

Péter TAKÁCS
**A rózsza neve: Magyar Köztársaság – Az államok
névéről és a magyar állam átnevezéséről**
[The name of the rose: Hungarian Republic –
about states' names and about changing
of the name of the Hungarian state]

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"The Name of the Rose: Hungarian Republic. About States' Names and about Changing of Name of the Hungarian State", a treat for both laymen and scientists with a passion for political and legal philosophy, linguistics, history, cartography, offers a complex analysis related to the importance of the states' names, their classifications, linguistic nature and function. The title of the book is inspired by the words of Bernard of Cluny as written in *De Contemptu Mundi*, reminding us to the ephemeral character of all material things, but also to the long lasting power of names.

Péter Takács, a philosopher, professor of legal studies has studied and conducted research among others in Budapest, Oxford, Salzburg, Antwerp, Cambridge, Groningen and Toronto. His writing is unique since there are only a few books that would address questions related to this topic. Well structured, bringing detailed examples from all around the world and complemented with its elegant and easy to read style, this book fills a much needed gap.

Since the supermajorities in the National Assembly won in both the 2010 and 2014 elections by the governing party (Fidesz), the Government of Hungary has taken many measures that have stirred heated debates. Among these was the adoption on 18 April 2011 the country's new constitution, the Fundamental Law which entered into force on 1 January, 2012. The new constitution has changed the name of the country from "Republic of Hungary" to simply "Hungary" (Magyar Köztársaság to Magyarország) on 1 January 2012. The act of changing the name of the country, and the new name of a country, as presented by professor Takács, has many legal, political, linguistic, semiotic dimensions which are addressed in the book.

In the following review, I will present the main points of the book, show the possibilities suggested after which, I will address the parts which were felt as left out and I will conclude my remarks with the parts particularly convincing. The book is extremely well documented, with examples from all around the world and several historical eras. An analysis comprising all this richness in this relatively short essay would be unmanageable; therefore I will limit my remarks on the specific parts of the book related to the name of the Hungarian state. The purpose of the writing, as presented in the Introduction is to analyze the theoretical

aspects related to the names of states, generally, and from certain aspects the case of Hungary. It aims to show the importance of the names and to provide a classification system; next, it aims at showing their linguistic characteristics and functions. Another goal of the book is to present a classification of states' names from linguistic points of view, leading to even more theoretical questions. Not as a central point, but an important element of the book is concerned with the particular case of Hungary's name.

In the first chapter, prof. Takács argues that, changing the name of states has a very important historical, legal, linguistic and socio-psychological meaning, and since it has also a future-building character, it always has a political meaning. In most cases, states' names are changed when their form of government changes which is also reflected in the constitution. Further on, he argues that in the case of Hungary, although the form of government has not been changed since 1989, omitting the *Republic* from its constitutional, long name has a very strong political meaning.

In the second chapter, the various functions held by these names are presented, such as identification, denotation, invocation, communication, representation and in some cases even description, and finally – its functions related to the states' identity. In the history of the 20th century, the country of Hungarians has been named and renamed several times. In most cases, these changes were related to the changes of the political structures and their goal was to build a new identity. The various names used in the 20th century (Hungarian Democratic Republic, Hungarian Soviet Republic or Hungarian Republic of Councils, Kingdom of Hungary, Republic of Hungary, Hungarian People's Republic, Hungarian Republic) all refer to different periods of the country's history, sometimes having changed territories and altered political systems. In all these cases, the statesmen have tried to differentiate themselves and their states from the earlier political system. In this sense, Takács argues, dropping the *Republic* from the country's official name has a very important meaning, as opposed to the official declarations according to which it has only a "symbolical meaning and stresses the historical continuity".

The third chapter raises various questions related to the linguistic and semantic aspects of the new name. He points out that as a full legal name *Hungary* has already proved to be unable to be used in several contexts of the new constitution and in certain cases the writers were obliged to write a less fortunate "Hungarian state" instead of using the earlier "Hungarian Republic". Further on, he questions the official reasons of this latest name change. Firstly, he questions the official argument according to which this form of the name represents historical continuity. Takács points out that historically, the long, constitutional name of the state has always included the form of government as well. Next, he mentions another official point, stating that this has only a symbolic meaning. Thirdly, it seems to him that in the official rhetoric it is relatively often mentioned that the "republic" does not have a historical tradition in this country. At the same time, statements regarding intentions of restituting the monarchy are perceived by him as less frequent and not enough convincing. In addition, prof. Takács mentions that the public discourses related to "republic" are very volatile. He summarizes: the *republic* is not worthy to be kept in the name of the state, but is good enough to be kept as the form of the state. Finally, the last official part of the discourse is presented: it is hard to trace straight limits between the concepts of "country", "state" and "homeland".

The fourth chapter discusses the typologies of states' names. Firstly, it shows that among the 195 states existing today, in 165 cases the constitutional form of the state's name mentions its form of government. In the case of the remaining 39 countries, 14 of them have some sort of legal, political terminology in their constitutional name and only in 25 states' names the constitutional form of the state corresponds to the short, conversational name of the country. Only six European countries have chosen to use this form to refer to their states and five among these are in the Central and Eastern Europe, all of them having a relatively long history of monarchy. The writer here hypothesizes that the political elite of these countries, especially in the case of Hungary after 2010, might want to revitalize the monarchical traditions and supports his argument with mentioning the discourses related to the crown of Hungary.

In the following part, the writing differentiates between the name of a country and the name of the state, stressing the dual function of the countries referring to both the geographical area and to the institutionalized power present in that area. Next, the book raises questions related to the linguistically correct form and the legitimacy of the official names of states bringing excellent examples from around the world.

The fifth chapter is entirely dedicated to the particular case of Hungary. First, the author presents the context in which changing the state's name took place, mentioning the importance given to the language and linguistics by the new government, its actions reminding him to Orwell's *Newspeak*. He points out that the new constitution begins with an emotionally filled word, which accurately could be translated more as: "The name of OUR HOMELAND shall be Hungary" as opposed to the official English language translation *The name of OUR COUNTRY shall be Hungary*. The writer stresses the different connotations and legal implications of the words *homeland*, *country* and *state* and points out that while they have very different meanings, from the legal point of view, the new word needs to be interpreted as if would be written "republic". The next section analyses the legal implications of this change and concludes that while it is not against the law to refer to the Hungarian state as Hungarian Republic, it would be perceived as anachronistic. The chapter's concluding sentences returns the readers to the poem of Bernard of Cluny, mentioning that individual hopes in the restoration of the state form existing between 1990 and 2010 are in vain.

The last chapter elaborates the importance of various names. The writer demonstrates that individuals who have opposed changing Hungary's name might have had a more personal connection with that particular form of name. According to Takács, some of the opponents of this change might have felt even as a being banned to refer to the Hungarian Republic. In his concluding remarks, he states that the Hungarian Republic as it has existed between 1989/90 and 2010/11 with its constitutional democracy, pluralistic political system, having the structures of the western European democracies has ceased to exist by having its name changed. According to the author, the new political system is an authoritarian one.

As a conclusion, the author's main points are that the names of states have multiple functions and meanings from legal, political and symbolic points of view. Changing the name and omitting the form of the government from the constitutional name of the country as it was done in the particular case of Hungary suggests that the country is not a republic anymore. He brings convincing evidence to support his argument that with 2010/11 a new important period in the history of Hungary has begun.

The book suggests that the real reasons behind this change are not known and are to be found out in the future. It also suggests major changes to be expected in the future, while mentioning several times certain preferences of the political elite for a possible monarchy and the Hungarian Crown. At this point I feel that the book has left out two important aspects. First, the book presents the upheaval of the government around changing names and giving extreme importance to the language while not mentioning that many of the names changed were the ones given in the communist-socialist era of the country. For example, one of the major squares of Budapest originally was named in 1929 after the former Prime Minister Széll Kálmán. The square became *Moszkva tér* (Moscow Square) in 1951 under the Rákosi regime. The square's name was also changed in 2011 by the city council back to its original name. In this context, changing names and changing the name of the country could seem much more as an action *against* the still existing and prevailing legacies of the socialist regime or Soviet occupation of the country. Second, the author makes a few remarks to the Hungarian crown, but he doesn't mention the constitutional order attached to it or the particular form of checks and balances system assured by the Doctrine of the Holy Crown¹. In this sense the Doctrine of the Holy Crown and the constitutional order attached to it since the 14th century up until the 20th century, would represent a certain historical continuity. Moreover, since the Crown was a symbol of Western European values, and it had a constitutional binding power, it could represent a guarantee for dividing the powers in a state. Accordingly, neither the sovereign, nor the nation or its representatives could possess an absolute power.

The Name of the Rose: Hungarian Republic is particularly convincing when detailing the importance of states' names and their meanings or when questioning the correctness of the official names. The footnotes of the book are just as interesting and important to read as the other parts of the text, including the Appendix which provides a full list of "official" lists of names of states provided by the Hungarian Committee of the Geographical Names, another one by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and finally, a list of names suggested by the author. Written in an easy to read style, while presenting a very large amount of information, this book will definitely not abide only in its name but it will be held in our hands, while reading it.

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1 The Holy Crown of St. Stephen and United States-Hungarian relations: hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, Ninety-fifth Congress, first session, November 9, 1977. (Material submitted for the record: THE LEGAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HOLY CROWN OF HUNGARY By William Solyom-Fekete, Senior Legal Specialist, European Law Division, Law Library, Library of Congress), online: <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015078707067;view=1up;seq=12>.