). It seems that at the local level, the party has some supporters and is able to gain moderate office success.

The Silesian Movement

The Silesian movement in Poland is an example of ethnoregionalist mobilization, as well. It is a social and political movement that developed in the early 1990s in Upper Silesia and is still evolving. Its three main groups of goals are social, cultural, and political. Social goals were the most important in the 1990s during the transformation of the economy in Poland, when the main industries in Silesia were shut down or sold. Today goals such as an elimination of unemployment or social

exclusion are present. Cultural goals aim to increase attention to the characteristic features of the region. These goals also encompass protection of Silesian culture and prevention of its disappearance, recognition of Silesians as an ethnic minority and Silesian as the regional language, and organization of regional events and institutions. Last are the political goals, which divide the movement into separate organizations. In general, the goal that binds all of the organizations within the movement is the need for its population and its representatives to take responsibility for the Upper Silesian region. What differs between organizations within the movement is the ways the goals can be achieved. On one side, there is a group of organizations that aim to introduce a new political system within Poland that will grant each region, such as Upper Silesia, autonomy. Until this goal is achieved, though, these organizations are content to actively participate within the existing political order. On the other side, there is a group of organizations that believes that decentralization of public authority as it is today is enough to achieve the goals of the movement, as long as they are used properly.

One of the few scholars who has studied the history of the social and political change in Polish Upper Silesia is Marian G. Gerlich, who began his study in the early 1990s as an ethnographer. In his study, the story of one of the activists goes as far back as 1987: “Silesians were oppressed for years. We needed to answer the most basic questions to ourselves. To know where we come from and where we are going to. We could not wait any longer and be still not free. We do not need “*kulturtrager*,” we need to take things into our own hands” (Gerlich 1992, 37–38; my translation). This statement indicates that as far back as 1987 there was awareness of the existence of separate interests of this population and of a need to take steps toward the empowerment of the indigenous population of Upper-Silesia. As the first public expression of the Silesian movement’s agenda, Gerlich points to a newspaper article by Andrzej Klasik from February 7, 1988, titled “*Tożsamość Górnego Śląska*,” which was published in *Gość Niedzielny* (a Catholic periodical still issued today). Klasik later became the chairman of the Upper-Silesian Union (Związek Górnośląski [ZG]), which was registered on June 30, 1989. ZG’s founders, in addition to Klasik, were Józef Buszman, Idzi Panic, Jerzy Wuttke, Jan Rzymelka, Janusz Wycisło, and Stanisław Tkocz.

The year 1989 has significant meaning in the development of the Silesian movement. Gerlich points out, for example, the article by Stanisław Bieniasz, a Silesian writer, which was published in November 1990 in Parisian *Kultura*, titled “*O autonomię Górnego Śląska*.” The author stated: “Upper Silesia boils.... All of the sudden, it was revealed, that diverse groups of the population exist, which have different interests, which are opposed to interests of another group” [my translation]. The article indicates that not only did different interest groups exist then, but there were also political and social actors who were able to articulate their ideas. The year 1989, especially the elections to parliament, become the symbol of the change—the transformation of the political system in Poland. For Upper Silesians, this time was significant for two reasons. First was the collective awareness of living through similar experiences and rapid changes raised (Gerlich 2010, 60). Second, Silesians believed that their actions, especially strikes in 1988 in the region, played an important role in transformation that led to pride from belonging to the regional community (Gerlich 2010, 67).

The first political program of the Silesian Autonomy Movement (Ruch Autonomii Śląska [RAŚ]) was published by Antoni Kositz in 1991 in *Jaskółka Śląska* No 1. The article was titled “*Autonomia – jedynym wyjściem*,” which become the basis for RAŚ activities during first few years and presented the attitude of the indigenous population, which believed itself to be separate from Polish and German nations. The Silesian population created the community on its own, which desired the right to self-government with extensive competences—autonomy of the region. Ruch na Rzecz Autonomii Śląska (Movement for Autonomy of Silesia)—the first name of Ruch Autonomii Śląska (Silesian Autonomy Movement)—was founded on January 13, 1990, but RAŚ was formally registered a year later under the latter name. Its first chairman was Paweł Musioł.

The Silesian movement has evolved over time and presumably will continue to do so (Wódz 2012). In the beginning (1990–1996), organizations were created and some of their representatives

took part in elections to decentralized bodies and Parliament and held public offices in the region. In the second phase (1996–2003), the main debate concentrated on registration of Union of People of Silesian Nationality (Związek Ludności Narodowości Śląskiej [ZLNS]). This process ended in 2004, when the European Court for Human Rights ruled for the decision of the Polish State, which hindered its registration as an association. (The main reason was that according to the Court, part of its name, “Narodowości (Nationality),” may in the future lead to claims to take part in Parliamentary elections with the privilege recognized by the Polish State national minorities; ECHR 2004). The third stage (2003–2009) began with RAŚ membership in the European Free Alliance and saw increased activity on the international level. New organizations were founded as well. The fourth stage started in 2010 and lasted until 2017. In 2010, the RAŚ took part in elections to decentralized bodies and gained three seats in Sejmik Śląski. Later, it took part in the ruling coalition in the region with Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform). Since then, some authors say, that RAŚ can be analyzed as proto-party, even though legally it is registered as an association (Wódcz 2015, 26). In 2017, two regional parties, Silesians Together (Ślōnzoki Razem [ŚR]) and Silesian Regional Party (Śląska Partia Regionalna [ŚPR]), were founded, and in 2018 they were registered as political parties in accordance with Polish law. These events mark the beginning of the fifth stage of a development of the movement.

There are many different organizations in Upper Silesia. The most important for the analysis of the Silesian movement are the member organizations of the Upper-Silesian Council (Rada Górnośląska [RG]). The umbrella organization was founded on May 16, 2012 in Katowice. It aims to connect organizations that accept or advocate for the following:

- Formal recognition of the Silesian nationality (ethnic group) by institutions of the Republic of Poland.
- Recognition of the Silesian language as a regional language.
- Introduction of a regional education to all levels of education.

Eleven organizations created the Council in 2012; three were admitted later. In 2017, one of organizations left the Council.

Commentary

A few methodological problems emerged during the study in the case of Polish Upper Silesia. First, since its beginning in 1989/1990, the Silesian movement was divided into two fractions: regionalists (Związek Górnośląski [ZG]) and autonomists (Ruch Autonomii Śląska [RAŚ]). It was not until 2012, when the Upper-Silesian Council was founded, that both fractions started to work together (still not very closely). Second, at the regional level in Poland, the executive branch is divided into two sections: decentralized (Council—*Sejmik* and its Executive) and delegated by the central government (Wojewoda). Third, in the 1990s no census was conducted, and there are no administrative data regarding nationalities.

Regarding the Moravian-Silesian movement in the Czech Republic, there were also some problems. First, the identities of Silesians and Moravians are different. Second, Moravians are by far the dominant group within the movement, which led to change of the name of the party from Society for Moravia and Silesia to just Moravians. Third, until 2005, there were at least two fractions with different goals within the movement: regionalists from HDS-SMS and ethnoregionalists (or even nationalists) from MNS.

The first group of criteria chosen for the study summarizes the strength and distinctiveness of the studied groups. In the first time period (1990–1999) (Table 1) in Poland, the movement was given 10 points and the movement in the Czech Republic 9 points; the difference is the characteristics of the area, where movements were developed. Upper Silesia in Poland is in the majority urban region; Silesia and Moravia in Czech are urban, but slightly less so. The difference in strength of groups is

difficult to evaluate, due to the fact that in Poland there was no Census conducted until 2002. In the second (2000–2009) (Table 2) and third (2010–2017) (Table 3) periods of time, there are available data on the numbers of ethnic group members in Poland (Census in 2002 and Census in 2011). In the Silesian case, the number of persons declaring that they belong to Silesian ethnic group rose almost fourfold during that time. There may be a few reasons for that situation. First and foremost, in the 2002 Census, each person could choose only one national or ethnic identification; in the 2011 Census, it was possible to choose two ethnic identifications (complex identity—55% of all Silesian auto-identifications). Moreover, many social and cultural organizations of minorities conducted information programs and advocated for choice of a minority identification (Gudaszewski 2015, 75–76). Regarding Census questions, they were quite similar in both the 2002 and 2011 censuses (for example, “To which nationality you belong?” in 2002 vs. “What is your nationality?” in 2011 [my translation]). Also in the forms from 2002 and 2011, there were descriptions stating that a nationality is not a citizenship in accordance with the methodology of censuses. Still, the numbers of declarations regarding belonging to nationalities other than Polish are criticized by regional leaders who claim that there were inaccuracies during the Census and the number is lower than it should be (Kijonka 2016). Some scholars estimate that as many as 1.5 million ethnic Silesians live in the historical region of Upper Silesia (Smolorz 2012, 54). We can compare these numbers with the Czech Republic censuses, where in the period 2000–2009 (Table 2) the number of Moravians and Silesians dropped and these two communities had a population of almost 400,000 people. In the third period (Table 3), this number is over 500,000 with a significant rise in declarations of Moravian ethnicity. The data do not include double declarations, which were popular as well (more than 110,000 people declared Moravian or Silesian identity as one of two). In the second and the third period of time, the overall evaluation did not change in the case of Silesians in Poland, and the same is true for Moravians and Silesians in the Czech Republic. To conclude this part, we can say that while there are more Silesians in Poland than Moravians and Silesians in the Czech Republic, the former groups include a bigger part of the population of their country.

The first part of the second group of factors encompasses a wide range of problems: existence of a kindred group, historical autonomy and separation demands, political grievances, discrimination, and emigration of members of the group. In the first period of time (Table 1), the overall rate for the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland is 20.67 and for the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement is 17.67. The biggest difference can be seen in the higher rate of emigration from Polish Upper-Silesia than from Moravia and Silesia in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the economic discrimination index and economic demands are stronger in the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland than in the Silesian-Moravian ethno-regionalist movement. In the second period of time (Table 2), the overall rate for Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland is 17.67 and for the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement is 16.67. In the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement, what has changed was a political discrimination index (some including policies had been applied). The political discrimination index stayed at the same level in Moravia and Silesia in the Czech Republic. Still, the economic discrimination index and economic demands are stronger in the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland than in the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement. In the third period of time (Table 3), the overall rate for Silesian movement in Poland is 17.25 and for Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement is 16.25. In the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement what has changed was the autonomy index (more time had passed since the loss of autonomy) and the same was true for Moravia and Silesia. The situation stayed quite the same as in the previous decade.

The second part of the second group of factors encompasses group organization, including the press, existence of organizations, taking part in elections, and electoral success. In the first period of time (Table 1), the overall rate for Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland is 9 and for Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement is 9, as well. The differences are based mostly on the existence of parties in the Moravian part, while in Polish Upper Silesia only associations representing the movement were established. As to taking part in elections and office success in the Moravian

part, the representatives achieved the office in the central executive, while in Polish Upper Silesia a member of an ethno-regionalist organization was a delegate of government in the Silesia region. In the second period of time (Table 2), the overall rate for Silesian movement in Poland is 4 and for Moravian-Silesian movement is 5. The Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland lost significantly due to lack of persons or organizations that would be able to represent Silesians in positions of power. At the same time, the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement was still represented by the parties capable of taking part in elections. In the third period of time (Table 3), the overall rate for the Silesian movement in Poland is 12 and for the Moravian-Silesian movement is only 4. The rapid increase in points for the Silesian movement in Poland was caused by the electoral success of RAŚ (after 2014, it had four seats in regional council [*Sejmik*] and took part in a coalition ruling the *voivodeship*, the administrative unit in Poland with self-government powers). At the same time, the Moravian-Silesian movement was first rather stagnant and then in a consolidation process.

The third group of factors encompasses the support from outside the State. In the first period of time (Table 1), the overall rate for both the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland and for Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement is 0. In the second period of time (Table 2), the overall rate for Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland is 1 and for Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement is also 1. In the case of both Silesian ethno-regionalist movement and Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement, the nonstate actors' political support is given mostly by the European Parliament party European Free Alliance (RAŚ has been a member organization since 2003 and Moravians since 2006). In the third period of time (Table 3), the overall rate for the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland and the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in the Czech Republic is still the same.

The fourth group of factors encompasses conflicts of groups and their intensity. In the first period of time (Table 1), the overall rate for Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland is 3 and for the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement is 3, though there are differences between movements. In the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement, as far back as the 1990s two parties existed: regionalist and ethno-regionalist; their agendas were different, and they did not cooperate until the mid-1990s. On the other hand, there was smaller potential for protest, due to the fact that HSD-SMS had its representatives in government and later lost much of its support. In the second period of time (Table 2), the overall rate for the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland is 4 and for the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement is 2. The change in the rate of the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland is based on the intensity of protests. The biggest mass protest in Silesia—the Autonomy March (first Saturday around July 15)—began in 2007 and still takes place today. In the case of the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement, the organizations created one political party, Moravians, and the intracommunal conflict disappeared. Still, the movement was marginal at the time, and only limited political actions were possible to undertake. In the third period of time (Table 3), the overall rate for Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland is 4 and for the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement is still 2.

The overall conflict potential of the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement has changed throughout the years. In the period 1990–1999, it was evaluated as 42.67 (Table 1), in the period 2000–2009 as 36.67 (Table 2), and in the period 2010–2017 as 45.25 (Table 3). The differences are compatible with the short history of the ethno-regionalist movement presented above. The overall conflict potential of the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement also changed. In the period 1990–1999, it was evaluated as 38.67 (Table 1), in the period 2000–2009 as 32.67 (Table 2), and stayed the same in the period 2010–2017 (Table 3). In this case, it can also be said that the quantitative study is compatible with historical analysis of the ethno-regionalist movement.

The conflict potential of the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement and the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement has changed significantly. While it can be seen that Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland has grown stronger throughout the decades, the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in the Czech Republic, after initial success in the 1990s, went into decay due to the internal conflicts and change in the political scene there. These events led to stagnation

and the need for reorganization of the movement. It can also be seen that strengthening ethnic demands led to development and rise in popularity of the Silesian movement in Poland. At the same time, ethnic and nationalist programs in the Moravian-Silesian ethnoregionalist movement led to a split within the ethnoregionalist movement and complicated its situation (Strimska 2000, 12). Since the 1990s, the Silesian ethnoregionalist movement has evolved into more solid structures and has become capable of competing in elections. At the same time, the Moravian-Silesian ethnoregionalist movement began with political potential and party structures only to become divided and weaker more recently.

The last point demands a more thorough study. What is the reason for a different role of ethnicity in the case of both ethnoregionalist movements? Is the ethnicity in both cases politicized? Or do we deal with simple peripheral mobilization based rather on center–periphery axis and regionalism (Lipset and Rokkan 1967)? Weber, Hiers, and Flesken (2016) state that politicization of ethnicity is most obvious in its discursive form: when politicians bring ethnicity into a policy-making process. Evidence of this process is the creation of ethnic parties (Chandra 2011, 157) and a measurement of their support. The constructivist approach to ethnicity (Eriksen 2010 [1994]) argues that the possibility of constructing ethnic identity consequently gives way to the argument that ethnic boundaries also may become salient in the same process. That leads to the conclusion that ethnicity may be developed in order to be politicized. However, this argument does not explain why in the case of the Silesian ethnoregionalist movement in Poland the process was successful, while in the case of the Moravian-Silesian ethnoregionalist movement in the Czech Republic it failed. It seems likely that the explanation lies within the latent potential of social identities to be politicized. In other words, social identity must already be socially relevant for the population in order to be used and politicized. This may be explained by the external situation of the movements. While in Poland after the Census in 2011 the number of Polish ethnic declarations was still high and strong national identity was present among most of Poles, in the Czech Republic gradually fewer people declared their nationality (in 2001 98.3% of respondents declared any national or ethnic identity; in 2011 it was only 74.7% [Český Statistický Úřad 2014]), and the issue of national identity is losing its significance for the growing part of society.

The Role of Ethnicity

This study revealed a significant role of ethnicity in political and social potential of both movements. In this context, the ethnic identity of Silesians in Poland is especially interesting. Ethnic identity, for the purposes of this study, is understood as individual identification with a certain ethnic group based on some objective criteria, such as culture, presumed ancestry, or national origin (Yang 2000, 40). Without a doubt, the phenomenon of the popularity of the Silesian movement (mostly political success of Ruch Autonomii Śląska/Silesian Autonomy Movement) led to a change within the Silesian community. This finding was established by Elżbieta Anna Sekuła, who recognized the emergence of the “RAŚ generation”—young people who are proud of their different culture and manifest it in many ways: by political activity, by consumption habits, and by using the Silesian language (2009, 378). Later, another author, Maria Szmaja, stated that in recent years we can see a process of gaining subjectivity by the Silesian indigenous population in the fields of culture, society, and politics (2017, 245). These processes are connected to each other: on the one hand, the popularity of the Silesian movement generated a public debate on the situation of Upper-Silesians and their identity; on the other hand, the movement would not exist if there were not a group with separate interests, which it can represent.

This conclusion leads us to the next questions: what made Silesian ethnic identity important for the Upper-Silesian community? And why did it lead to opposition to dominant culture strong enough to become politically relevant? There are few features that differentiate Silesians (and their culture) from other communities: ethnolect (which is defined as a group of similar Slavic dialects diverse from Polish or Czech languages), also categorized as language (Tambor 2008, 116),

stereotypes and auto-stereotypes (Tambor 2006, 66); and customs. Though, in my mind, the most important element for separate Silesian ethnic identity is the collective memory, seen as was already described by Aleksandra Kunce and Zbigniew Kadłubek “Silesianism is a state of mind, related to time and space, historical experience and habits. By revealing individual experience, which accumulates past and present, it is possible to ask important questions about what Silesianism means” (2007, 67; my translation). In this case, an interesting point for study is so-called “Silesian harm” (also called “Silesian injustice”), which is described in the literature as feelings of harm, injustice, disappointment, believing to be misunderstood, humiliated, and judged due to the different culture and collective memory of the Silesian community (Gerlich 1994, 5; Wanatowicz 2004, 150; Smolorz 2012, 118). Collective memory is seen as a narration about the past—a process of its reproduction and interpretation (Kansteiner 2002, 188). This phenomenon became especially vivid during the inter-war period, when Silesians grew disappointed with the newly formed Polish State, and some Poles deemed Silesian culture as lesser, their language flawed, and their community as uneducated. This attitude was strengthened by the Upper-Silesian Tragedy (1945–1950), which is a set of events related to persecution and exploitation of the Silesian community that were conducted during the process of making Poland a nationally homogeneous state after World War II (Smolorz 2012). In summary, “Silesian harm” is what led to the development of strong community feelings among Silesians and, at the same time, it is what strengthened their separateness from other communities (sometimes in the form of an opposition toward the national majority).

Today ethnicity is still perceived through the constructionist approach (Yang 2000, 44). The features presented above would not necessarily lead to the emergence of an ethnic group. Beginning with language (the written version of Silesian was created recently, and there is no one exclusive and commonly accepted orthography), there was a need for Silesian language and literature, which led to this development. Also, the collective memory only recently became widely reproduced and discussed publicly on a large scale; consequently, it was only recently that it truly became widely recognized as a shared experience (the unifying function of collective memory was pointed out by Kansteiner [2002, 193]). Those primary cultural and social processes were entangled with the politicization of ethnicity and, to some extent, were initiated for its purpose. It can be observed that public debate about Silesian identity—its promoted interpretation and reproduction—happened simultaneously with the growing popularity of the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement and its political demands.

Summary

This article shows differences between the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Poland and the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in the Czech Republic. It is possible to pinpoint internal and external circumstances of their development that influenced differences in the evolution of the two movements.

The chosen methodology to some extent enabled the researcher to draw conclusions in regard to the aim of the article, namely the study of the conflict potential of two ethno-regionalist movements, respectfully, in the Czech Republic and in Poland. First, the basic demographic differences between the movements, including the population rate, the characteristics of the territory in which its members live, and the emigration rate are easy to point out based on my research. To some extent, they influenced the process of evolution of the studied movements. Second, many of the criteria were focused on group organization and political success (either electoral or office success); the changes in these variables throughout the time allow us to draw clear conclusions as to the evolution of the movements and their popularity. Third, some indications can be made from criteria encompassing discrimination and demands made by representatives of the movements. The focus on the economic and cultural issues is much stronger in the case of the Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in Polish Upper Silesia, while the political demands seem to be more important for the character of the Moravian-Silesian ethno-regionalist movement in the Czech Republic.

Still, there are some factors that influence the differences in the evolution of both movements, which are not included in the study. First, as already indicated above, are the diverse attitude toward the role of national identity among Poles and Czechs. While in the case of the former, declarations and national identification still play an important role; for the latter, these are becoming less vital and, consequently, less prone to cause conflict. Second, the attitudes of the political center toward peripheral ethnoregionalist movements are quite different in the Czech Republic and in Poland. In the Czech Republic, the existence of historically autonomous units (lands) is taken for granted and, consequently, accepted by the political center. In Poland, the idea of a homogeneous state and nation implemented during the times of Polish Peoples Republic regime (Berdychowska 1998, 16–17) prevailed, and so any ethnic or regional claims and demands are contested and suppressed by the political center. One recent example is the rejection of an amendment to the National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language Act of 2005, which aimed to introduce in Polish legislation Silesians as a recognized ethnic minority. This situation leads to further under-funding of protection and preservation of Silesian culture and language. Third, too little attention could be given to the influence of intra-communal conflicts within movements. Inter-communal conflict, which in both cases should be classified as center–periphery opposition, is widely recognized as one of the axes leading to political opposition (or even conflict). Still, in the view of this article, the role of intra-communal conflict in the development of ethnoregionalist movements is also important. Differences in the political and social agendas of actors representing (even not as parties) interests of the same community can lead to an enrichment of the ethnoregionalist movement, but also to its stagnation.

Last, what is especially interesting for both movements is a seemingly invirise of ethnic or even national identity claims. In the early stages of their development, the demands of the regional character within the Moravian-Silesian and the Silesian movement were the main issues to be addressed. About a decade later, there are clear ethnic demands as well, encompassing recognition, protection from discrimination, and preservation of distinctiveness.

In summary, the methodology inspired by the AMAR project proved to be useful for evaluation of conflict potential of two movements having their roots in Central Europe: the Moravian-Silesian movement in the Czech Republic and the Silesian movement in Poland. The methodology made it also possible to compare their evolution throughout almost three decades. However, this approach had its shortcomings, pointed out above. Some circumstances surrounding the movements were not easy to apply to it, and some criteria were not prepared for the internally diversified ethnorregionalist movements. All in all, a mix of qualitative and quantitative analyses allowed certainly a clear and deep insight into the situation of these not widely studied and relatively young ethnorregionalist movements.

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