

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONALIST POLITICAL PARTIES:
EXPLORING DIFFERENCES IN RHETORIC, STRATEGY AND POLICY**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the political nature and impact of nationalism within political systems. The dissertation does this through two distinct contributions: 1) establishing a clear conceptual definition of nationalist political parties (NPPs) and 2) developing a typology of NPPs that explains their development. Attention to NPPs has been mixed as some scholars have dismissed their relevance and/or merely grouped them with right-wing political parties. This points to a particular problem within the study of NPPs, namely that they are both undertheorized and over-simplified. In the dissertation, I argue that a more systematic approach is necessary for analyzing the distinct features of NPPs so that scholars can discern the similarities and qualities that make NPPs unique. NPPs are defined as parties that *prioritize a singular nation or national identity, expressing a belief that this nation or national identity is unique, and as such requires political action to ensure its protection and survival*. Unlike traditional political parties, NPPs are unique in their often-disjointed policy proposals and lack of definitive policy positions along the traditional left-right spectrum. The rhetorical tools employed by NPPs provide a basis for how they can be identified as different from other political parties within their system. Using small-N comparative historical analysis of political parties in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, a typology of NPPs is proposed across three distinct policy frameworks. Specifically, the Fidesz and Jobbik parties of Hungary and the UDMR of Romania are examined as respective ideal types of each of the frameworks discussed. The theory presented in the dissertation states that the type of policy framework chosen by the party depends on the timing of its development and more importantly on the structure and membership of the party organization.

Dedicated to my husband, Jeremy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In March of 2019, Viktor Orbán’s nationalist Fidesz party of Hungary was suspended from the center-right European People’s Party for its nationalist and anti-EU rhetoric seen as a violation of the European Union’s rule-of-law principles.¹ However, the use and labeling of Fidesz as a “nationalist” political party set up an interesting question for researchers of nationalism and political parties alike – how do we know if or when a political party is a *nationalist* party? Are nationalist political parties different from other political parties? These are two questions that are central to the broader contributions of the dissertation.

While there has been a lot written about concepts like “the nation” or “nationalism,” few have truly examined the connection between these concepts and their manifestation as political parties. Moreover, the discussion of nationalist political parties (hereafter referred to as NPPs) tends to evoke images of the German Nazi party during the 1930s, rather than examples of modern-day NPPs that exist throughout the world. Since the end of the Cold War, NPPs are at least eighty-four parties that have been elected in democracies throughout the world.² While some of these parties were short-lived, NPPs continue to retain a central political role in some Western democracies,

¹ Rankin, Jennifer. “Viktor Orbán’s party suspended from centre-right EPP bloc”. The Guardian, 20 March 2019.

² Krause, W. et al. (2019): Manifesto Corpus. Version: 2018-2. Berlin: WZB Berlin Social Science Center.

specifically within democratic systems across Central and Eastern Europe. Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has been a central point in the discussion of both populist and nationalist scholars alike.³ The region places this debate in a unique perspective as most of the party structures are relatively new (Kitschelt, et al. 2008: 95-96). As such, CEE provides a theoretically interesting region of the world to dissect the role and development of NPPs. Of the eighty-four parties noted in the Comparative Manifestos Project dataset, thirty-six (roughly 43%) of the coded NPPs came from democratic CEE countries (Krause, et. al. 2019).⁴ The degree of support for NPPs within these countries varies across the region from election to election. Countries like Hungary and Croatia have experienced seemingly strong nationalist parties, while Slovenia, Czechia, and Poland have received relatively weak support. While this variation is interesting, it has largely been overlooked.

Complicating things further, there is a general disconnect between the way that academics have thought about NPPs, often connecting these parties to their populist cousins (Mudde 2007: 15-18). The overall lack of clarity between the two concepts is concerning as treating both populist and NPPs as the same, misses any investigation of what makes NPPs particularly unique from their populist counterparts. Moreover, as

³ See King (2010) *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the End of Eastern Europe* and the edited volume by Mudde (2005) *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe*.

⁴ The eleven democratic countries of Central and Eastern Europe included here have met the standards and qualifications for democratic elections required for membership in the European Union.

precision has become a central concern within the discipline, the lack of a clear definition of NPPs leaves a potential avenue of research largely left unstudied. When approached from this angle, nationalist parties pose an interesting set of research questions as they are not present within all political systems and their strength within those systems can vary greatly. The theory developed here aims to address under what conditions NPPs develop and when present, what factors explain the variation in party structure and strength within different political systems.

Definition and Theory

The definition of NPPs and the theory of their development discussed below (and in later chapters) create a better understanding of the political nature and impact of nationalism within political systems, specifically within political parties. NPPs are not a monolith as they often extend beyond the traditional “left-right” party distinctions; I argue that because of this there needs to be a clearer analytical definition and a more systematic approach to analyzing the distinct features of the nationalist political party family. Without a clear definition, scholars miss the similarities and qualities that make NPPs unique, while also missing the ability to determine predictable patterns of behavior.

As will be discussed in further detail in this chapter, I define NPPs as parties *that prioritize a singular nation or national identity, expressing a belief that this nation or national identity is unique, and as such requires political action to ensure its protection and survival*. Unlike traditional political parties, NPPs are unique in their often disjointed

policy proposals and lack definitive policy positions along the traditional left-right⁵ spectrum and the rhetoric that they use is focused on three distinct policy areas where the party argues that there are (real or perceived) threats to the nation.

The second, and larger, contribution made in this project, is an exploration of the variation in party development and organization, which shapes the policy frameworks employed by NPPs and how those frameworks affect their overall durability and success. Using small-N comparative historical analysis of parties in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, I specifically examine the *Fidesz* and *Jobbik* parties of Hungary and the *UDMR/RMDSZ* of Romania. I argue that the development of NPPs depends on the timing of the party's development and more importantly on the policy framework employed by the party. These policy frameworks provide the structure for a typology of NPPs, arguing that NPPs can be placed within three policy frameworks: pragmatic nationalists, radical nationalists, and minority nationalists. Pragmatic NPPs believe that there is a singular inclusive national identity under threat and therefore the party needs to actively participate in state institutions to protect the nation. These parties, of which *Fidesz* is my primary case, seek to construct a large electorate to achieve state power. The second type, radical nationalists, believe in an exclusive ethno-nationalist claim that their identity is under attack by outside forces and that there is a need to take over state institutions and

⁵ See Breuning (1997: 3) for a short discussion of “ideological detachment” of nationalist political parties.

return them to their relevance within national history. Radical nationalists are exclusionary in identifying members of the nation and seek to build an electorate around the ethnonational cultural identity. The last type included within the study is minority NPPs, which represent a smaller or weaker nationality within an existing large nation. Parties in this category seek to rectify their weakened position by obtaining protections for their identity or for autonomy over regions where the nation is most prevalent.

The theory presented aims to illuminate the dynamics of NPP development through an assessment of party membership, as well as the leadership structure. These factors shape the overall development of the party, and its identification within one of the three NPP types and may yield additional clues toward the potential success and durability of NPPs over time.

Nationalism, the Nation, and Nationalist Political Parties

Nationalism and the Nation

When discussing nationalist political parties (NPPs) it is important to clarify the political connection of parties to the broader literature around nations and nationalism. There is a vast literature on “nationalism” as a concept, viewing the concept as a result of historical developments and the political, social, economic, and cultural transformations of modern society (Brubaker 2019: 4). Broadly speaking nationalism divides into two main groupings: primordialists and modernists. Beginning with the latter, modernists view nationalism and nationalist politics as the result of socioeconomic forces that began

to change and developed around the end of the eighteenth century.⁶ Primordialists, on the other hand, argue that this only captures half of the picture, arguing that nations did not simply develop from nothing. Their argument rests on the notion that some understanding of national identity existed before modernization; existing through a set of shared cultural values, norms, and histories.⁷ While differences in theories of nationalism essentially argue about when the nation and sense of belonging to that nation began; it is important, for this project, to focus instead on the common understanding both groups have of nationalism more broadly: that it is deeply connected to history, politics, culture, and a desire for a shared identity.

Due to the ubiquity of nationalism within contemporary society and its connection to all aspects of human life through social, political, and economic means; it is important to clarify what is meant when using the terms *nationalism*, *nationalists*, and *the nation* within this study. For the concept of *nationalism*, I use a definition advanced by Anthony Smith, which states that nationalism is “an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity, and identity of a human population, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or ‘potential’ nation” (Smith 1999: 37). *Nationalists* are the political actors that seek to attain the goals described by the concept of nationalism, within a given political context (which could include local, sub-national,

⁶ See Gellner (1983), Anderson (1983), and Hobsbawm (1990), as examples of modernist approaches.

⁷ Smith (1986) as the central text on primordial national identity and cultural identification.

national, or international political arenas). Lastly, the concept of a *nation* or a given *national identity* rests on a human population that focuses on the (sometimes perceived) shared historical territory, cultural values, national myths, and memories, as well as an expectation to maintain those connections through the maintenance and advocacy for their respective national identity.⁸

Nationalism vs. Populism

The concepts of nationalism and populism have increasingly returned to prominence within social science, as well as within the context of modern political discourse (Brubaker 2019: 1-2; Stroschein 2019: 923; DeCleen 2017: 342-343). As a result, it is extremely common to hear these concepts blended together to describe social movements, political ideologies, and political parties. However, this discourse has largely treated populism and nationalism as synonyms; as two concepts that are deeply connected; or as though the existence of one of these is dependent upon the other (DeCleen 2017: 342). Moreover, studies of political parties have been especially problematic in this regard by often blurring the lines between these two concepts; not only seeing them as connected but using them as empty signifiers for discussing any

⁸ The definitions for nation and nationalists are my own but are influenced by the collection of writings on nationalism is Hutchison and Smith (1994) *Nationalism*.

party that represents a platform that seeks to “protect national interests” and maintains right-of-center political preferences (Mudde 2007: 16-19; Golder 2016: 480-482).⁹

While writing and analysis on the topic of populism have been prolific, very few scholars have taken up the challenge to engage with what makes nationalism different from the concept of populism. Both Brubaker (2019: 9-14) and De Cleen (2017: 345-346) argue that there are distinct differences between the concepts of nationalism and populism.¹⁰ De Cleen (2017: 343-345) argues that nationalism focuses on the “nation” as seen as “a limited and sovereign community that exists through time and is tied to a certain space and that is through an ‘in/out’ (member/non-member) opposition between the nation and outgroups” (DeCleen 2017: 344). De Cleen (2017: 345) and Brubaker (2019: 10) argue that nationalist politics and discourse seek to draw comparisons between those “inside” the nation and those who belong to the outgroup through a horizontal relationship. This approach is in opposition to populists, who are not necessarily interested in the nation per se but are more focused on the “vertical relationship” between *the people* and *elites*, irrespective of their nationality. With that said, some politicians and parties seek to combine these elements as a way of appealing to a broader political audience; however, this does not disrupt the logic that nationalism and populism are

⁹ Additional examples include Manifesto Research on Political Representation data set’s definition of nationalist political parties through 2022 or the works of authors like Ishiyama (1998), and Minkenberg (2010).

¹⁰ See also De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017) for further discussion of the nationalism/populism debate. See also Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) and Roberts (2017) for discussions of employing populist political rhetoric.

focused on distinctly different political goals and audiences. As noted in the section below, this focus on party rhetoric forms the basis for the distinction between NPPs and other political parties, justifying party policy and rhetoric as the defining element of an NPP.

Defining Nationalist Political Parties

NPPs (NPPs) are a unique and understudied variant of political parties. Existing conceptions of NPPs appear to be limited to parties that espouse cultural protection and right-wing policies or simply to those that espouse some nationalistic belief appearing to be agnostic to the traditional “left-right divide” among political parties (Tudor and Slater 2016: 28-29). However, this project establishes a definition of NPPs that focuses on the content of the party’s message and policy, rather than simply limiting it to only self-declared and right-wing options. As noted earlier, this project employs as a minimal definition that NPPs *prioritize a singular nation or national identity, expressing a belief that this nation or national identity is unique, and as such requires political action to ensure its protection and survival*. The definition provided, as well as current debates on how to study nationalism, puts forth the position that NPPs are *issue-focused* political parties because they do not have, or rely on, a set of core constituencies; rather they are built around the primary goal of protecting the core national identity. This differs from the more traditional argument that parties form around social cleavages within society (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 50). Cleavage parties take the form of more traditional and/or mainstream political parties like those that identify as Christian democratic, conservative,

socialist, or labor-based parties.¹¹ Thus, cleavage-based parties seek to make connections to particular economic and social groups within the public. Under *cleavage-based* political parties, the policies and rhetoric of the party will seek to capture specific elements of the voting population, such as conservative parties' connections to the upper strata of society or labor and social democratic parties' connections to labor movements and trade unions (Gibson 1996: 9-10). While these constituencies may only represent a small portion of the voting population within the country, they are incredibly influential in their ability to drive party policy positions (Gibson 1996: 7). As a result, these parties operate with a basic expectation that those constituencies will turn out and support the respective party.

Unlike *cleavage-based* political parties, NPPs rely on the use of rhetorical tools, and often ideologically incoherent policy positions to seek support among the voting public. Consequently, the “content” or “issues” the party seeks to address becomes its main feature in the pursuit of support.¹² NPPs are not unique in this regard, as other parties (e.g. green, populist, and single-issue parties) attempt to capture votes through their messaging and/or specific policy positions rather than any one particular

¹¹ See Gibson (1996: 9-15), though Gibson calls them “constituencies” rather than cleavages, Kalyvas (1996: 3), Manwaring and Holloway (2022: 172), Close and van Haute (2019: 3).

¹² Breuning (1997) citing Gordon Smith (1991) argues that nationalist political parties do not fit neatly within the left-right spectrum and as a result are “detached” political parties. Breuning states that nationalist parties will advocate for the group that they seek to represent, but beyond that are limited in their policy approaches.

constituency.¹³ Similarly, NPPs and other issue-based political parties are often not a singular representative of a given political movement. Breuning (1997: 1-2) argues, for example, that NPPs do not always overlap with a singular nationalist movement within a given country, but rather can coalesce around a singular concept of national identity.¹⁴ This can be interpreted that a given popular movement or social organization (environmental movements, nationalist movements, or movements of sovereignty in the case of the United Kingdom) does not have a singular parallel relationship between its structure and the perceived equivalent party structure.¹⁵

¹³ For example, green parties are primarily focused on environmental policies. An example of a single-issue political party would be the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which sought political support primarily based on the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. Like nationalist political parties, populist parties tend to have incoherent policy positions and rely on messaging as a means for accruing public support (Mudde 2007: 29-30).

¹⁴ However, nationalist *movements* can be a major force behind the creation and support of a nationalist political party. For example, Schlozman (2015) notes “social movements hold a special possibility to disrupt the terms of debate and expand ideological horizons.” As such, they can push political parties to behave in ways they might not otherwise. Particularly within Hungary, nationalist political movements have been key elements of civil society that drive certain political parties (i.e. Fidesz and Jobbik) to take specific political stances or carryout the parties’ policies in an unofficial manner.

¹⁵ As discussed later in Chapter 4, while there is overlap between the political party of Jobbik and the Magyar Garda, there are also several additional nationalist organizations that align themselves with Jobbik and are sometimes also connected with competing nationalist political parties (see Molnar 2016: 218-236 for specific examples). For Hungary, this is a connection to Fidesz (discussed in chapter 3) and the new upstart nationalist political party *Our Homeland*.

NPPs are also unique in their ability to capitalize on *actual or perceived threats* to the country or nation. As such, NPPs use specific rhetorical tools or cues to highlight the following “threats” to the nation: 1) threats towards economic security, 2) threats to national sovereignty, and lastly, 3) threats of cultural dilution. This then creates the expectation that the content of NPP’s messaging will seek to address each of these through its party policies. Similarly, cleavage-less and content-focused political parties also seek to make claims around given threats or events. Returning to the non-nationalist party examples, we can think of green parties using the perceived threat of climate change or ecological concerns globally as the impetus for their policy positions¹⁶, UKIP employing what was seen as the increasing interdependence between the United Kingdom and the European Union and a loss of sovereignty in the governing of UK politics¹⁷, or in the positioning of populist political parties against the perceived inequality that persists between ‘elites’ and ‘the people’ (Brubaker 2019: 9). Thus, these social threats form a crucial part of defining issue-based political parties.

There is one caveat to the proposed argument around the content of NPPs and their use of “nationalist” rhetorical tools by traditional political parties. As nationalist movements are somewhat removed from the nationalist political party, so too can nationalist rhetoric operate outside of an official nationalist party structure. An anecdotal

¹⁶ European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) Manifesto – *Climate Emergency Manifesto: We only have one planet. Let’s save it. Now!* (2019: 13-14)

¹⁷ UKIP Manifesto – *Britain Together* (2017: 3)

example of this can be seen in Donald Trump’s declaration at one of his support rallies that he is “a nationalist.”¹⁸ Does his use of the term nationalist and his espousal of “nationalist” policies mean that the US Republican party is now a nationalist party? Under the arguments presented above, his declarations do not change the status of the Republican Party, since the party has historically been and continues to be connected with the business classes and religious organizations, as well as viewed as the party of limited government in American society. Thus, the Republican party still relies heavily on specific cleavages or constituencies within the American political arena rather than eschew those social cleavages, organizations, or traditional constituencies in favor of a broader “defense of the nation” agenda. Similarly, you can find these examples within populist rhetoric used by cleavage-based political parties as well. This points to an important facet of studying political parties, namely that an analysis of the origin of the political party, as well as the party’s structure, is useful for articulating differences within the cleavage and issue frames.

As noted in the previous section, one of the key features of NPPs is their use of rhetorical tools around what they see and believe to be a particular set of threats. All three rhetorical threats are necessary within the party’s rhetoric for a political party to be considered an NPP. If one or more is not present, there is the possibility of two results: the party may be a non-nationalist *issue-based* political party (e.g., populist or single-issue) or potential voters are captured through the use of similar rhetorical devices by an

¹⁸ Forgey, Q. (2018, October 22). *Trump: “I’m a nationalist.”* POLITICO.

already standing mainstream, mass, or traditional political party. Moreover, the threats espoused by NPPs can be real, in that they are occurring within a given political system, or the threats can be perceived by the party as occurring within society and not being covered in the media, discussed by politicians, or purposely hidden by elites.¹⁹ NPPs can therefore manufacture or exaggerate the threats as a means to set the political agenda. The threats can, and may, change in terms of their salience within a particular national context. For example, in times of global economic uncertainty, issues of economic security may hold more potential political value than threats toward specific cultural values. As such, different NPPs may use and accentuate specific threats to mobilize voters or capture feelings of unrest or uneasiness within society. Lastly, the threats are evident through the rhetoric employed by the parties and typically take on the form of the parties' overall policy positions. Accordingly, identifying membership within the NPP family can be ascertained through an analysis of speeches and policy positions espoused by party membership and the party's leadership (Mudde 2007: 38-39).²⁰

In attempts to identify whether a party belongs to the NPP family, researchers should look for the three threats within the content of the party's policy and rhetorical positions. Of the three threats, the first is the *threat toward economic security* describes a

¹⁹ Of note here is that this is one of the distinguishing factors between the strategic element of pragmatic nationalist political parties and their radical nationalist cousins. This is discussed at length in chapter two.

²⁰ Mudde (2007: 38-39) notes that the use of qualitative content analysis of political party rhetoric is arguably the most useful tool in identifying and classifying members of a particular party family.

perceived feeling of economic precariousness in society and/or a loss in economic security through an institutional change. Several examples may help to illuminate what this threat may look like. A perceived feeling of economic precariousness can be interpreted as the belief that individuals have about their ability to succeed or advance their economic standing within society, or a deep feeling as though the economy is out of reach. This could be the result of direct domestic institutional changes, such as the enactment of austerity measures; the collapse of major industry; or an overall shift from one economic system to another (i.e. moving from communism under the U.S.S.R. to a capitalist system); or it can result from a global threat to economic security, which could include environmental disasters, the collapse of international markets, or similar catastrophic events. Additionally, I believe it is the response to this threat that often leads to nationalist and populist parties being conflated. In looking for evidence related to this threat, I would expect to find references by party leaders and within party documents that highlight the economic insecurity felt among the public from foreign intervention in the economy, crises stemming from foreign systems, or more general global insecurity.

The second threat, the *threat towards national sovereignty* describes the feeling or contention that the state or nation has lost the ability to control its institutional structures or policies. Examples of this threat would include the perceived interference of an international or supranational organization, the perceived omission of minority nationalities within the government structure, or the inability of the state to carry out basic functions. Evidence to confirm the presence of this threat would include an examination of the state structure, and ability of the state to perform basic functional

tasks (pass legislation, proactively legislate, remain consistent, etc.). This will require an examination of the functioning attributes of the state, as well as party statements and platforms.

Lastly, the third *threat of cultural dilution* is described by the fear of losing the nation's cultural identity. This can occur through a process of de-emphasizing elements of a historical national identity or moving towards a form of liberal multiculturalism. As a result, parties will utilize rhetoric or policies that seek to maintain the unique cultural traits of a given national identity. This would include, but not be limited to the protection of traditional cultural items, linguistic groups/identities, and customary practices. Evidence will require both an assessment of the public's response to these events and attempts to protect these elements through formal procedures.

Alternative Explanations for Party Development and Party Outcomes

There are several alternatives to explaining how parties develop and what may determine their strength. Within this section, I identify three alternative explanations that may provide some basis for explaining different outcomes in party development and strength. First, it is commonly held that the electoral system structure will play a role in determining the number of possible parties within a given political system, affecting both their strength and development (Duverger 1964: 217, 239, Art 2011: 16-17). The second explanation is a set of institutional explanations from Bustikova and Kistschelt (2010: 30-31), which seeks to explain the development of far-right parties within CEE. Lastly, focuses on features of demand and the role of civil society (Mudde 2007: 201-202).

Electoral Systems

The first alternative explanation commonly discussed among political party competition in proportional or mixed proportional systems is easier for new parties to form and get votes as their share of the vote will translate into parliamentary representation. Duverger's (1964) theory of electoral systems highlighted that the number of political parties within a given system is directly related to the type of electoral system present within that system. In this case, countries that use a proportional or mixed-member approach will have more parties than a country that uses a majoritarian style system like first-past-the-post. Others like Grofman and Lijphart (1986) in their edited volume of the effect of electoral laws on political outcomes, Lijphart (1999: 153-157) in his discussion of the relationship between electoral systems and party systems, and Farrell's (2011: 165-166) discussion of the political effects of electoral systems have built on this, highlighting that smaller parties are likely to be more common in proportional systems because individuals are willing to vote for them to have a presence in the legislature. Moreover, additional theories argue that the thresholds placed within proportional systems will also limit the overall number of political parties within an electoral system.

Table 1		
Electoral System and Nationalist Parties in CEE EU Member States ²¹		
Country	Electoral System Type and Threshold	# of NPPs that have Developed
Bulgaria	Proportional (4%)	3
Croatia	Proportional (5%)	2
Czech Republic	Mixed-Member Proportional* (5%)	3
Estonia	Proportional – Two Tier (5%)	1
Hungary	Mixed-Member Proportional (5%)*	4
Latvia	Proportional (4%, 5%)*	3
Lithuania	Mixed-Member Proportional (5%)	1
Poland	Proportional (5%)**	4
Romania	Proportional/Mixed-Member Proportional (5%)	5
Slovakia	Proportional (5%)*	4
Slovenia	Proportional (4%)	1

Specifically touching on far-right and nationalistic political parties, Art (2011: 16) argues that the traditional arguments around the limiting nature of single-member districts over multi-member districts do not hold as well in cases of far-right, anti-immigrant, and possible NPPs. The table above shows the results using the Manifesto Research on Political Representation data set (MARPOR)²² for parties that are coded as “nationalist” within each of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Table one above provides a summary of the eleven Central and Eastern European states that classify as democracies and are members of the European Union. The second column provides an identification of the electoral system, as well as the threshold needed for parties to gain

²¹ The threshold for winning parliamentary seats is noted within the parentheses. *Represents a single party threshold. The threshold may differ for coalition/affiliated parties. **Threshold has varied widely from each election.

²² Formerly the Comparative Manifestos Project.

seats within the national legislature or parliament. In the third column, are the number of parties coded as nationalist according to the MARPOR data set for 1990-2019. As shown, all eleven countries use some form of a proportional or mixed-member proportional electoral system with electoral thresholds around 4-5%; yet the number of NPPs can vary greatly from one system to the next with Estonia, Lithuania, and Slovenia having only one party and Romania having five. Therefore, something else must be capturing the variety in NPPs and their strength and durability outside of the electoral system alone.²³

Legacies of Economic and Policy Institutions

The second alternative explanation argues focuses specifically on countries within CEE and argues that the strength and presence of far-right and NPPs, largely rely on the type of inherited economic institutions from the former Soviet Union. Thus, all variance in nationalist party success could be attributed to the type of economic system a state has. This theory has been established by Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009) who argue that states with a “national-accommodative structure” developed differently than states with “bureaucratic-authoritarian or patrimonial communism” (42-45). The first structure “national accommodative,” were states that did not experience polarization within parties

²³ Until 2022, the comparative manifestos project/MARPOR classified nationalist political parties using two metrics: 1) if the party classifies itself as a nationalist party and 2) if parties meet a set of criteria, such as populist, anti-immigrant, and/or Euro-skeptic.

on economic issues because of how the communist regime would allow for democratic and economic reforms to occur within the state during Soviet domination (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 33).²⁴ These states experienced a stronger shift after the fall of the Soviet Regime moving towards strong liberal democratic institutions, capitalist markets, and inclusive universal democratic government; while also seeking to protect the features of the quasi-welfare state. Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009) argue that because there was a lack of contention along economic or institutional lines, mainstream parties instead focused on focus on sociocultural differences and Christian traditionalism as a means for earning votes within the political system (33-34). As a result, mainstream political parties were able to exclude far-right radicals from gaining access to electoral institutions (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 35).

Those states that inherited the second institutional structure of “bureaucratic-authoritarian or patrimonial systems” were systems that contained strong anti-communist organizations, as well as a strong post-communist following, leading to competition over both economic and democratic institutions (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 35-38). Additionally, within this structure during the time of Soviet occupation, these state regimes were not permitted latitude on economic reforms.²⁵ Moreover, Bustikova and

²⁴ Identified as Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Baltic countries (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 43).

²⁵ States in this category are identified as the Czech Republic (Bureaucratic Authoritarian), Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, and Ukraine (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 44).

Kitschelt (2009) argue that “the communist leaders never made concessions to non-communist forces, as the strong organization and mass support of socialist politics permitted the construction of tightly controlled, bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes” (35). As a result of this institutional structure, the party system that was formed provided several openings for radical right-wing parties to form because voters were susceptible to far-right ideology because of a residual desire or expectation for authoritarian socialism (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 37-38).

Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009) present an interesting argument; however, there are several concerns presented by the typology included within their study. First, their research is singularly focused on what they identify as “far-right radical parties,” which they define as having elements of a traditional populist as well as NPPs (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 42). This broad definition, but narrow focus yields result along with the institutional forms mentioned above but does little to illuminate the central question that I am posing in this research project around NPPs. Second, their unit of analysis within the study does not compare well with modern developments within these states (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 30). Czechia, for example, has had some experience with right-wing government, but not as much with far-right extremism the same way that neighboring countries have (e.g., Hungary and Poland) (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 47). The third issue with this study/approach is that for most of the countries, where they are claiming this type of party development occurred are missing data, especially along nationalist and cultural dimensions of competitor political parties to the far-right parties within their studies (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009: 43-44).

Bustikova and Kitschelt's (2009) design presents an alternative explanation that I believe will need to be addressed within my study. While I also examine institutional structures as a part of the antecedent conditions to party formation, I find that the difference in development is connected to a series of institutional constraints as well as the arena in which the party develops rather than simply developing as a feature of the economic structure of the state.

Features of Supply and Demand

Another common theory as to why parties develop is captured in the supply and demand structures of the political system. This line of reasoning focuses on either the role of supply-side explanations, which focuses on specific institutional structures (discussed in the previous section on the electoral system and the following section on legacies), as well as mainstream party responses to smaller political parties as to the reason for party development (Mudde 2007: 232-233, Golder 2016: 486-490). While, demand-side explanations seek to connect civil society, social unrest, and grievances about the state of political society to the development of political parties (Mudde 2007: 201-202, Golder 2016: 482-485). Under the "demand" based argument parties form as a means of addressing some unresponsive element of the political system (Mudde 2007: 202).

As the supply-side arguments are addressed in the previous sections, this section will primarily focus on demand-side explanations. Betz (1994) and Minkenberg (2000: 175) argue that far-right and nationalistic political parties develop as a result of the populace's fear and unease at the rapidly "modernizing" society and economy. In some

ways, this is best captured in CEE, as those countries were forced to transition from Soviet-styled socialism to a more capitalistic environment. Theoretically, this should have caused an explosion of populists and NPPs within CEE countries, but those results are rather limited. Molnar (2016: 210) argues that in Hungary, nationalist and far-right groups in civil society were actively recruiting members and turning them towards political parties, thus leading toward eventual electoral success because group members were demanding party responses. Lastly, scholars have argued that heightened cultural grievances have led to an increase in nationalistic sentiments and behaviors, thus leading to the development of nationalist and far-right political parties (Golder 2016: 485).

While these are all seemingly compelling arguments, they do not fit what I see as the overall pattern of NPP development within the CEE. Specifically, these parties are forming under elite-led movements that seek to claim or establish representation for the demand-side explanations provided above. This is why I believe that nationalist parties are unique in that they tailor their messages and policies around “threats” that they believe are salient within a given political system, rather than the traditional social cleavage groups. Thus, it may seem as though they are responding to demands in society, but they are in fact adapting their message to meet their ultimate party objective. Thus, the demand-side explanations do not capture party formation within Central and Eastern Europe.

Why Central and Eastern Europe?

This research project seeks to contribute to the broad notion of the identification and development of NPPs. However, as noted earlier this research seeks to illuminate these concepts through a regional focus on Central and Eastern Europe. By turning attention toward the parties in Central and Eastern Europe, this research will highlight how parties develop in a set of emerging democracies that are temporally and geographically similar. Moreover, the extant literature on political parties and institutional development for this region includes several theories explaining the historical underpinnings that may have contributed to the development of political parties within CEE states (Kitschelt, et al. 2008, Klandermans and van Stralen 2015). Therefore, the goal of this project is to develop a new conceptual tool for identifying and discussing NPPs that operate separately from the broader discussions of traditional political parties within these systems, while also examining the role of historical legacies in shaping the development of these parties within the former Soviet states.

Nationalist Political Parties in CEE

This study seeks to address three distinct concepts: developing a definition and/or approach to studying NPPs, how NPPs develop, and the role of historical development in both. The study of party systems and families within Central and Eastern Europe is not new, several authors have contributed to the theoretical components of party development within this region, most notably Kitschelt, et. al (2008) and Minkenberg (2010). Kitschelt, et. al. (2008: 10-14) argues that historical legacies, specifically the states'

previous experience with democracy before the Soviet era, helped to shape the type of party systems that emerged after the fall of communism. As a result, these previous experiences with democracy shaped and contributed to the types of parties and electoral systems that have emerged. In the edited volume from Minkenberg (2010), he and various contributors sought to explain how historical legacies may explain the success of the *radical right* within CEE states. Similarly, Wittenberg (2006) has examined the persistence of right-leaning political parties and ideologies within Hungary, as well as some of the traditional surrounding central European states. However, as Wittenberg (2006: 10) notes in his book, that research on political parties and ideological persistence in Eastern Europe has been limited to right-wing parties. This brings to the fore the issue noted above, that these studies within the discipline have largely completed this work with the exclusion of various nationalistic political parties that may not fit the far-right mold or may be classified as “populist” instead. Other studies of nationalistic political parties, like those of Ishiyama (1998) and Vermeersch (2013) have sought to explain nationalist political party development through their relationships with other political parties within the same political system. Ishiyama (1998) asserts that within the cases of Romania and Russia there appeared to be an alliance between NPPs and communist successor parties (70,78). Ishiyama (1998) goes further in attributing the development of this relationship between parties relates to the types of regimes that existed under communist rule and the overall length of the transition to democracy (65-67). Vermeersch (2013) argues that the presence of nationalistic political parties (at least in his case of Poland) is predicated on whether the more popular mainstream political

parties feel threatened by NPPs (129-130). If threatened, he argues, popular parties will adapt their message to capture nationalist sentiments and nationalist voters; using the content that often occupies nationalist parties but remaining focused on courting their traditional constituencies (Vermeersch 20013: 142-143). While these studies pose a series of potential alternative explanations for party development, they do not capture a more comprehensive picture of how nationalistic parties have developed and behaved across CEE.

Case Selection

By using a small-N comparative analysis this project seeks to study the development and performance of NPPs within the confines of Central and Eastern Europe.²⁶ As noted above, this region presents almost half of the NPPs that have developed internationally since 1990; some of which have gone on to lead governments or serve as the primary opposition within the political system. Additionally, looking at cases from this region allows for several controls to be used as a means for narrowing down the possible causal relationship in the development of NPPs within this particular region. The first constant across all cases is that all these states experienced the transition to democracy around the same time and have similar historical legacies in that they all

²⁶ Examples of excellent small-N work on political parties and nationalist politics within this region include: Gryzmala-Busse 2002 and 2007, Chen 2007, Kuzio 2007, King 2010, Beissinger & Kotkin 2014. Full citations are available in the works referenced section.

shared the communist experience.²⁷ The second criterion used in case selection is the role of the European Union (EU) as a force requiring regular elections and the enforcement of democratic norms.²⁸ Initially, parties and countries for analysis excluded the use of states that are not member states of the EU and are not considered to be democratic enough for EU membership, this included Albania, Belarus, Bosnia, Moldova, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Serbia, and Ukraine.

While the interwar period and the move to, and maintenance of, the occupation by the U.S.S.R are important facets for why certain elements of a political system develop, this project analyzes party development at the party's inception and their growth within the period of democratization that began after the fall of the iron curtain in the late 1980's early 1990's through today. Gryzmala-Busse (2002: 4-9), Kitschelt, et. al. (2008: 10-14), and Wittenberg (2006: 6-8) argue that to understand the party systems that developed the post-communist era, researchers need to return to the period before the Second World War to see if there are remnants of democratic institutions. Several other researchers argue that it is a combination of looking at the pre-communist past, as well as the communist experience.²⁹ These studies, however, have not been able to capture the development of NPPs, either because of their thin definition of what constitutes a

²⁷ Similar studies discussed previously, like that of Bustikova and Kitschelt 2010 have focused on the region for this particular purpose, though arguing that all experiences under communist control were not the same.

²⁸ As outlined in section 7 of the Copenhagen Agreement, 22 June 1993.

²⁹ See Bernhard and Kubik (2014), Kubik and Linch (2014), and Chirot (2015)

nationalist party or the fact that in most cases the NPPs did not exist in early democratic institutions. Moreover, the works noted above are focused on elements of the party, ideology, and institutional persistence; even though NPPs were rare in the pre-communist era, thanks in most part to the experience with National Socialism in the 1930s and 1940s.

Lastly, the choice of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe provides a unique feature of shared experiences with Soviet occupation, which makes the region distinctly different from its Western European counterparts and traditional studies of colonial legacies within other regions of the world. Moreover, the region presents a large number of cases in the form of different state and party system outcomes, which allows for a robust examination of the theory of institutional legacies posited here, as well as an examination of modern NPPs.

Method and Data Collection

The qualitative small-N case study approach used in the dissertation is best for studying the phenomena of interest. Small-N case studies are best used when: 1) researchers seek to develop a new concept, hypothesis, or shed light on an unknown causal mechanism; 2) when attempting to develop a highly contextualized understanding of the social and historical elements of a given region or area; and 3) when examining temporal theories or explanations for given events or phenomena (George and Bennett 2005: 19). As this study seeks to not only provide a new theory of why NPPs develop (especially within CEE) it meets the three qualities mentioned above. Moreover, by

developing a new approach to defining and understanding NPPs a highly contextualized study is needed to investigate the proposed criteria for what constitutes an NPP.

In addition to the use of case studies, this research project will employ two distinct approaches, which will be introduced here and discussed in more detail in the sections to follow. The first approach is the use of critical junctures, one of the key features of the historical institutionalist (HI) approach used within political science (Capioccia and Keleman 2007: 341).³⁰ HI posits that institutions will change and develop over time, which will, in turn, have an effect on the way in which certain political phenomena develop (Fioretos, et. al. 2016: 4). Critical juncture approaches argue that in a given moment of political opportunity institutional structures will shift and allow for change or new developments to occur (Cappocia and Keleman 2007: 342). The second research approach that will be used within this study is process tracing, which uses the evidence collected from within a case to make inferences about causal explanations of that case and can also be used to describe structural and macro-level explanations as well (Bennett and Checkel 2015: 5-6).

Historical Institutionalism and Punctuated Equilibria

As stated above, this project uses a historical institutionalist and critical juncture framework to explain the development of NPPs in Central and Eastern Europe. Historical institutionalism (HI) is a broad lens for examining institutional development, change, and

³⁰ I use the terminology of critical choice points when discussing party development.

persistence (Fioretos, et. al 2016: 4-5). As Hall and Taylor (1996) argue in their seminal piece, HI has four general features: 1) the relationship between institutions and individual actors are broadly defined; 2) there is an asymmetrical power relationship developed within the operation and establishment of institutions; 3) institutional development tends to emphasize path-dependence and unintended consequences; 4) also work to analyze the contribution of additional factors (i.e. ideas) can make to political outcomes (936). While this is an early summarization of HI, this approach to institutionalist theory has since developed into two distinct theoretical frames. One side of the HI approach argues that critical moments in history help to shape the institutional outcomes, which are often discussed as moments of punctuated equilibrium and also commonly referred to as critical junctures within the political science community (Capoccia and Keleman 2007; Soifer 2012). Another aspect of HI examines how institutions evolve through gradual change and how they change endogenously, rather than changing due to exogenous shocks (Mahoney and Thelen 2010: 2-3). Gradual institutional change in HI is useful when examining existing institutional development, but it is problematic for understanding when new institutions (i.e. NPPs) develop. This weakness comes from the generally critical nature with which American Political Development researchers and gradual change scholars have approached the determinist aspect of critical junctures and path dependence (Mahoney and Thelen 2010: 7). The gradual change approach is not useful for this study as NPPs have been a distinctly unique development in the post-communist period within CEE states. Moreover, the institutions in question – state structures and regimes – experience dramatic shifts, such as the shift from Soviet

occupation to democracy after the fall of the Iron Curtain; the institutional structures appear to be more influenced by critical junctures rather than relatively slower endogenous institutional change.

Ruling out these alternatives leaves us with the critical junctures as the superior method for examining the role of institutions in NPP development. Introduced by Collier and Collier in 1991, the critical juncture framework holds that there are moments of opportunity in which several options for change can occur. These critical moments only last for a short period and once closed, lock in a particular institutional structure or policy (Collier and Collier 1991: 30). Adapting (and simplifying) Collier and Collier's framework is useful in approaching how one may conduct research using the critical juncture theory. Their approach has four unique points of interest: antecedent conditions, cleavage formation, critical juncture, and legacy (which include lock-in and positive feedback effects). The revised version of the critical juncture framework is provided in the figure below.

Antecedent conditions are those that provide the basis or groundwork for the institutional options that are available during the critical juncture. However, not all antecedent conditions are important. In their 2010 article, Slater and Simmons argue that there are factors or conditions preceding a critical juncture that combine in a causal sequence during the juncture to produce or create divergent outcomes (889). Several researchers have also attempted to refine and/or create a testable understanding of when critical junctures occur. Soifer (2012) argues that critical junctures are identifiable through the presence of what he identifies as *permissive* and *productive* conditions.

Permissive conditions define the duration of the critical juncture and are defined as *“those factors or conditions that change the underlying context to increase the causal power of an agency or contingency and thus the prospects for divergence”* (author’s emphasis) (1574). Productive conditions are then defined as *“the aspects of the critical juncture that shape the initial outcomes that diverge across cases”* (author’s emphasis) (Soifer 2012: 1575). The approach of permissive and productive conditions is useful within the theoretical framework discussed above as they will help to identify what in fact may be the critical juncture that allows NPPs to develop and what policy framework they will take on.

Lastly, the legacy as outlined by Collier and Collier, for my purposes here will be broken into two parts: 1) the institutional outcome and lock-in; and 2) the positive feedback or path-dependent features of the institution (Collier and Collier 1991: 30). These two concepts are distinct in that they occur separately. Institutional outcome and lock-in is a discreet moment when one type of institutional structure is selected over another (i.e. party structures), while the path-dependent features would be those that describe and shape options for the parties once as they continue to develop.

Conceptually the outcome and the lock-in occur after the critical juncture closes and thus solidify the institution's place in the positive feedback path. Pierson (2004) highlights that there are four main features of path-dependent processes: 1) a range of possibilities under an initial set of conditions (for the purpose of the critical junctures framework this would be the critical juncture period); 2) relatively small events, if occurring at the right moment, can have large and enduring consequences; 3) timing and

sequence, and 4) inertia – once a process has been established, positive feedback will generally lead to a single equilibrium. The development of NPPs then works in conjunction with the structure outlined by Pierson here as well (44).

Process Tracing

This project applies a standard comparative historical analysis in which different cases will be examined to identify potential causal mechanisms that may contribute to the development of NPPs within CEE. In addition to the selection of cases, the comparative historical analysis also typically employs a method known as “process tracing” to make inferences about the causal mechanisms of a case or set of cases. This is applied to historical cases as researchers can trace in a systematic method, the historical evidence linking potential causal elements to their eventual outcomes. Bennett and Checkel (2015) explain this approach as follows: “...it refers to the examination of intermediate steps in a process to make inferences about hypotheses on how that process took place and whether and how it generated the outcome of interest” (Bennett and Checkel 2015: 6). George and Bennett (2005) also discussed the approach of process tracing, placing the tools for such research in an explicit connection to the process. They emphasize that process tracing is “the use of histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is, in fact, evident in the sequence of values of the intervening variables in that case” (George and Bennett 2005: 208-209). Bennett and Checkel (2015) improve on previous discussions on the use of process tracing by providing a general guide for research using

this approach (20-31). As such, the research design used here will follow that general guide (with some adjustments).

This project primarily uses secondary historical materials, archival election data for analysis. In reviewing the validity and eliminating possible biases within the historical material, this project will review a variety of historical accounts and narratives to ensure accuracy.³¹ The use of descriptive evidence is essential in process tracing designs as it is needed to confirm that the hypothesized variables are present. For the independent variables of interest within this study, the timing of the party's development and the context of the party's membership, there are three descriptive tasks that evidence is required for 1) identifying that there are differences within the party structures; 2) that these differences are continuously referenced by the party through party documents, election manifestos, statements by party leadership and members; and 3) that timing plays a role in the party's decision to select a specific policy framework. As primary evidence, this research project will review party manifestos, parliamentary speeches, and public interviews by party members and leaders. Similarly, the causal connection between the party's structure and political development and the connection to the party policy framework employed will also be established. As noted in the chapter that follows, when parties are selecting their policy frameworks, they are also taking into consideration their intended electorate, therefore a connection needs to be established between the policy framework and an individual's choices to vote or against a given political party.

³¹ This is to correct for the concerns of historiography noted by Lustick (1996: 606-607).

This information will be more difficult to attain and will require evidence in the form of answers given to value surveys, as well as news reporting of the public's perception of political parties, elections, or satisfaction with the political situation.

Cases Selected for Analysis

A typology of NPPs is presented within this project and focused on the particular archetypes of NPPs, rather than the confines of state political structures. In the tradition of Weber's construction of ideal types, the selection of the primary cases for analysis focused on specific political parties: Fidesz, Jobbik, and the UDMR/RMDSZ.³² Each party selected for analysis provides a detailed discussion of each of the party types presented within the typology and serves as a representative structure for how this typology may be used to study NPPs within the broader context of CEE, as well as an additional application within newly democratizing countries around the world. Moreover, the selection of Fidesz and Jobbik in particular provides an additional set of control variables to the study, in which we can see how a variety of NPPs may develop or behave within the same political system.

³² As Gerth and Mills (1946) argue the use of the concept of ideal types is not to make an evaluative decision about the correctness of the concept, rather the ideal type is typically an extreme or clear case "that refers to the construction of certain elements of reality into a logically precise conception" (59). This allows for researchers to make the choice of using logically controlled and unambiguous conceptions of social science phenomena.

Dissertation Overview

This chapter has served as both the introduction to the major conceptual elements of NPPs, while also providing an overview of the theoretical argument and the overall method used to carry out this study. There are five additional chapters included in this study, the next chapter (chapter two) expands upon the theory provided above by discussing the main theoretical components of the explanation for why NPPs develop and the overall shape those parties take when they employ specific policy frameworks. In Chapter Two, I also provide more detail about the structure of each policy framework, as well as an explanation for why each may yield different electoral outcomes.

Chapters 3-5 use the political parties of Fidesz, Jobbik, and the UDMR/RMDSZ as the main case studies for both the use of the new analytical definition provided within this chapter, as well as the application of the theory and policy frameworks to illustrate how each of the different policy frameworks becomes an integral part of the party's identity. Chapter three examines the Hungarian political party Fidesz as an example of the pragmatic nationalist political party framework. The chapter highlights the pragmatic nature of the political party, and its leader while showing how NPPs can develop within transitioning countries and use the "nation" as a force for uniting voters and challenging traditional left-right politics. The Hungarian political party, Jobbik, is the focus of chapter four. Jobbik serves as an exemplar for radical NPPs and provides additional contextual evidence about how NPPs of different policy frameworks behave within the same political system. Chapter five analyzes the last of the part policy frameworks, the minority nationalist framework, through the case of the Democratic Alliance of

Hungarians in Romania (UDMR/RMDSZ). This chapter contextualizes the difference in using nationalistic rhetoric to bind members of the nation together against the dominant national or ethnic identity within the state.

Chapter six is the final chapter of the dissertation and accomplishes several items. First, the chapter begins by summarizing the overall findings of the dissertation and the elements of the cases discussed in chapters 3-5. To test whether the classification of policy frameworks will hold within Central and Eastern Europe, I discuss a survey of NPPs within the region and focus on three brief shadow cases of the political parties For Fatherland and Freedom (TB/LNNK) of Latvia, National Union Attack (ATAKA) of Bulgaria, and lastly, the Election Action of Lithuanian Poles (EAPL) of Lithuania. This analysis helps to expand the theory and show areas where there might be weaknesses or a need to investigate further. Lastly, the chapter concludes by thinking about how the theory presented within the dissertation may be expanded to include new political systems, as well as whether the variation in approaches to NPPs discussed within the policy frameworks would be useful for analyzing subnational politics in cases where nationalism is seen as a core political issue.

CHAPTER 2

A THEORY OF NATIONALIST PARTY DEVELOPMENT

This chapter presents a theory of nationalist political party (NPP) development that examines the context through which NPPs develop within certain political systems, the organizational structure and features of the party, and the overall identification of the variation in NPP policy frameworks used by nationalist political parties. This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I address under what conditions NPPs develop and the theoretical rationale for selecting the policy position that they do. For this, I walk through some of the key theoretical components of critical junctures and how that process shapes the outcome of the party type. Second, I discuss the effects of party organization and structure, as well as leadership, and how that contributes to the differences in party types. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a discussion of a potential moderating variable and some thoughts on the potential theoretical expectation for party type on party success and durability.

Theoretical Framework

The figure below provides a visual interpretation of the theoretical framework. The top of the figure displays the critical juncture framework discussed in Chapter 1, whereas the lower figure shows how the general critical juncture framework maps onto the theory of party development discussed within the dissertation. Moving left to right,

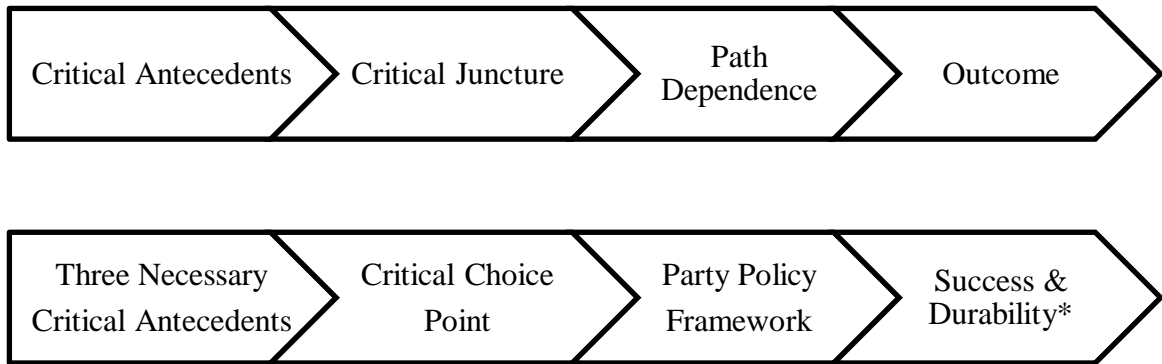


Figure 1. Theoretical Concept of Nationalist Party Development

NPPs develop as a result of a set of state and institutional features, historical factors, and competition from additional political parties within a domestic context (noted here as critical antecedents). There are however three necessary conditions for nationalist political parties to develop within a given country’s political system, the first is defined as the weakness of party competitors. For NPPs to gain traction within an electoral system they need to persuade voters away from the traditional left-right or in the case of post-soviet states away from the traditional communist successor party and liberalization parties. Therefore, if these traditional parties are institutionally weak or have not aligned themselves with a distinct constituency, it makes it easier for NPPs to persuade voters to join their cause (Ishiyama 1998: 65, 67-68).³³ Secondly, the main competitors cannot simply be weak institutionally, the electorate must also display anger or apathy towards

³³ In newer democratic systems, parties may not be durable or establish themselves within the electorate. As a result, the party can be perceived as weak since party membership may be low and the typical forms of institutional support may not be present. Moreover, if parties are unable to maintain their structure (i.e. members are creating breakoff parties from the first or original party organization), then they are also perceived as weak.

the traditional political parties. Voter anger towards a particular party (or set of parties) allows for NPPs to exploit that anger and garner support (Mudde 2007: 226-229). Additionally, voter apathy toward the traditional parties provides the opportunity for NPPs to make a more emotional connection with voters by making more personalistic appeals.³⁴ The third and final necessary antecedent condition is the belief that the traditional parties are not able to, have not, and/or are unwilling to defend the nation or national identity. This is the piece that fits naturally for the rhetorical and policy positions NPPs take as they use examples of global interference in domestic politics, the loss of cultural identifiers, or more specifically the effect that these policies have when combined with immigration. These factors in particular are used within the European context to justify the development of NPPs within the political system.

Once these conditions are met, the party, or more specifically the party's executive/leadership, moves into the party development stage, when party elites work to establish the structure and membership of the party (Panebianco 1988: 19-20). It is this latter element of the party's development that has the most impact on the party's identity among the three policy frameworks discussed below. It is in this phase of party development that the party elites establish the central goal or policy framework of the party. In doing so, the party emphasizes the features of the society which they feel are most important, in addition to where they strategically place themselves within the state's

³⁴ Anger towards a particular political party or leader may lead voters to look elsewhere; the same principle applying to voters feeling apathetic to the rhetorical claims or policy positions espoused by the traditional political parties.

political system. Nationalist political parties are unique in this respect as they are founded around one of three principal goals or policy frames: 1) pragmatic nationalism, 2) radical nationalism, or 3) minority nationalism.³⁵ These three policy approaches will be discussed at length in the section that follows; however, this project asserts that as the party leadership and party members formulate and structure their party's policies, they will in turn fall into one of the three policy frameworks. It is noted here that the type of policy framework may explain overall party success and durability within some political systems; however, this is not investigated within this study.³⁶

Supplementary Antecedent Conditions – Institutional Structures

Political parties do not form devoid of context – making the impact of antecedent conditions, conditions that predate party formation, a significant part in the types of parties that develop later (Tudor and Slater 2016: 29-31). These institutional or state-level antecedent conditions help to frame, not only the political moment in which the party development occurs (Ishiyama 1998: 65, 67). Examples of important institutional antecedents for party formation include institutional structures where competing in elections is generally easier (i.e. proportional systems), where asymmetrical relations are

³⁵ There is a possible fourth variant – “Unifying Nationalism;” however, such a case is not present within CEE countries.

³⁶ While this figure notes that there may be a relationship between party policy framework and the party's success and durability, the theory presented here is of the type of policy framework chosen by the parties rather than focusing on their success or durability.

present (whether constitutionally or customarily observed), or where there is a weak institutional structure (i.e. newly independent states) (Sartori 1986: 58; Ishiyama 1998: 65; Mudde 2007: 233). Each of these will have differing impacts on party development; thus, the antecedent conditions may be one of the primary driving forces for why party development occurs *where* and *when* it does (Tudor and Slater 2016: 29, 31).

When reviewing antecedent conditions for political party development, I place state-level factors into two general categories. First, are country-level factors which include: the electoral system of the country, economic conditions, the stability of ruling elites, government structure, and in the case of the Central and Eastern European countries their institutional status under the former Soviet Union.³⁷ The second category focuses on the level of party competition within a given institutional setting (Mudde 2007: 237). Thus, party system factors seek to illuminate differences in the overall competition for votes, structure, and policy positions of other political parties, and where the party in question, such as NPPs seeking to achieve electoral strength.

³⁷ Brubaker (1995: 55-76) argues that the relationship of both the state and ethnonational cultures heavily impacted the way that state institutional structures developed after the fall of the USSR. For example, Brubaker argues that in the USSR's desire to assert itself as a "multicultural nation" it founded and supported unique ethnonational identities; some through the official state status (independent states) and some through formal state recognition (i.e. recognition of the Estonian ethnicity by the USSR).

Party Development - Origin and Structure

The theory presented above contends that nationalist parties develop when they believe the nation or national identity is threatened. However, the environment through which these threats come about (the critical antecedents) and the period that decisions that party leaders make around policy decisions are critical to the institutional structure of the party's development. Angelo Panebianco (1988) argues that in the first phase of party development, the goal is rather simple, members of the early iteration(s) of the party will seek to realize and establish the "common cause" of the party (hereafter referred to as the party's *policy framework*) (19). As the party begins to institutionalize, the goals of those within the leadership structure will shift to accommodate its new status; however, Panebianco (1988) argues that the party will struggle to shake off the originating policy framework of the party as it continues to develop (19-20). This originating policy framework will ultimately shape the party's messaging and overall development as it competes for votes during its lifetime. For example, when the German NSDAP (more commonly known as the Nazi Party) was formed in 1920 and solidified after the *Beer Hall Putsch* in November 1923, the party emerged with the structure and goals of taking power at any cost, exploiting the inequalities and failures of the Weimar Republic and the Treaty of Versailles, having a singular and strong charismatic leader (Hitler), and a strong hierarchical institutional structure (Panebianco 1988: 156-157). Even as the party adjusted to social movements, political events, and societal change these elements remained central aspects of the party's structure and identity until the party's collapse. Additionally, Panebianco (1988) argues that the development of a given political party is

heavily predicated on the early elite members (19-20).³⁸ This theory coincides with my earlier claim that NPPs are not the result of a particular political cleavage within society, rather these elites come together to form the party to address their particular collective interests. Panebianco's (1988) theory, therefore, provides some of the basis for why I expect the origin of the party to play a significant role in its possible strength and development.

States that began to form after the fall of the Soviet Union were largely divided along with ethnic and national identities; however, not all states incorporated their now independent nationalities within state institutions in the same way. Rogers Brubaker (1995: 4-7) argues that states approached the institutionalization of their nationality in three distinct ways: 1) through an existing claim to a "pre-existing" national identity (one that existed before the Second World War), 2) through a "newly nationalizing framework" that sought to bring as many people of the same or similar identity under the new state institutions, and 3) a belief that the state is run by some ethnic or national minority within the population (thus his titled "minority nationalism"). While his concepts are useful in terms of thinking about how the State's institutions developed, I

³⁸ For a general discussion of the role of elites in party formation see McAllister (1991) "Party Elites, Voters and Political Attitudes: Testing Three Explanations for Mass-Elite Differences" or Shefter (1994) *Political Parties and the State*, as well as more specific CEE content examples of Korosenyi (1999) "Political Elites" from the text *Government and Politics in Hungary*, Lane (2011) "Identity Formation and Political Elites in the Post-Socialist States", and Vogel & Best (2016) "Political Elites in Transition and Unification: German Lessons for the Korean Peninsula?"

believe that parts of his theory can be adapted to how we should think about NPPs' policy framework origins.

Party Policy Frameworks

Adapting Brubaker's approach to NPPs, there are three types of policy frameworks employed by parties within CEE.³⁹ These party frameworks not only provide the basis for party policy and rhetoric but also affects their ability to capture support among the electorate. Each of the party frameworks is describe in the section that follows and summarized in Table 2 below. The first framework, *pragmatic nationalism*, focuses on institutionalizing the newly independent national identity within the party's policies. The party will seek to establish claims that there is a "core nation" or national identity that is differentiated from the citizenry as a whole. This core nation is seen as the legitimate "owner" of the state, which is conceived of as the state of and for the core nation. Even with their state, actors within the core nation believe that they are in a weak cultural, economic, or demographic position. As a result, the party believes that historical discrimination against the nation provides justification for their remedial or compensatory project of using the state's political institutions to promote the specific interests of the core nation. Parties that belong to the *pragmatic nationalism framework* seek to have a broad definition of what the nation is so that they can increase the likelihood of building a

³⁹ As noted, the three frameworks are adapted from Brubaker's (1995: 4-7) state institutionalization theory. While mostly an original contribution, there is some overlap with Brubaker's theories.

Table 2 Party Policy Frameworks	
Framework	Explanation
Pragmatic Nationalism	<p><i>Principles:</i> Belief that there is a singular inclusive national identity under threat and asserts a need to actively participate in state institutions to protect the nation.</p> <p><i>Electoral Goals:</i> Seeks to construct a large electorate to achieve power. However, the party will make clear claims about those that do not belong within the <i>nation</i>.</p> <p><i>Expected Electoral Outcome:</i> Moderate to strong national electoral support; leading to durable political parties.</p>
Radical Nationalism	<p><i>Principles:</i> Belief that there is an exclusive <i>long-standing</i> singular national identity under threat and asserts a need to protect members of the nation both within national boundaries and within other countries. As a result, the party believes in taking over state institutions and returning them to their former historical relevance.</p> <p><i>Electoral Goals:</i> Necessarily exclusionary, the party seeks an electorate of an ethnocultural national identity and seeks to protect members of this group both at home and abroad.</p> <p><i>Expected Electoral Outcome:</i> Due to the exclusionary nature of the party, electoral outcomes are limited.</p>
Minority Nationalism	<p><i>Principles:</i> Claims that the national identity is weak within the state as they make up only a small portion of the population. Party goals seek to rectify this through the protection of national identity.</p> <p><i>Electoral Goals:</i> Will seek to mobilize individuals within the electorate that seek to belong to their specific national identity. Representation nationally will be small, but the party may have regional or territorial dominance within the state.</p> <p><i>Expected Electoral Outcome:</i> Weak national electoral support, but strong subnational support (if geographically concentrated); strong durability if concentrated, weak durability if diluted.</p>

large coalition of support among the electorate. NPPs that fall within this policy framework will have established and broad political coalitions that can be mobilized for support. This mobilization effort may lead these parties to perform well in national parliamentary elections and increase their likelihood of long-term durability. Importantly, the party's ability to be responsive here is a reference to the way in which these parties are adaptable and responsive to shifts in the political system, whether they are responding to shifts in policy, voter demands, or exogenous shocks to the system. The ability of the party to adapt to the changes within the political system and make pragmatic decisions around policy recommendations and whether to cooperate or participate with other political parties – makes this policy framework different from other members of the nationalist party family. Lastly, the use of the word “responsive” here is not to imply that parties belonging to this framework are not able to serve a politically entrepreneurial role; they are fully able to set the political agenda within a system (if they are strong enough). Thus, responsiveness here is more of a reference to their ability to read the proverbial tea leaves within the political system and their overall ability to adapt to shifts within the system.

In contrast to the *pragmatic nationalism* framework, other NPPs will form under a *radical nationalism* framework. This framework espouses the need to protect a perceived long-standing and exclusive national identity. This belief in this established national identity also provides a rationale for participating in and/or taking over the state, as it is the only means through which the national identity can return to its perceived historical relevance or dominance within the country. Additionally, within this framework,

adherents believe that the nation expands beyond the physical national boundaries into other geographical areas, expresses notions of irredentism, and/or the need to protect national identities outside of the existing borders. Parties that use this framework will be highly restrictive and exclusionary in their definition of the nation, seeking to maintain ethnonational purity, rather than seeking to have broad electoral strength. Yet another feature of these parties is the belief or espoused preference for overturning the structures of the state and remaking them in the image of the nation. As such, by limiting those who qualify as a part of the national identity and by proposing a radical change to the way the government is constructed or functions, the party limits its overall appeal to a broad electorate leading to an inability to gain broad support and a likely cap or ceiling in potential support. The inability of the party to capture large portions of the electorate makes it difficult to determine the overall durability of these parties.

The third framework focuses on national identities that exist within a state where there is a larger more prominent national identity. Parties that employ the *minority nationalist* framework either a) have a historical notion of attachment to a different national identity or culture than the one they are currently occupying (i.e. Hungarians in Bulgaria) or are concentrated ethnocultural minorities within a dominant political culture (i.e. Hungarians in Romania). Under this framework, the party aims to assert its national identity and desire state recognition of its distinct ethnocultural national identity, as well as the assertion of certain collective action rights, and nationality-based cultural and political protections. Thus, their electorate will most likely be small nationally, but strong

regionally or territorially if members of the nation are geographically concentrated. When concentrated within a particular part of the country, parties can be expected to maintain their durability and a small or weak presence within national parliamentary elections.

As noted above, parties may choose to adapt their rhetoric or policy positions over time but will be unable to remove the elements of their original policy orientation or framework. This is made equally more difficult depending on the role and emphasis the party membership place on their adherence to party policies. Moreover, these party frameworks can have added effects of limiting those who lead the party (this includes party leaders and elites within the broader party leadership structure) and limiting the party's responses to a potential new state or international crises in the future.

Party-level Variables

While the policy framework is the most important feature of NPP development, additional party-level variables are also important to consider. The organizational development of the party, that is the overall institutional structure of the party as well as where the party ultimately developed from, will play a role in the effect the policy framework may have. Within the party institution, Panebianco (1988) argues that there are a set of factors that need to be investigated, which include: examining whether party members are "believers and purists" or "careerists and pragmatists", whether the coalition of party members and supporters is homogenous or heterogenous, and an examination of the party's leadership structure and selection (elite-driven or grassroots selection) (25-30). Lastly, party development also needs to be examined through the unique rules and

aspects of the state's electoral arena; therefore, researchers need to examine the type of electoral system, and rules around party formation and adoption, as well as whether there is significant competition for votes among the electorate (Mudde 2007: 233) .

In addition to the overall structure of the party in terms of membership, leadership characteristics are also aspects of parties that can shape how the party identifies or determines policies and can be an indicator of the type of members a political party has. Speaking to the first point, a common theme in the literature about political parties has been the expectation that the leaders of political parties within modern or contemporary society will become central figures and act as representatives of the party itself.⁴⁰ Kirchheimer (1966), for example, argues that a feature of contemporary political parties is that there is an overall strengthening of the party leaders' organizational authority over individual party members (198-200). This is also captured by Mudde's (2007) study of the radical right, in which he argues that the leadership type and the structure of the relationship between the party membership and the leader can have a significant impact on the development of contemporary political parties (260-264). More specifically, Mudde argues that parties today are dominated by cult-personality style leadership and leadership defined by a charismatic leader.⁴¹ Mudde (2007) also argues that party

⁴⁰ Kirchheimer (1966: 198-200), Panebianco (1988: 52-53, 65-67, 143-147), Mudde (2007: 261-262), Wren & McElwain (2009: 559)

⁴¹ This applies to the *issue-based* political parties discussed in Chapter 1 of the dissertation. A future study may examine whether leadership style varies from traditional cleavage-based parties and their issue-based counterparts. It seems as though issue-based political parties are more easily captured by charismatic leadership.

leadership is a key variable within the study of political parties as the leader (and their leadership team) are chiefly responsible for creating a stable organizational structure for the party (260). This stable organizational structure is important since it contributes to the party's stability over time and entrenchment within the political system. Lastly, in an area where Mudde (2007) and the theory presented here overlap, there is an expectation that issue-based parties, like his populist radical right and my nationalist political parties, will have a more minimalist structure – with relatively few members, power positioned in a handful of centralized figures within the party, a strict hierarchy, and a generally charismatic leader (256-276).

The second point is that analyzing the leadership of the party can yield information about the type of members a party has, which stems from the relationship between members and their leadership. Parties that are defined by pragmatism will generally move in the direction that the leader seeks to push or pull the party. As a result, pragmatic parties will emphasize the importance of party leadership, organizational structure, and stability as they seek to build a broad electoral coalition. Parties defined by membership of purists or believers on the other hand will be extremely supportive of the party leader when that leader aligns with the membership's political values; however, should the leadership decide to take the party in a direction contrary to the party's traditional positions, members will express their anger at the new position or policy orientation.

When analyzing the party's structure and organization, the emphasis should not be solely on the party membership, rather it should emphasize the leadership and its

relationship with the party's members. The overall structure and organization of the party will have an effect on the type of policy decisions that are made and are crucial for identifying and classifying the variation in NPPs' policy frameworks.

Moderating Variable - Moment of Political Opportunity

While the preceding context of a party's development is important, so too is the moment through which these parties form. Noted here as the "moment of political opportunity," parties form and can achieve strength within a particular political system as a response to some shift in state institutional structure(s) (Webb and White 2007: 9). These moments can serve as an additional critical choice point in the party's development. In critical juncture theory, it is argued that in a given moment a sudden shift will occur, allowing for a resetting of the political landscape and permitting new institutions or relationships to form (Capoccia and Keleman: 341). The moment of political opportunity in and of itself does not have to be a critical juncture, rather this shift in the political system can have a distinct emphasis on shaping the party's performance within a certain electoral period or with certain elements of society. Moreover, these moments of political opportunity can be endogenous and could include: an unusually unpredictable election, scandal within a government or particular party, institutional shift (i.e. joining an external organization like the European Union), or a change in the party system either through failure or collapse of opposing parties. Exogenous changes occur when outside forces shift the domestic political landscape causing the shift to occur. Exogenous changes within the context of party systems or the

CEE region can include: external influence by the European Union, international organizations (such as the IMF or the UN), or global superpowers; or can occur during moments of international crisis, such as the global economic crisis of 2008-2009 or the mass migration crisis within Europe from 2015-2017. Both forms of endogenous and exogenous shocks may have differing effects on the development of NPPs, but both provide a context through which NPPs can assert their perceived or actual threats as justification for their need for electoral success. While contextually important in explaining why NPPs might be successful at a given time, the *moment of political opportunity* provides a moment in which parties take advantage of fissures in the political scene; as well as a moment when their rhetorical claims are most useful in capturing voters. The reason the *moment of political opportunity* is seen as a moderating variable is that when present, it can change the exaggerate the effect of the political party in focus but is not needed for a party to achieve a particular outcome.

Potential Influence on Party Strength and Durability

The established party framework provides the basis for the types of electoral coalitions NPPs will seek to form; as a result, it has should have a direct connection to the party's strength and durability within a given political system. Weak parties will struggle to get representation within the national parliament and may not have consistent electoral returns from election to election. Moderate parties will earn consistent support from election to election but remain relatively weak as they are excluded from government coalitions or other political factions. Strong parties are those that have consistently

competed from election to election, earned significant support during elections, and formed a government or were the primary party in a government coalition.

This consideration of both strength and durability is important. Strength as a factor alone can be important, but if a party is inconsistently receiving support or has one good election that may unfairly bias any classification by strength only (Art 2011: 4).⁴² Moreover, since all of the states within CEE use a variation of proportional or mixed-member proportional electoral systems; the ability of the party to obtain a percentage of the vote within the electorate often translates to a similar representation among parliamentarians. Secondly, focusing on national parliamentary elections allows comparisons to be made across different political systems, as all countries within CEE are either parliamentary or hybrid presidential-parliamentary systems. Alternative measures of party strength would be in terms of parliamentary representation rather than vote count, but since the total number of parliamentary representatives may shift within a given country or the fact that none of the systems are majoritarian; limits the overall usefulness of using party representation as an indicator for party strength. Additionally, Art (2011) argues that party durability (defined as electoral persistence) is a more important feature than party strength and should be the focus of this study (4). While I

⁴² Art (2011) definition of “success” is similar to my definition of “strength,” where he argues that if a party receives 5% of votes in parliamentary elections, they are considered successful. My analysis is not as generous, in that I use parliamentary seats as a measure of whether a party can be successful and strength would be measured by the percentage of seats the party takes within the legislature and their ultimate ability to influence the legislative agenda.

believe durability is an important factor as it will lead to more formalized and institutionalized parties that can compete across numerous elections or have representatives participate within state institutions; durability may not capture the degree to which there may be a steady and consistent nationalist vote within a given state or country.

Conclusion

This chapter provides several tools for analyzing nationalist political parties. The theory presented above addresses how these parties can be assessed in terms of their political rhetoric and ideology and how that fits within the nationalist political party family. Pragmatic nationalist political parties have the largest opportunity for potential success since the party seeks to control the state and build broad coalitions. Radical nationalists, on the other hand, may have durability but struggle to gain power or a significant vote share since they are inherently limited by their rigid ideals and beliefs about national identity. Lastly, minority nationalist parties seek to protect their minority identity by advocating for their unique national identity within a state where the ethnocultural group is not the primary national or ethnic identity. As such, they may find strength in local or regional elections but will be relatively weak in national-level institutions. Each of these party types represents a unique approach to addressing the concerns of national identity, which can influence their competitiveness within the political arena.

CHAPTER 3

PRAGMATIC NATIONALISTS: FIDESZ – HUNGARIAN CIVIC PARTY

This chapter explores the first of the party types under examination – *pragmatic nationalist* parties. As noted in Chapter Two, the *pragmatic nationalist* framework is grounded in the belief that there is a singular national identity under threat and asserts a need to actively participate in state institutions to protect the nation and national identity. The focus of this chapter, therefore, is to explore the development of pragmatic nationalist political parties and in particular the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party⁴³. The chapter begins with the party's classification as a nationalist party. The remaining sections of the chapter aim to establish the theoretical components that allowed Fidesz to develop as a nationalist political party and provide a road map for examining the relationship between that development within the Hungarian political system and its classification within the typology presented here.

Fidesz, the party analyzed in this chapter, is identified and described as espousing the first of the three types of nationalist frameworks, namely *pragmatic nationalism*. *Pragmatic nationalism* is grounded in the belief that there is a singular national identity under threat to which parties that belong to this particular type of NPP will assert a need to actively participate in state institutions to protect the nation. To that end, the expectation is that on average pragmatic nationalist political parties will seek to gain power and participate in government, seek to establish a broad electorate to support their

⁴³ Hereafter referred to as Fidesz.

claims about the vulnerability of the state, and lastly, will be made up of a largely pragmatic membership that views access to power, favorability, and the ability to govern as more valuable than stated ideological principles or goals of the party. Furthermore, I contend that this might explain why pragmatic nationalists may best be able to capitalize on support from the electorate and are possibly more successful and durable than the competing NPP frameworks.

Is Fidesz a Nationalist Party?

Fidesz's development is unique in that the party's political positions and policy choices in 1990 have shifted during the approximately thirty years that are in focus here. As such, the party is often labeled as "conservative" or "center-right" for many years, with an eventual adaptation to "nationalist" around 2014.⁴⁴ However, these coding schemes (particularly the definition and classification system used by the Manifesto Research on Political Representation through 2022) use a narrow definition of what constitutes a nationalist political party in connection with the current assumptions about nationalist political parties being synonymous with far-right or fascist political organizations; misses a key element in thinking about party systems and the development of political parties (Krause, et. al 2018). As highlighted in Chapter One, rather than focusing primarily on party policy decisions to identify whether a party is nationalist or not, researchers should assess and evaluate the rhetorical elements of the party as well.

⁴⁴ In particular this is referring to the MARPOR determination that Fidesz is a "liberal conservative" party from its inception until 2014, where they begin to code it as a "nationalist" party.

The definition of nationalist political parties (NPP) that I use states that NPPs *prioritize a singular nation or national identity, expressing a belief that this nation or national identity is unique, and as such requires political action to ensure its protection and survival*. By focusing on the definition in this way, NPPs are seen as *issue-based* political parties because they do not have, or rely on, a set of core constituencies. Moreover, NPPs lack a central ideological claim on the traditional left-right political divide; instead, they have policy positions that occupy a variety of aspects of left-right politics.

The transformation of Fidesz from a liberal party to an NPP occurs in 1995 as definitionally the party meets two requirements. First, it does not occupy a clear ideological position other than being “liberal” and anti-communist⁴⁵, from 1990-1995 Fidesz defined themselves as the “liberal-center” of Hungarian politics with the MSZP on the left and the MDF and the Christian Democratic Party (FKPG) as the mainstream parties of the right (Wilkin 2016: 53).⁴⁶ Secondly, the party lacks a central clear constituency, with their popular support reaching into the single digits through most of the first half of the 1990s.⁴⁷ At the 1995 Congress, Fidesz officially changed their party

⁴⁵It is important to also note that all parties within Hungarian politics were essentially liberal. However, where they disagreed was on the speed and degree to which liberal policies should be implemented or should occur and the role of the state in protecting the interests of the public.

⁴⁶ Orban discusses his party’s positioning in a speech to the Liberal World Conference in November 1993.

⁴⁷ “Poll Reveals Ratings of Parties, Politicians” MTI News Agency reporting from the Magyar Nemzet newspaper in Budapest. 10 October 1995.

name to include “Hungarian Civic Action” which results in the strategic decision to craft their identity and messaging around a notion of what I would identify as *civic nationalism* and begin to work towards an alliance with civic-minded political parties in what was termed by party leader Viktor Orban as the “Civic Alliance.” Civic nationalism is an inclusive form of nationalism that includes members of the nation that adhere to a particular set of shared political values (Huntington 2004: 29). This turn towards the civic alliance was an attempt by Fidesz to argue that they are the best defenders of the Hungarian *citizens* (broadly defined).⁴⁸ This also provided the party with the flexibility to alter and adjust their party positions in contrast to the main parties of the liberal center and center-left. After the 1994 election, you can begin to see the repositioning of Fidesz, as they started to change their messaging focus on delivering for the “bourgeois class” and the “average Hungarian citizen.”⁴⁹ While it is also true that the party does become the leader of the center-right movement within Hungarian politics, as discussed later this is a strategic decision to run as a right-of-center party rather than one with any particular commitment to conservative or right-wing ideals (Fowler 2004a: 82; Oltay 2014: 184; Szabo 2015: 307-308; Wilkin 2016: 53-54).

The definition provided in chapter one also argues that NPPs are unique in their ability to capitalize on *actual or perceived threats* to the country or nation. As such, their rhetorical tools highlight “threats,” these threats are towards economic security, threats to

⁴⁸ *A Fidesz története*. Archiv.Fidesz.Hu. from <http://archiv.fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=60>

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

national sovereignty, and lastly, threats of cultural dilution. Examples of this can be seen through the rhetorical cues employed by Fidesz and their policies as they attempted to defend citizens from outside influence and protect the nation, as well as national symbols, by enshrining them into law (Wilkin 2016: 60-63; Fowler 2004b: 60-61). The years under communist rule, in addition to the economic upheaval of the 1990s set the stage for Fidesz to make claims about the lack of security in the Hungarian economy (Wilkin 2016: 57-58). Thus, economic security and independence became a key issue for Fidesz's transformation into an NPP in the critical period in the lead-up to the 1998 election and one of the key talking points while serving as the primary opposition from 2002-2010.⁵⁰ As an example, in 1997 Fidesz released a statement condemning the authorization of land acquisition by foreigners and demanded that the socialist-left government maintain the property for Hungarian citizens.⁵¹ In their election manifestos, Fidesz regularly tied the security of the nation to economic interests, viewing the two as deeply connected. Thus, the need and desire for establishing a strong military or security forces were seen as a key element in protecting economic interests within the country.⁵²

Fidesz under Orban's leadership was also highly focused on retaining Hungary's national sovereignty, at first, this was an openness to international bodies and

⁵⁰ *A Fidesz története*. Archiv.Fidesz.Hu. <http://archiv.fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=60>

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² See specifically the 2007 manifesto - *A Stronger Hungary: The Manifesto of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union*

organizations, including the European Union (EU) and the North American Treaty Organization (NATO), since these organizations were seen as able to protect Hungary and allow for economic development (Fowler 2004b: 74-76). As time progressed though, it became increasingly advantageous for Fidesz to take positions against the international community in “defense of the Hungarian nation” (Wilkin 2016: 81). This is where Fidesz took on the more traditional nationalist policies that included actively challenging ascension to the EU institutions and EU policies or through the rhetorical claims to eschew western neoliberal traditions in favor of made-in-Hungary solutions. These claims that outside influences (e.g., the EU, international neoliberal institutions, NATO, etc.) were, and will continue to be, a threat to national sovereignty in the eyes of Fidesz party leadership. As an example of this shift, Orban was a proponent of Hungary being admitted into the EU during the first government of 1998-2002 but began to shift his position and signaled his uneasiness with the EU ascension and the loss of national identity in the 2002- and 2006 Fidesz election manifestos.⁵³ Additionally, it is not unusual for Fidesz to make claims of their competitors selling out the state institutions to foreign interests, thus risking Hungary’s sovereignty. For example, the policy decisions left the center-left parties when in government led to criticism that they were not representing the Hungarian people but were subservient to international interests.⁵⁴

⁵³ Fidesz Party Manifestos for the 2002 and 2006 parliamentary elections.

⁵⁴ Orban argues that Hungary cannot be independent or welcomed in the EU with the economic policy of the government. This was in an interview on domestic politics in the Hungarian newspaper *Magyar Nemzet*, May 4, 1996.

Lastly, the most blatant rhetorical appeals to national identity have been around the national founding of the country and national symbols. For Fidesz, this has meant advocating for the inclusion and protection of cultural symbols such as the crown of St. Stephen or combining the imagery of the party and the state, adding claims about the role of King (later Saint) Stephen in the founding of the country around 1000 AD to the constitution and other national documents, as well as advocating for the protection of the culture of Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries (Wilkin 2016: 61; Fowler 2004a: 104). This included a notable change in Fidesz's policy to what Orban identified as a "renewal of liberal thinking" in which his government would focus on clarifying values, striving to preserve family values, national traditions, and cultural heritage.⁵⁵ This topic comes up again in later election manifestos, party policies, and speeches as Fidesz continued to develop over time. In particular, the rhetoric around the need to protect cultural heritage and national traditions becomes a common focal point for Fidesz after they form the government in 2010 (Wilkin 2016: 65-67).

Fidesz provides an interesting case study in examining the rhetoric of political parties that may fit within the nationalist political party family. Unlike other parties that fall under the NPP classification, Fidesz, and more broadly pragmatic nationalist political parties, have a keen ability to shift and shape their rhetorical approaches in a way that makes them seem as though they are the mainstream of politics, but in reality, surreptitiously promotes the more complex elements of nationalistic rhetoric.

⁵⁵ *A Fidesz története*. Archiv.Fidesz.Hu. <http://archiv.fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=60>

Conditions for Fidesz's Development

Initial Party Genesis (1989-1995)

The *Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Party* (formerly known as the Federation of Young Democrats and hereafter referred to only as *Fidesz*) was originally founded as pro-liberalization, pro-democracy, and an anti-communist youth movement in 1988 by Viktor Orban and several of his university classmates (Fowler 2004a: 85; Wilkin 2016: 50). The organization initially lacked any large-scale membership and was heavily governed by the founding members (Wilkin 2016: 50). This, however, changed over time as the organization later declared itself an official political party in the lead-up to the first post-communist parliamentary elections in 1990 and began to take on a more traditional hierarchical role that allowed Orban to increasingly take control of the party (Wilkin 2016: 50). After the first set of parliamentary elections in 1990, Fidesz earned approximately 9% of the popular vote and twenty-two seats (5.7%) in the national parliament.⁵⁶ Due to the fractured results of the first election, the party with the highest share of votes – the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) – sought to form a coalition with pro-liberalization parties including Fidesz (Nohlen and Stoeber 2010).⁵⁷ However,

⁵⁶ Manifesto Research on Political Representation (MARPOR) (2018)

⁵⁷ Six parties won seats in the 1990 election, with the Hungarian Democratic forum (MDF) winning the most seats (164 of 386) and 24.72% of the popular vote. The second party the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) won 94 seats and 21.40% of the popular vote. By comparison Fidesz came in fifth place among the six parties.

Fidesz refused overtures to join the center-right coalition government and chose to sit in opposition instead as a strategic decision to place the party as critical of both the degree to which liberalization should occur and to those parties as seen as carrying the remnants of the communist regime (Wilkin 2016: 52-53). In the 1994 election, Fidesz lost support earning 7% of the popular vote and twenty seats in parliament (Fowler 2004a: 85; Oltay 2014: 183). The Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), the successor to Hungary's former communist party was the winner of the 1994 elections, which had revitalized and consolidated left-wing support after the often tenuous rule of center-right political parties in Hungary from 1990-1994 (Fowler 2004a: 86; Oltay 2014: 183). The new success of the Socialist Party (MSZP), their coalition with the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), and the poor results from the campaign; pushed Fidesz's leadership to reevaluate how the party should position itself within the Hungarian political spectrum.⁵⁸

Early Development (1988-1991) - Critical Antecedents

As discussed in the previous chapter, NPPs develop under a set of three necessary conditions. The first condition is when there is a perceived weakness among the primary or main political parties. Before the critical choice point in 1995, Fidesz struggles to find a place within Hungary's crowded party system with the main political forces in

⁵⁸ Orban hints at this during an April 20, 1994 interview with the newspaper *Magyar Hirlap*, when asked by the journalist if the party could sustain four more years in opposition. Orban discussed the need for a coalition of non-socialists to be led by a liberal party (read as Fidesz-led) and the need to combat a socialist-led government at all costs.

Hungary, namely the center-right Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) - along with the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) and the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) on the center-left, positioning themselves as the successor parties in the post-communist regime. While these parties were the main parties in both the 1990 and 1994 elections, each suffered from internal problems that made them weak (Wittenberg 1999: 141-149). The governing MDF party and their coalition partners struggled during the initial post-communist government leading to economic decline and rapidly decreasing support among the populace. Wittenberg (1999) states that “there was enormous disappointment, bitterness, anger, and resentment...between 1990 and 1994” which led voters to “enormous swings in partisan preferences” (141). However, the only parties to see drastic shifts in support were the (then) opposition MSZP and the governing MDF parties (Wittenberg 1999: 142-143) . Moreover, Wittenberg (1999) highlights that there were several national-level instabilities in voting behavior found through survey research conducted from 1990-1994 (144-145). These instabilities can in part be blamed on the shifting political landscape, but also on the governing parties’ internal struggles and leadership conflicts that corrupted their messages during the 1994 election (Fowler 2004a: 83-85). The feeling of insecurity within the country around the center-right MDF government led voters to the MSZP which made a resurgence from the 1990 elections and, in a surprise upset, won a majority government; even though the party only won

33% of the popular vote.⁵⁹ However, there was also a level of distrust with the MSZP as they were the successor party to the former governing communist regime.⁶⁰ As a way of easing tensions about the return to the communist government, the MSZP invited the centrist SZDSZ to form a large center-left coalition. The MSZP also focused heavily on appeals to the international community, both as a means to pay down foreign debt, and to also increase foreign investment within the country. The MSZP actively believed that the key to solving the economic woes of democratic transition was to appeal to international businesses and organizations.⁶¹

The second condition is when the structure of the political system allows for new parties to exploit existing weaknesses. In analyzing this initial period, we can see the elements that set the stage for Fidesz's development due to the complications of the main

⁵⁹ While the MSZP was able to win the 1994 election with an outright majority, this does not exactly mean that they were a strong political party in relation to other parties in Hungary's political system. Gryzmala-Busse (2002: 183-186) for example highlights that the Hungarian Socialist party was strong in comparison to other communist successor parties in Central and Eastern Europe, this however, does not mean that the party did not struggle at the time.

⁶⁰ In a 1995 poll from the newspaper *Magyar Nemzet*, respondents ranked the MSZP as the least trustworthy political party. The same poll also found that the leader of the MSZP and the finance minister Lajos Borkros were seen as highly untrustworthy with more than half the population distrusting of the finance minister.

⁶¹ 1994 Election Manifesto - *For a Modern, Democratic Hungary: Manifesto of the Hungarian Socialist Party*

Table 3			
Party Share of Popular Vote – 1990 and 1994 National Assembly Elections ⁶²			
Party	% of Popular Vote in 1990	% of Popular Vote in 1994	Difference
MDF	24.7%	11.7%	-13.0%
SZDSZ	21.4%	19.7%	-1.7%
FKGP	11.7%	8.8%	-2.9%
MSZP	10.9%	33.0%	+22.1%
Fidesz	9.0%	7.0%	-2%
KDNP	6.5%	7%	+0.5%

political parties. Though the main parties won majorities or formed majority coalitions, this was largely due to shifting voting blocs among the electorate. As Table 3 above shows, there were large swings among the electoral with relatively little remaining stable. The inability of the center-right to form a cohesive message around liberalization and democratic rights left them to be easily exploitable by an external force (in this case Fidesz). The political and party system also fed this instability, as the broad swings that occurred politically between 1990 and 1998 exposed the notion that party support was volatile within Hungary in the initial post-communist period (Wittenberg 1999: 140). This helped to shape Fidesz's eventual transformation. If voters did not feel an allegiance toward any particular political party, then they could be swayed to support another party, specifically a revitalized Fidesz.

⁶² Wittenberg 1999: 158.

Lastly, NPPs develop when there is a perception of insufficient defense of national identity and a lack of protection of existing national symbols among the parties in the electoral system. The existing major parties did not have a message that spoke to the Hungarian citizen about the protection of Hungarian identity (Fowler 2004a: 86-88). The center-right coalition government of the early 1990s sought to make neoliberal reforms mimicking those adopted by President Reagan in the United States and Prime Minister Thatcher in the United Kingdom.⁶³ As such, they were seen as trying to appease international forces, rather than defending the Hungarian population. The center-left coalition suffered from the same problem as the parties tried to make reforms and establish themselves as an improved version of their communist past.⁶⁴ This desire to appeal to and win-over international observers exposed the existing political system to potential nationalistic appeals. The conditions combined with the malleability of Fidesz (and NPPs in general) allow for the weaknesses in the political system to be exploited. The lack of a consolidated center-right and lack of trust with the major center-left political parties presented Fidesz with the opportunity to exploit the major parties' weakness and eventually capture the center-right and obtain power in 1998.

The weakness in political preferences among the electorate and the relative volatility in support for the political parties provides Fidesz with the ability to build

⁶³ Programme of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) – 1990.

⁶⁴ 1994 Election Manifesto - "For a Modern, Democratic Hungary: Manifesto of the Hungarian Socialist Party"

support among the electorate, thus allowing them to go from 8-9% of support in 1994 and 1995 to 35% after the 1998 election (Fowler 2004a: 94-95). The shifts in party support are also emblematic of the changes that were made by Fidesz to focus on more “civic” national policies. This policy position allowed the party to be more adaptable in responding to changes within the political system. Moreover, the attempts by the 1990 and 1994 governments to appeal to particularly Western international observers, foreign investors that believed in neoliberal economic policy, and the European Union left them open to critiques that they inadequately represented the Hungarian nation and Hungarian national interests.

The critical antecedents provided the framework through which Fidesz sought to alter its party image and position within the Hungarian political system. The party’s opposition to the communist successor MSZP and the implosion of the main center-right political organization (the MDF) in the 1994 national elections, at such an early stage of the democratic transition, created an opening through which Orban and the party were able to find a way to break through.

Critical Choice Point - Change in Party Name and Reorganization (1995-1997)

The 1994 parliamentary elections and the 1995 Fidesz party conference set the stage for the transformation of Fidesz from a liberal party and organization to a

nationalistic one. After the collapse of the center-right in the 1994 elections⁶⁵ and the perceived acquiescence of the political elite to external interests, the leadership of Fidesz (especially party president Viktor Orban) argued that the party needed to take advantage of this opportunity by capitalizing on the perceived weakness of the center-right political parties (Oltay 2014: 184-185). The party leadership, under Orban, proposed that Fidesz make overtures to the center-right political parties in an attempt to have them work together to form a united opposition against the governing center-left coalition and communist successor parties (Oltay 2014: 184; Fowler 2004a: 86). However, at the 1995 party conference, the party leadership with the support of party members also sought to change the party's official name from the *Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ)* to the *Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Party*.⁶⁶ Here the emphasis on the 'civic' or citizen aspect of their policies allowed the party flexibility among the electorate as they could position themselves as intellectually vague, with an emphasis (at least superficially) to protect welfare provisions, while also cutting taxes for what was increasingly seen as the "sinking middle class" (Fowler 2004a: 86).⁶⁷ Positioning themselves in this way, the

⁶⁵ The governing MDF party loses 124 seats and becomes the third party in the Hungarian Parliament.

⁶⁶ *A Fidesz története*. Archiv.Fidesz.Hu. from <http://archiv.fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=60>

⁶⁷ This was noted as well in speeches and letters provided to delegates in the 1996 and 1997 Fidesz Party Congresses - *A Fidesz története*. Archiv.Fidesz.Hu. from <http://archiv.fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=60>

party gained mass appeal as both the answer to what was seen as the problems of post-communist development, but also with the continued notion of promoting national identity through civic connection (Fowler 2004a: 86).

After the adoption and development of Fidesz's connection to civic nationalism, their rhetorical appeals also began to change. It is during their time in opposition, especially after the Bokros package, that Fidesz began making moves from broad claims of civic nationalist ideals to appeals that focus on ethnic nationalism in their approach (Wilkin 2016: 65). The MSZP government introduced the "Bokros Package," a series of neoliberal reforms that were meant to shock economic development in 1996 (Wilkin 2016: 56). While overall effective, the initial results of this sweeping economic program hurt a large proportion of Hungarian middle and lower classes (Wilkin 2016: 57). This event and Fidesz's relative flexibility in party position allowed for the party to capitalize on the moment. Since the rebranding in 1995, the party moved to alter its organization and ideology of the party rapidly and fundamentally; with the eventual goal to consolidate power on the center-right and to reimagine themselves as the sole protector of the Hungarian citizens (Fowler 2004a: 86). As a result, Fidesz's support among the voting public began to grow (Wilkin 2016: 60). Also, during this time, Fidesz was working behind the scenes to formally unite the weakening right-wing parties against the left-wing government.⁶⁸ This was a microcosm of the changes that Fidesz, and more particularly the party leadership, began to make in shifting their goals and policy

⁶⁸ "Hungarian opposition Young Democrats redefine party line before congress." MTI news agency (Budapest, Hungary), April 13, 1997. *NewsBank: Access World News*.

orientations towards ‘traditional’ values, even going so far as to claim that “all good Hungarians should have three children” (Kiss 2002: 745). Wilkin (2016) notes that it was during the years leading up to the 1998 election, that Fidesz now used the abstract individualism of liberalism as an attack against the center-left government (54). Moreover, they criticized the government as being filled with ‘cosmopolitans’ and ‘intellectuals’ as being Budapest based and ‘foreign-hearted,’ which later became key claims made by extreme right-wing parties and codewords for deeper forms of intolerance and racism towards the Jewish and Roma populations (Wilkin 2016: 54). Fidesz began to shape their policies as a response to the actions of outsiders creating the “us vs. them” mentality that is common in nationalist discourse (Brubaker 2019: 7). Furthermore, Wilkin (2016) notes that it is during this period that Orban and Fidesz saw their policy goals as a means to take over the state to ensure the protection of the Hungarian people; by improving and expanding the middle class; and an emphasis on the family, nation, and god (55).

The shift in name and policy orientation ultimately allowed Fidesz to become a more agile and flexible party that aimed to represent the interests of the “Hungarian people” (Oltay 2014: 184). This is partially the result of Orban solidifying his power and control over the party apparatus. Thus, the statements and positioning by Orban quickly became Fidesz’s party policy positions, making the rhetorical claims of the party leadership predominantly synonymous with Fidesz’s actual party policies. This resulted in their eventual success in consolidating the center-right and their win in the 1998

parliamentary elections and providing the party with a base of support that has remained relatively consistent from 1998 through today.⁶⁹

The political maneuvering by Fidesz under Orban's control leads to their conversion from a radical liberal party to a conservative nationalist political party. This conversion becomes complete after the 1998 parliamentary elections; when Fidesz wins the largest share of the popular vote and leads a coalition government of right-wing political parties. From 1998-2002 Fidesz continued to consolidate center-right political parties as the competitor parties continued to weaken or were rocked by scandals.⁷⁰

Institutional Lock-in and Path-Dependent Features of Fidesz's Development

Fidesz in Government (1998-2002)

Dissatisfaction with the center-left's neoliberal policies and their connection as successor parties to the previous communist regime resulted in a drop in the center-left's popularity particularly among rural and industrial populations of Hungary's electorate in the 1998 National Assembly elections (Fowler 2004a: 90). Fidesz had come a long way from its small social movement structure in 1988 to become the governing party of 1998,

⁶⁹ While the party narrowly loses the 2002 and 2006 elections – they have never been below 40% in parliamentary elections since 2002.

⁷⁰ Fowler (2004b) and Oltay (2014) note that the Democratic Forum was unable to guarantee election to parliament unless they were formally connected to Fidesz in the 1998 and 2002 elections. The other junior coalition partner – the Independent Smallholders party – was able to obtain votes and seats without direct assistance from Fidesz, but the leadership gets significantly weakened by a political scandal involving their leader in 2000.

all while shedding its liberal ideology along the way, and reconstructing itself as a conservative party of civic nationalism (Wilkin 2016: 60). While Fidesz also supported neoliberal economic approaches; it was their historical opposition to communism and particularly the appeal of their “political and nationalist rhetoric” that won over this shifting demographic (Wilkin 2016: 60). After consolidating the MDF under the Civic Alliance banner, Fidesz formed a coalition with the remaining center-right political parties after the 1998 elections (Fowler 2004a: 89-90).⁷¹ The Fidesz-led coalition quickly worked to revamp the economic and political system by passing or completing forty of the forty-six proposed policies within the first two years of government.⁷² However, more conservative (and nationalistic factions) political movements of Fidesz, under Orban’s leadership, sought to solidify the support it had begun to receive within traditionally MSZP-supporting regions and areas of the country. Wilkin (2016) notes that within the first Fidesz government, Fidesz gained success by appealing to a political agenda that built up the image of Hungary as a victim of betrayal by cosmopolitan Hungarians and foreigners, and by articulating the idea that what was needed was a restoration of the real Hungary: Christian, conservative, and build around the family and the one true Hungarian nation-state (62).

⁷¹ *A Fidesz története*. Archiv.Fidesz.Hu. Retrieved January 30, 2023, from <http://archiv.fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=60>

⁷² *Ibid.*

An example of this surfaced around the government's intense focus on the millennial commemorations, which were to last from January 1, 2000, through August 20, 2001 (St. Stephens Day) (Fowler 2004b: 59). The millennial commemorations were to recognize the coronation of King Stephen in the year 1000/1001. The cultural mythology of the founding of Hungary is attached to this moment as it is interpreted to be the key point when the Hungarian people were recognized as a separate and unique population and received legitimation from the Pope and the Church in Europe. Fowler (2004b) argues that this legislative action was key to understanding the ways that the Fidesz-led government *strategically* and *deliberately* used cultural symbols to galvanize support and create a unique Hungarian identity (59). Furthermore, this allowed Fidesz to make a clear delineation from the center-left political parties that sought a more secular and 'modern' Hungarian identity.⁷³ The Fidesz-led government focused on newer issues of nation-culture, like the role of the treaty of Trianon in shrinking the presence of Hungary within the European continent and defending the interests of the Hungarian diaspora throughout CEE (Wilkin 2016: 63).⁷⁴

The transformation of Fidesz and Orban's political positioning continued throughout their time in government, ultimately culminating in the 2002 national election, which Fidesz narrowly lost to the MSZP. In that election, Orban's nationalistic

⁷³ During a speech on national image in 1999 Orban stated that "Hungarians should forget the need to 'invent' Hungary. Hungary was invented quite well enough a thousand years ago by St. Stephen himself" (Fowler 2004b: 57).

⁷⁴ See next chapter for additional discussion of the treaty of Trianon.

rhetoric blossomed to become a central part of his campaign (Wilkin 2016: 64). He was often seen draping himself in the flag-adorned stages at rallies and calling for a “war” to save the nation (Bozoki 2008: 211). Fidesz focused on policies that created “a greater economic living space for Hungarians, a provocation which was used to link him to Hitler by his opponents (Simon 2003: 89). Moreover, Orban argued that Hungarians needed to elect another Fidesz-led government to prevent the occupation of the state by the center-left opposition that [he argued] was largely in the pay of foreign capital and working with foreign finance and banking against the Hungarian nation (Wilkin 2016: 64). This hyper-nationalistic tone was seen by voters to be overly aggressive compared to the technocratic campaign of the socialists and is largely attributed to the government’s loss in that election (Bozoki 2008).

The hyper-nationalistic tone also came forth in the party’s 2002 election manifesto, which departed from the traditional language around liberalization and instead hit hard the message of “civic pride” and national identity. To touch on the connection between cultural symbolism and faith within Fidesz’s new nationalistic rhetoric, sections 32 and 33 respectively within the 2002 election program specifically call for significant investment in cultural artifacts ranging from statues and monuments to the creation of national museums and public squares to “bring the people together again” and provide a common, shared history of Hungarian culture.⁷⁵ Moreover, the program discusses the role of these cultural institutions in protecting the nation’s history and unique cultural

⁷⁵ Fidesz Election Program 2002 – *The Future has Begun*.

traditions. In section 33, titled “Faith is the Most Personal Public Affair,” Fidesz outlines its policies for using public funds to support and build up the relationship between state and “church” institutions.⁷⁶ Likewise, section 38 of Fidesz’s election program argued that Fidesz had a deep responsibility for protecting the Hungarian nation emphasizing that:

The borders of the Hungarian state and the nation do not coincide. This places an increased responsibility on Hungary. We [Fidesz as the government] built the institutional system of Hungarian-Hungarian cooperation. The Magyar Állandó Értekezlet (MÁÉRT), the joint and authoritative forum of Hungarian organizations across the border, Hungarian parliamentary parties, and the Hungarian government. We created the status law, which serves the cross-border reunification of the Hungarian nation. This success extends beyond national borders. The primary goal of the law is to enable Hungarians across the border to remain Hungarians in their homeland. Solving this long-standing problem in our environment will help to increase the stability of the region...*The vision of Fidesz is rooted in the multi-level integration of the Hungarian nation. National integration creates the opportunity for the Hungarian state to undertake a personal community with Hungarians across the border within the framework of the status law.*⁷⁷

While the 1998 election program for Fidesz placed more emphasis on the “civic” elements of their civic nationalism, there was a distinct policy turn that had occurred during the party’s time in government.

Fidesz’s first turn in government solidified the party as the main opposition to the center-left aligned political parties within Hungary, but more importantly, it solidified Fidesz’s move towards conservative nationalism (Wiklin 2016: 64). Viktor Orban’s desire to remain in power and remain in control of the institutions of the state led him to

⁷⁶ Fidesz Election Program 2002 – *The Future has Begun*.

⁷⁷ Italics are the party’s emphasis. From *The Future has Begun – Election Programme 2002*

continue to renew Fidesz's policies to take on a more nationalistic tone and structure (Wilkin 2016: 64-65). The consolidation of the right wing of the democratic transition under Fidesz's banner meant that not only did the party have to adopt the nationalistic rhetoric, but they also had to maintain their conservative image. The reward of achieving government solidified the movement of Fidesz both toward a more conservative ideology and also reasserted that there was success to be had in invoking the nationalistic imagination of Hungarians. This provides the mechanism for reproduction that is necessary for the path-dependent conditions to take hold and solidifies Fidesz's nationalistic orientation.

Fidesz Returns to Opposition (2002-2010)

In 2002 the party and the center-right more broadly returned to the opposition after narrowly losing the election to the coalition of center-left political parties.⁷⁸ During the time in opposition, Fidesz continued to consolidate the 'right' under its banner but also made moves to win support outside of urban areas in the industrial and rural heartland of Hungary.⁷⁹ Orban believed that they had a good chance of regaining government in the next set of parliamentary elections in 2006, as long as they continued to make inroads within rural communities around the country. As such, the *Civic Circles Movement* was founded in 2002 by Orban and was heavily supported by members of the

⁷⁸ Fidesz's Civic Alliance wins 41% of the vote and the most seats in parliament, but loses the opportunity to remain in government after the MSZP and SZDSZ form a center-left coalition.

⁷⁹ *A Fidesz története*. Archiv.Fidesz.Hu. from <http://archiv.fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=60>

Fidesz party after its defeat in the spring 2002 elections (Greskovits 2017: 2). At the founding rally, a short time after the election results were finalized, Orban urged his followers to accept the outcome and invited them to go through a “common soul-searching process” to promote the forces of “civic Hungary” and protect the nation (Greskovits 2017: 2). The Civic Circles Movement was an attempt to use civil society to make connections with voters around the country and it was a shrewd political tool to blend the political with a seemingly innocuous public service organization. In a speech to supporters, Orban made this request:

I ask you in the coming three months to form small groups of people, troops of friends, civic circles. What we need is not formal organizations, but to get together, join our forces and be on the alert. We need to launch hundreds of civic circles and companionships. Our force is in our numbers but it will become real power only if we can get organized. Our force become real only if we can create and organize the public sphere of civic Hungary. (Greskovits 2017: 3)⁸⁰

According to Bela Greskovits (2017), the use of the terminology around “circles” was extremely strategic on the part of Viktor Orban. Greskovits (2017) states “indeed, the ‘circles’ meant direct reference to ‘small circles of freedom,’ a catchword in Hungarian political parlance...the phrase was rich in historical connotations, as it denoted autonomous sites and networks of solidarity and safeguarding of interests” (3). By establishing this civil society organization, Orban, and Fidesz by extension, were able to make appeals to people throughout the country and regularly remain connected to their feelings and concerns about the government. This would allow Orban to keep supporters

⁸⁰ Orbán Viktor speech at Disz Square on 7th May 2002.

engaged in the years between the 2002-2006 parliamentary elections, while also building a coalition of supporters across the country. As Orban stated in his speech:

Civic Hungary is not one smaller or larger part of this country. It is the whole...Even if our parties and elected representatives might be in opposition in the parliament, we, all those present in this square, will not and cannot be in opposition, because it is impossible for the *nation* to be in opposition. It is only a government that may end up in opposition to its own people if it abandons acting in the nation's interest. (Greskovits 2017: 4)⁸¹

Through this quote, we can see Orban's use of increased nationalistic rhetoric and the use of civic nationalistic phrasing as a way to unite existing supporters and build coalitions with potential new supporters. The degree to which Fidesz and the Civic Circles Movement overlapped was not limited to the shared leadership of Viktor Orban. To be admitted to the Movement, all circles needed to register with the Democracy Center, which operated as a watchdog organization established by Fidesz during the 2002 parliamentary elections. The official coordinator of the Civic Circles Movement, Csaba Hende reported directly to Fidesz and was a former high-profile member of the conservative wing of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) (Greskovits 2017: 7).

While the focus was to try and break into new coalitions of support, the movement remained committed to Fidesz's early political goals of a robust middle class. Moreover, the effect of the Civic Circles Movement was geographically uneven throughout the country, it did have the significant effect of mobilizing, and at times radicalizing, supporters within the metropolitan middle class (Greskovits 2017: 7-8).

⁸¹ Quote from Viktor Orban's speech creating the Civic Circles Movement.

From 2002-2006, the radicalized right wing used the Civic Circles Movement to organize protests against the MSZP-led administration, even though economically and socially the country was relatively stable (Greskovits 2017: 12). At its peak in 2006, the movement had approximately 163 thousand members across approximately eleven thousand civic circle groups, which was more than the combined membership of all major Hungarian political parties (Greskovits 12).⁸² In addition to creating a substantial organization, the Movement united civil society groups that aligned with Fidesz's increasingly nationalistic identity. For example, Viktor Orban founded his own civic circle, *the Alliance for the Nation*, which was a collection of more than a dozen large religious, patriotic, political, professional, family, women, and youth organizations (Greskovtis 2017). The effort to construct and unify these coalitions in support of Fidesz and for the purpose of winning the next set of parliamentary elections in 2006 was the main impetus for founding the Civic Circles Movement.

The party continued to move right on the political spectrum and take on a more Euro-skeptic and nationalistic tone, Fidesz and Orban faced criticism from elements of the far-right as well. The Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP) was a supporter of the 1998-2002 Fidesz-led government, but the party suffered a major defeat in the 2002 parliamentary elections and was seen as ineffectual (Kovacs 2013: 224). The leadership

⁸² While this number is impressive, it is important to note that there were no formal membership rolls, so researchers have relied on reports by the Movement's chief organizer Csaba Hende. Greskovits (2017) argues that while the numbers are probably inflated the level of support within the Civic Circles Movement was significant compared to other civil society organizations (9).

of the MIEP actively blamed Fidesz for the loss of government in 2002. Additionally, a contingent of Fidesz's youth movement was growing increasingly unhappy with the direction of Fidesz and the leadership of Viktor Orban, especially after the loss in the 2002 election. As a result, in 2003 the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) was established as a breakaway party from Fidesz.⁸³ Since Jobbik is the subject of the next chapter they are not discussed in as much detail here. However, the rhetoric employed by both Jobbik and the MIEP worked to both pressure Orban and his leadership team to be politically more acerbic around issues of national identity and protection. So, while the 2002-2006 period was largely stable, the pressure from more nationalistic elements within the Hungarian system forced Fidesz to increase their rhetoric in advance of the 2006 parliamentary elections (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 189).

The success of creating and establishing the Civic Circles as well as the increased attention to nationalism (especially after EU ascension in 2004), Fidesz ultimately did not win the 2006 election, receiving 42% of the vote and falling behind the MSZP-SZDSZ coalition in both vote and seat totals. This was the first time in Central and Eastern Europe that a communist successor party won back-to-back parliamentary mandates. While the electoral pact between Jobbik and the MIEP ended after the 2006 election, Jobbik had proven to be a strong mobilizing element within the political far-right and continued to push Fidesz to radicalize its messaging (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 189).

⁸³ The MIEP and Jobbik form an electoral pact for the 2006 election. The parties do not perform well together and as a result decide to go their separate ways (Kovacs 2013: 224).

Kreko and Mayer (2016) argue that the rise of Jobbik from 2006 onward, posed an unprecedented challenge to the *one camp, one flag* policy of uniting the right under Fidesz and Orban's political banner (189-190). However, Orban saw value in the use of Jobbik as a foil to the messaging of Fidesz; on the one hand, Orban could argue that Fidesz was not as extreme or did not pose nearly the threat that Jobbik did, Orban stated in a 2007 interview with *Manager Magazin*:

There's no need to criticize the fact that right- and left-wing parties are trying to integrate radical voters even though these parties' policies are otherwise centrist. From a societal point of view, I see this as a benefit. It prevents Hungary from looking like other countries where radical forces are cropping up both the right and the left. God only knows how long these can be kept below the 20% level or how long they can exist within the framework of Europe's democratic traditions. (Orban 2007 quoted in Kreko and Mayer 2016: 189)

The quote above underscores not only the difference between Fidesz and Jobbik but more apropos to this study it underscores the difference in party membership between pragmatic and radical nationalist political parties.

From 2006 to 2010 the MSZP-led government suffered a series of fatal mistakes. Shortly after the 2006 election, it was revealed in a secret recording that the leader of the socialist party admitted to lying about the strength of the Hungarian economy to win votes in the election and that serious cuts would need to be made in the coming years to correct for this deficiency (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 189). This set off a series of major protests across the country with Fidesz and Jobbik actively fomenting the discord in society. In response to the protests, the Gyurcsany government and its police attempted to

suppress the demonstrations which only amplified the anti-government messages of Fidesz and Jobbik (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 189).

In 2007, those cuts were put into place, and they wreaked havoc on the Hungarian economy (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 189). This was only exacerbated by the 2008-2009 financial crisis and resulted in the falling out between the two major parties in the left-wing coalition. Moreover, Jobbik's increased rhetoric and scapegoating around the Roma population continued to push the rhetoric used by Fidesz further to the right as well (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 201). Likewise, the intervention by the European Union and the European Central Bank to stabilize economies across the continent placed pressure on Orban and Fidesz to take an increasingly anti-EU stance.⁸⁴

The instability of the 2006-2010 period sets the stage for the 2010 election, in which support for the MSZP collapsed and led to a win and a massive majority of support for nationalist parties in both the popular vote and parliamentary seats.⁸⁵ As a result, the Orban led the Fidesz government and began to remake the state in the way that it believed policy and institutions should be structured. In doing so, Fidesz also took steps to scapegoat groups within Hungarian society at large – the powerful and well-connected

⁸⁴ See Fidesz's party program for the 2009 European parliamentary elections. The first chapter of the program begins with the phrase "Understandable Disappointment in Hungary" and perceived wrongs or disappointments that have stemmed from membership within the EU.

⁸⁵ Fidesz takes approximately 52.7% of the vote and 68% of the seats in parliament, while Jobbik secures around 16.6% of the popular vote and 12% of the seats in parliament.

(Hungarian Parties of the Left, the EU, and multinational organizations) and groups with little power or recognition (ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, and the unemployed) (Wilkin 2016: 66). It is during their first and second terms in government that we begin to see Fidesz's complete transition to a particularly conservative and ethnocentric variant of nationalism.

Fidesz's Revitalization and Takeover of the Hungarian State (2010-present)

The dramatic success of the nationalists within the Hungarian political system, but also the sheer super-majority of support for nationalistic measures within parliament provided Fidesz with the opportunity to solidify support and ensure that the party remains in control of politics within the Hungarian system. By 2012, less than two years after taking office, the Fidesz government had passed over 200 pieces of legislation and rewrote the national constitution (Pytlas 2013: 179). Within the constitution, some of the major changes made by the Fidesz government were to formally legislate a defined understanding of national identity. The 2011 constitution states in the preamble that the state is responsible for “promoting and safeguarding our heritage, our unique language, Hungarian culture, the languages and cultures of nationalities living in Hungary, along with all man-made and natural assets of the Carpathian basin” (Pytlas 2013: 176)⁸⁶ Additionally, the government added a new article to the constitution – Article D – which focused on the needed survival of a singular Hungarian nation and identity, stating specifically that:

⁸⁶ Hungarian Constitution as quoted in Pytlas (2013).

Bearing in mind that there is one single Hungarian nation that belongs together, Hungary shall bear responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders and shall facilitate the survival and development of those communities; it shall support their efforts to preserve their Hungarian identity, the assertion of their individual and collective rights, the establishment of their community self-governments, and their prosperity in their native lands, and shall promote their cooperation with each other and with Hungary. (Pytlas 2013: 177)⁸⁷

Moreover, the government passed a series of laws about who could qualify as a Hungarian national. No longer were individuals able to easily claim their status as a Hungarian national by possessing a Hungarian National Identification Card, but they needed to speak and understand Hungarian (Pytlas 2013: 177).

In addition to these measures around identity, Fidesz also took steps to alter the electoral system in ways that favor the party and disadvantage its opponents. Jakli and Stenberg (2021) argue that the key to Fidesz's success after the 2010 election was the party's unique ability to navigate the institutions of the state and implement a series of changes at the subnational level (317, 330). More specifically, Jackli and Stenberg (2021) state that it was Fidesz's ability to limit the opportunities for political contestation by adjusting the means for qualifying for elections, adjusting the thresholds for seats in parliament, and also through reconstructing electoral districts through the reduction of the overall number of members of parliament (317-321). Moreover, changes in the constitution as well as general adjustments to overall oversight of the government have allowed Fidesz to remain successful. Similarly, the Fidesz government of 2010-2014

⁸⁷ Article D of the 2011 Hungarian Constitution.

went to great lengths to dampen the success of Jobbik; as Orban saw Jobbik as a potential problem for future success. Bocksei and Molnar (2019) found that between 2010 and 2014 the Fidesz government had passed several laws that codified pledges from Jobbik's 2010 party program, rather than the positions noted within Fidesz's form (9-15).⁸⁸ While the authors are cautious to state that there is a specific strategy for the adoption of Jobbik's policies, noting that the role of the opposition can have a unique ability in agenda setting, it is worth noting that the government wrote laws with a particularly radical element to them (Bocksei and Molnar 2019: 9-10). Both in government, and campaigning for office, Fidesz has continually taken on a more nationalistic structure often criticizing foreign elites, like George Soros, for undermining Hungarian identity; attacking the institutions of the EU as corrupt and self-interested institutions; and asserting Hungary's independence by looking eastward for international alliances.⁸⁹

The time that Fidesz spent in government from 1998-2002 solidified their stance as a nationalistic party, albeit one that espoused a decidedly civic form of nationalism. As noted in the previous section the adoption of nationalist policies took on a path-dependent structure in which the party needed to continue to represent nationalistic interests to maintain their support among the electorate, as well as differentiate themselves from the main opposition MSZP. The arrival of Jobbik and the challenges of the 2006-2010 period

⁸⁸ Though the authors note that the Jobbik party program was much more detailed and longer than Fidesz's for the 2010 election.

⁸⁹ These were central arguments within Fidesz advertisements in the 2018 parliamentary elections.

continued to reward Fidesz for their increasingly divisive and ethnically driven nationalistic rhetoric, which one could argue led to their eventual success in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Its astounding success in that election and the party's knowledge of the institutional structures of the state provided Orbán and Fidesz the means to solidify its domination within contemporary Hungarian politics.

What Makes Fidesz a Pragmatic Nationalist Party?

Earlier in the chapter, I noted that Fidesz was representative of the pragmatic nationalist policy framework. This framework argues that a political party's policies will be grounded in the belief that there is a singular national identity under threat to which parties that belong to this NPP will assert a need to actively participate in state institutions to protect the nation. To that end, the expectation is that on average pragmatic nationalist political parties will seek to gain power and participate in government, seek to establish a broad electorate to support their claims about the vulnerability of the state, and lastly, will be made up of a largely pragmatic membership that views access to power, favorability, and the ability to govern as more valuable than stated ideological principles or goals of the party. All these characteristics can be seen through the development of Fidesz as a political force within Hungarian politics.

The rhetoric employed by Fidesz throughout their development emphasized the need to focus and make decisions that promoted and protected the Hungarian nation (Fowler 2004a: 104; Fowler 2004b: 60-61; Wilkin 2016: 60). This emphasis changes over time, with a focus on liberalization policies in the 1990s, to the more protectionist policies of the 2000s, and the more extreme anti-EU and anti-West attitudes of the 2010s.

In addition to the views that the party is the only one capable of protecting the national identity, the pragmatic nationalist framework argues that parties adhering to this framework will seek to actively participate within state institutions rather than seek to replace or overthrow them. This was most evident in the period from 2002-2010, where Fidesz continually adopted more extreme nationalistic rhetoric, but actively sought and promoted the idea of returning to the government to “fix” the problems with the institutions of the state (Kreko and Mayer 2016). As noted earlier in the chapter, when the party first comes to power in 1998, they use the mechanisms of the state to make changes to the laws and restructure parts of society (Fowler 2004b: 61). Though limited by their size in the coalition government of 1998-2002, that changed in 2010 when the party wins an overwhelming majority. The experience as the main opposition party and party leadership’s previous stint in government prepared the party to use (or “fix”) the state institutions to their benefit (Pytlas 2013: 176). This was most evident in the scope and pace of legal changes made in the first few years of the 2010-2014 government (Pytlas 2013: 176). Fidesz’s adept ability to maneuver through parliamentary politics displays an adeptness that is unique to the pragmatic nationalist framework.

One of the key components of the pragmatic nationalist framework is that political parties identified as such will have a pragmatic party membership that seeks power, influence, and the ability to govern as the strategic goals of the party. This differs from the other policy frameworks discussed in Chapter Two and discussed in the later chapters of the dissertation. Where radical nationalists seek to overthrow the state and dramatically reshape it and minority nationalists seek to have representation within state

institutions (and maybe some regional autonomy), pragmatic nationalists see value in operating within the state structures that are already present. As a result of this, party membership views the primary means for protecting the nation through winning national elections. As such, this requires a pragmatic approach to politics in which some compromises need to be made around party decisions in order to achieve electoral success. This is evident within Fidesz's development as well. The rebranding of the party in 1995, the move toward the center-right as a strategic vote-getting strategy from 1996-1998, and the party's willingness to make policy moves in line with party leadership (particularly in line with Orban's rhetoric and policy positions) displays a level of adaptability that is unique to parties within the pragmatic nationalist framework.

While the party membership's approach to policy positions is important, so too is the leadership of the party. However, there is little difference among policy frameworks with regard to leadership structure. In line with Kirchheimer (1966: 198-200) and Mudde (2007: 260-262), Fidesz is dominated by a centralized leadership team and figure in Viktor Orban. Viktor Orban has been the main architect of Fidesz's political maneuvers since the party's founding in the 1990 election. Even in the few occurrences when Orban did not serve as the party's chairman or president, he was still a key influence in the drafting and constructing of party policy.⁹⁰ Though not unique among the different party frameworks, this underscores the pragmatic nature through which the Fidesz party membership regularly adapted their policy positions to that of the leader. Under the

⁹⁰ *A Fidesz története*. Archiv.Fidesz.Hu. from <http://archiv.fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=60>

radical nationalist policy framework for example, where the party membership is more grassroots focused and adheres to a more purist interpretation of party policy, leadership is granted some room to adapt and change policy positions but will be disciplined by the party if they are seen to compromise or radically shift party policies.

Lastly, the key elements of the pragmatic party framework are the ability of the party to respond, adapt, or take advantage of changes within the political environment. As discussed throughout this chapter, through Fidesz's development there has been a regular adjustment of party policy and an adaptation to the current political climate in a way that is unique to this particular party framework. Whether it was the decision to rebrand the party in 1995, the consolidation of the political right from 1996-2002, the clever juxtaposition of Fidesz party policies against Jobbik's more extreme nationalist forces within the political system, or the pilfering of Jobbik's policies when they return to government in 2010, Fidesz and its party leadership have displayed an uncanny ability to respond to the political environment and shape their policies as a result (Oltay 2014: 197).

Pragmatic Nationalist Parties – Possible Outcomes

The desire to govern and the willingness to work within the political institutions of the state shape how pragmatic nationalist political parties approach the electorate and structure their party policies. This leads to the strategic need to build broad coalitions of support among the electorate to obtain the votes necessary to achieve electoral success. This is one aspect that makes pragmatic nationalists different from their radical and minority nationalist counterparts. While not central to the research discussed here,

Fidesz's adaptability and distinct approach to crafting its image around inclusive policies of civic nationalism, provided them with the best ability to construct a broad electorate of voters in comparison to other nationalist political parties within the Hungarian political system. Considering this, Fidesz's success may indicate that there is a connection between the type of nationalist policy orientation, in this case, pragmatic nationalism, and the possible success parties within this policy framework might have within other political systems and may help researchers identify and potentially predict the behavior of these parties.

Conclusion

Pragmatic nationalist political parties are adept organizations with the ability to act in response to the changing political landscape. The choice to form or mold their party identity springs from the perceived weaknesses in the political system, as well as their ability to capitalize on the desire of the population to feel like politicians and governments are representing their needs. Fidesz's focus on identifying and maintaining cultural symbols, policy positions of both instituting neoliberal reforms and reinforcing strong ethno-nationalist sentiments and their overall flexibility in responding to crises both domestically and abroad place them as an exemplar for the potential of parties within the pragmatic nationalist framework (Fowler 2004a; Oltay 2014; Wilkin 2016).

Furthermore, by thinking about Fidesz as a nationalist political party it allows for greater clarity in approaching the party's policy positions or behavior. As noted above, scholars have struggled with how to define or deal with Fidesz, grouping the party with populists, far-right extremists, and authoritarian-minded political parties across the

political spectrum (Mudde 2007: 44). By classifying the party as a nationalist party, social scientists can assess and analyze the party from a unique position which may not only help to distinguish Fidesz from other parties but also explain their sometimes-incoherent policy positions.

The flexibility and adaptability of pragmatic nationalist parties like Fidesz also helps to underscore their difference from the other nationalist policy frameworks employed by other parties. Fidesz's ability to respond quickly to changing political circumstances, and take advantage of political moments of opportunity make their potential for success possible. This *pragmatic* approach to party organization and policy also helps to distinguish the advantage pragmatic nationalist political parties have against the other variants discussed in the subsequent chapters. Radical nationalists are often weighed down by the *purist* elements of the party, limiting their ability to adapt to changes, grow party support among the electorate, or take advantage of moments of opportunity. Similarly, the function and ability of minority nationalist parties to operate in the domestic political arena are limited by identity, regional, or limited support base. This underscores both the promise and peril of pragmatic nationalist parties – as they have the greatest potential for success at the ballot box, but also a greater likelihood of being susceptible to more extreme elements of party politics.

CHAPTER 4

RADICAL NATIONALISTS: JOBBIK

In 2003, a new political party entered the Hungarian political scene – The Movement for a Better Hungary or as it is better known as *Jobbik* (Kovacs 2013: 224). Early members and leadership of Jobbik expressed a desire for a stronger grassroots political party within the Hungarian political system, since the other right-wing political parties on the scene, Fidesz and the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIEP)⁹¹, were viewed as elitist and ineffectual. As an example of this, the weakness of the MIEP proved pivotal for Jobbik’s entry into the political fray. At its peak, the MIEP was able to send only fourteen members (of 399 seats) to the legislature in 1998, while failing to win seats in either of the elections held before 1998 or the elections that followed. Jobbik’s leadership argued that MIEP’s elite-led political party of the democratic transition, as well as the party’s poor performance at the polls, created an opening for the new grassroots-led political organization like Jobbik (Wilkin 2016: 97). Aside from presenting a political party that was seen as devoid of the traditional elite political class, Jobbik’s leadership proclaimed to be the only party willing to address what many within the movement and the party saw as the primary concern – the Roma and broader immigrant population. In Hungary, the Roma make up approximately 5-8% of the population and are viewed as a subordinate class of individuals within the country (Kovacs 2013: 225). Members of Jobbik argue that the Roma, the European Union, and Jewish populations of

⁹¹ Hereafter referred to as the MIEP.

Europe, were the main reasons for Hungary's struggle in the transition to liberal democracy. Therefore, party members sought to actively exclude the Roma population from Hungary and work to protect Hungary from outside influences. Leaders of Jobbik also argued that the more dominant Fidesz party did not actively do enough to support the Hungarian people, prevent ascension to the European Union, or protect Hungarian identity; and most importantly were not willing to take the drastic steps needed to address these concerns (Wilkin 2016: 97).

Jobbik is an example of the second type of nationalist political party – *radical nationalist* – as they hold a fundamental belief that the state and its political system need to be overhauled to ensure the protection of the Hungarian people from outside influence at any cost. This chapter examines Jobbik's development from a student-led social movement to a radical troublemaker and second-largest political party in Hungary following the 2010 election (Kovacs 2013 224). As Jobbik is presented as an ideal type for radical nationalist political parties, the party also provides context for how different types of nationalist political parties can develop and compete within the same political system. This provides an interesting comparison to explore the differences in rhetoric and party strategy used by radical nationalists versus their *pragmatic nationalist* competitors. This chapter proceeds by first providing evidence that Jobbik is a radical nationalist political party by exploring the rhetoric, strategic decisions of the party's leadership, and policy positions taken by the party. Then the chapter addresses the theoretical implications of this identification by analyzing the party's performance in national parliamentary elections. Lastly, the chapter concludes by demonstrating that the

performance of Jobbik is due to the party type (radical nationalist) rather than other factors.

Radical Nationalist Parties

Differing from their *pragmatic* and *minority* nationalist counterparts, *radical nationalists* form within the political and ideological extremes of a given political system. Radical nationalist parties fundamentally espouse three beliefs, first that there is an *exclusive long-standing singular* national identity that is under threat. Secondly, the party members argue that there is a need to protect members of the nation, not only from those that pose a threat outside of the nation but also from particular communities domestically as well. Lastly, to achieve their political goals, radical nationalists advocate for the complete overhaul of government and policy institutions for both the purposes of establishing order in society and returning the cultural and political institutions back to their perceived former historical relevance.

The belief in a long-standing singular national identity is not unique to radical nationalists, as the recognition of the symbolic legacy of national identity was important to pragmatic nationalists as well. However, what makes radicals different is their firm belief in cultural and national purity; that is to say, that national identity is not and should not be inclusive of *all* (though *any* could also apply here) ethnic groups within the nation-state. This exclusionary policy is a necessary requirement for radical nationalists. Their overwhelming concern for the state, the nation, and its people – means that only those who truly belong, and truly espouse the virtues of the nation are permitted to take part and more importantly, can be trusted. The consequence of this exclusionary policy is that

all outsiders (both physically outside the nation and those not included within the defined ethnic-national background) are perceived as a threat and, in accordance with the party's goals, need to be removed or prevented from participating within the political system.

The desire to define the community around shared historical and cultural experiences is not new to nationalist movements or political parties; however, what makes radical nationalists unique in their efforts is to define those boundaries by both those internal to the national structure, such as minority ethnic groups, so-termed 'internationalists' or 'liberals' in society, as well as those that are seen as members of the elite in society not acting in the best interests of the national population (Brubaker 2019: 9). The external threats are similar as well. Migrant communities, [resettled] citizens of the European Union, Western European and international elites, and international institutions all are seen as potential threats to the preservation and maintenance of the unique cultural, historical, and social structure that makes up the national identity (Wilkin 2016: 98). The level of skepticism directed towards outsiders provides the basis for the party's political positioning.

Lastly, radical nationalists espouse a belief that the state and its institutions, as they are currently structured, are not sufficient for protecting national identity. Therefore, they advocate an active role in dismantling and rebuilding the state structure. It is this belief that often has *radical nationalist* parties as presented here as often classified or identified as "far-right" or "neo-fascist parties." While this is possible under my typology, I also do not limit the possibility that radical nationalist political parties do not have to only occupy the traditional "far-right" of the political spectrum. Rather, under

this understanding of the three elements of radical nationalists' policy positions, I also argue that nationalists from the left of the political spectrum can also argue that the state institutions are not doing enough to protect the national identity and argue for a need to dismantle the state.

Radical Nationalist Parties - Electoral Goals

Jobbik's stance on defining Hungarian identity as exclusionary of immigrant and minority groups within the nation leads to a necessarily narrow electorate (Kovacs 2013: 226; Wilkin 2016: 98). As a result, Jobbik politicians espouse the desire to remake the state but are not certain to obtain enough support to govern or gain power on their own (Kovacs 2013: 226). This is indicative of radical nationalist political parties as a group – where the focus is on the *purity* of their political beliefs over the more *pragmatic* approach to constructing their message and policies to attract broad support nationally. Moreover, while a majority of voters may be inclined to support nationalist political parties⁹², some have expressed uneasiness with the way the more extreme or fringe party positions that radical nationalist parties have taken on. An excellent example of this is Jobbik's support and coordination with the militia organization – the Magyar Garda, which is discussed in more detail later in the chapter (Molnar 2019: 228-231). The exclusionary policies coupled with the activist and devoted party membership have a limiting effect on the ultimate strength and durability of radical nationalist political

⁹² As indicated by voter support for Fidesz and Jobbik in national elections, both of which are identified as nationalist political parties.

parties. Unlike pragmatic nationalist parties, radical nationalists sometimes struggle to respond to the shifts in the political arena or merely remain focused on their policy objectives and goals, whether they align with the population and the political situation or not. The result of the strict adherence to their positions and policy positions means that there is a limit on the overall amount of support the party can receive over time. What this then ends up looking like for a party like Jobbik is a ceiling to the amount of potential support a party can achieve. The ceiling in this particular case seems limited at its highest to approximately 20% of voter support, with the most common electoral result ranging between 6-10% of voter support and will vary by political context (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 149).⁹³ As a result, radical nationalist political parties generally have the ability to become a small faction within a legislature and may participate in government through the means of a coalition, but the likelihood of individual success (i.e., such as capturing government) is low. As to durability, there is some expected idiosyncrasy as to whether radical nationalist political parties are able to remain durable over time. Jobbik is a good example of this, as the party was able to remain active even after its dismal electoral results, whereas the MIEP was not able to maintain its support over time. Thus, the ability to remain durable over time requires a constituency and party membership that is accessible and generally supportive of the party's policies.

⁹³ See section on the broad analysis of Central and Eastern European election results. Jobbik is one of the few parties that perform at the highest levels as Biro-Nagy & Rona note "Jobbik is probably the only radical right party which has not considered a 17% election result a great success" (149).

Conditions for Jobbik's Development

In chapter two, I discussed that three necessary antecedent conditions lead to the development of nationalist political parties. The first antecedent condition is there is a perceived weakness of the party's competitors. The leadership of Jobbik's frustration with the center-right political coalition's loss in the 2002 parliamentary elections, as well as the collapse in support for the MIEP, displayed a weakness that the Jobbik's leadership thought they could exploit (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 152). The early leadership of Jobbik argued that the existing political parties, especially on the center-right, were complicit in the failed policies of both the democratic transition after the fall of the communist government and the "transition" into a new and independent country free from foreign interference during the Fidesz government of the late 1990s. Additionally, the younger populations felt increasingly distant from the parties of the democratic transition, as Biro-Nagy and Rona (2013) note:

The disenchantment with Fidesz, in itself, should not have necessarily led to the foundation of a new party. The rightist youngsters could have chosen MIEP too. The old radical party, however, was unable to integrate a wide range of new supporters and did not show any signs of renewal either...MIEP policy was too one-sided for them as well: the party [MIEP] based its strategy exclusively on conspiratorial theories and open anti-Semitism. (152)

This narrow focus of the MIEP, their inability to marshal support around a coherent set of ideas, and an increasingly perceived out-of-touch leadership became a fundamental argument for the establishment of Jobbik as the radical alternative (Wilkins 2016: 84; Kreko and Mayer 2016: 184; Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 151). The second condition is a perceived apathy by the electorate towards the parties already within the electoral system

or anger towards those parties driving voters to be wary of them. Jobbik leadership felt that the loss of support for the MIEP was an example of public dissatisfaction with the party. Moreover, as a civil society organization, the student group which eventually became the Jobbik political party, viewed Fidesz's capitulation after the 2002 election as an example of their embeddedness and continuation of the dominance of Hungarian politics by pre-1990 elites. As a result, Jobbik members argued that the loss of the right-wing parties in 2002, was a rejection by the voters. The third and final condition is that the new party (Jobbik in this case) perceives that there is an insufficient defense of the nation by the existing political parties. As Andras Kovacs (2013) notes "Jobbik disputed the reality of the transition and claimed that, despite superficial changes, there existed a hidden continuity between the pre-1990 'old' regime and the post-1990 [Hungarian political] system" (225). Furthermore, they note in a speech from prominent party member Kristina Morvai, that "the task is to reconquer Hungary from those who do not recognize common values and common principles [of the Hungarian people]" (Kovacs 2013: 226). The existing party's perceived continuation of the pre-1990 regime, had the seeming inability to properly establish a national Hungarian state and prevent the interference of outside forces from the global community. This is a critical element to the radical nature of Jobbik, as they view the system itself as flawed and identify a need for the system to be restructured (Kovacs 2013: 224).

While all three necessary conditions are present here, there is an additional aspect where Jobbik and Fidesz are two nationalist political parties competing within the same political arena for the same set of nationalistic voters. Horowitz (1985) notes that when

studying ethnic groups, there can be a competition for support and an attempt to appear as better defenders of the identity in comparison to other ethnic groups or organizations. Sherrill Stroschein has applied this theory in her research to ethnic and nationalist minority political parties in Romania, arguing that when there is a concentration of ethnic or nationalist group ideology within a particular area, multiple parties may emerge with some attempting to be more extreme than others (Stroschein 2011: 190; Koev 2019: 233). Since the population of Hungary is predominantly of Hungarian ethnicity, I would argue that in addition to the necessary conditions noted above, it is not surprising that within the Hungarian context, an additional nationalist political party would not only emerge but identify itself as the more radical and 'true' protector of the national identity. These factors help to explain why Jobbik enters into the political arena and begins competing for support among the electorate. Therefore, once a party has made its entrance into the political arena, they need to identify and solidify what its policies are and where they fit within the dynamics of that system which is discussed in the sections below.

Jobbik's Founding and Early Development (2002-2006)

Similar to the start of Fidesz, Jobbik began in 2002 as a student movement that supported Christian values and a more outspoken set of policies about their particular concerns about those running the country and working through the 'First Transition' (Wilkin 2016: 97-98). At first, the movement was supportive of the Fidesz-led right-wing coalition government. However, after the loss of government in 2002 to the communist successor party, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), their support began to wane. The

leadership of the organization began to argue that too many within the leadership and government of Fidesz were individuals that were active in the democratic transition, the writing of the perceived flawed constitution, and democratic government post-transition. It was assumed that as a party Fidesz was dominated by the elite and not attuned to the particular concerns of the nation. Moreover, the fact that Fidesz was unsuccessful in preventing the election of the socialists in the 2002 election, only underscored their inability to protect the country (Wilkin 2016: 97-98). Additionally, the far-right MIEP party's inability to gain traction in the 1990s and its inability to win seats in the 2002 election created the opening for a new party and organization to court those particular voters (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 151; Wilkin 2016: 98).

After the 2002 election, while Fidesz was seeking to establish an arm of the party within civil society, the leadership of Jobbik was invited to take part in the “discussion circles” being established by Viktor Orban (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 150). Jobbik's second leader Gabor Vona initially formed a close relationship with Orban through these groups; however, they had a falling out prior to the establishment of Jobbik as a political party and organization. Unhappy with the direction of Fidesz and other national political parties, Jobbik – The Movement for a Better Hungary, became an official party in October of 2003. Initial leadership of the party went to academic and historian David Kovacs (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 151). Under Kovacs, the party became outspoken critics of the MSZP-led government and the opposition led by Fidesz (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 151). From 2004-2005 there were several attempts to create a united right-leaning coalition; however, Fidesz and Jobbik rejected those approaches (Wilkin 2016:

98). Then in 2006, Jobbik formed an electoral coalition with the far-right (and previous opponent) MIEP in which they agreed to work together through the next election that was set to occur that year (Kovacs 2013: 224). While Jobbik and the MIEP had similar policy positions on Hungarian culture, immigration, and national identity, they differed greatly on how best to bring about those changes (Kovacs 2013: 225-226; Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 150-151). Moreover, there was a cultural and generational difference within the party structures in that the MIEP had existed during the democratic transition and whose leadership was dominated by elites from the communist era (Kovacs 2013: 226; Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 151). Jobbik was different in that it was largely youth-led and took issue, not only with the former communist regime but also with what they viewed as the failed democratic transition in the 1990s (Kovacs 2013: 226). As noted, naturally Jobbik accused the moderate/liberal MDF and MSZP governments of the early 1990s of their part in the failed transition, but members of Jobbik also were unhappy with the level of corruption and perceived complicity by Fidesz and the MIEP in contributing to the failed transition (Kovacs 2013: 226).

In the 2006 parliamentary election, the Third Way Alliance which consisted of Jobbik and the MIEP only received 2.2% of the vote and failed to gain any seats in the national parliament (Kovacs 2013: 224). Jobbik officials blamed the MIEP for the lack of success and sought to change direction. This led to the replacement of David Kovacs as their leader, with the younger and more strident activist Gabor Vona taking over the helm (Kovacs 2013: 226). The post-election period of 2006 and the new leadership of Gabor Vona begins a period of dramatic change for the party, not only in terms of their

perceived support throughout the country but also a change in the style and substance of the party and the party's political positions.

Critical Choice Point – the 2006 Parliamentary Election

The 2006 parliamentary election in Hungary was historic and consequential as it proved to be a critical moment in the post-democratic development of Hungarian politics. First, the coalition government led by the MSZP was the first government to be re-elected since democratic elections were first held in 1990 marking a significant milestone for the socialist and liberal parties (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 150-151). Second, support for the major right-wing parties (Fidesz and the KDNP) also saw an increase in vote share nationally, but a small decline in seats in parliament. This helped to embolden Fidesz, and Orban more specifically, to put more pressure on the socialist government and aim to capture more of the right-wing vote. Third, the failure to win any seats and the further collapse in votes for the MIEP led to a dissolution of the Third Way and ultimately the political death of the MIEP (Kovacs 2013: 224).

The 2006 parliamentary elections were important to the development of Jobbik, as the party began to find its message and footing in response to the Öszöd speech given by the reelected Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 151-152). In what was supposed to be a private speech to members of the MSZP at an annual conference several months after the 2006 election, the Prime Minister was recorded saying that the parties of the left had lied about the state of the country, policy accomplishments, and the state of the country's finances during the election (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 151). The release of the speech was widely condemned by Jobbik and

other parties on the right. This led to mass protests and demands for Gyurcsany to resign (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 151-152). Jobbik's party leaders and its supporters became heavily involved in the protests providing the party with a means to catch the attention of Hungarian media and new supporters (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 151). It was in the aftermath of the 2006 elections that Jobbik changed leadership and selected the young, radical, and one of the founding members of Jobbik – Gabor Vona as their party's leader (Kovacs 2013: 226). Vona was a right-wing youth activist in the early 2000s and had formed a relationship with the Jobbik social movement (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 151). After the election of 2002, Vona was instrumental in establishing the Jobbik political party and was made the party's deputy chairman under the leadership of David Kovacs. His ascension into the leadership was viewed as the natural progression of the party and it was believed that his youth and belief in the party would be an asset (Varga 2014: 791).

Establishing the Nationalist Message – the Bethlen Program

Vona sought to coalesce support for the far-right around Jobbik after the collapse of the MIEP, capture new voters who felt disconnected from the existing political parties on offer, and represent the interests of the nation from perceived foreign and domestic threats. To this end under his leadership, Jobbik developed and published the *Bethlen Program* in 2007⁹⁴, which was the first detailed policy document outlining the policy positions of Jobbik. The symbolic nature of the document is highlighted first in its name.

⁹⁴ The full title of the Bethlen program was “Gabor Bethlen Program – Jobbik for Hungary Movement Program in Population, Goods, and the Growth of the Hungarian National Spirit”

The “Bethlen Program” refers to Gabriel Bethlen,⁹⁵ Prince of Transylvania and King-elect in Hungary during the 17th century. Specifically, Bethlen was chosen as the “patron” of the program because he led an insurrection against the catholic Habsburgs of Royal Hungary and was seen as being able to bring together the disparate parts of the Hungarian population “politically, economically, and socially” where he “made Transylvania a thriving European factor.”⁹⁶ The preamble notes that “his historical example proves that if [there is] thoughtful, responsible strategy and political will to implement it, all difficulties can be overcome.”⁹⁷ Similar to Fidesz’s focus on St. Stephen as the first King of Hungary, Jobbik’s claim to Gabor Bethlen underscores some of the political differences between the two parties.⁹⁸ Of specific difference here is the radical nature of the figure they are choosing to place their focus on. Unlike St. Stephen, the use of Bethlen points to the radical nature of the party - in that Jobbik aims for political overhaul and upheaval rather than the recognition of traditional figures/structures in Hungarian society. Lastly, the selection of Gabor more subtly underscores a key difference between Jobbik and their main nationalist competitor Fidesz – a difference in support for religious

⁹⁵ This is the anglicized name – Bethlen Gabor is the traditional Hungarian variant of the name.

⁹⁶ Bethlen Program, 2007, 1.

⁹⁷ Bethlen Program, 2007, 1.

⁹⁸ St. Stephen is recognized as the first “God-anointed King” of Hungary in 1000/1001. Fidesz used this to legislate “St. Stephen’s Day” in 2000 – a national holiday recognizing the Hungarian nation.

institutions in Hungary. Fidesz is largely supportive of the Catholic faith within Hungarian society and uses historical symbols of catholic recognition, while Jobbik's choice to focus on Bethlen, who was a recognized protestant who specifically opposed the mistreatment of protestants by the Habsburgs and their Hungarian supporters. These small details display the more nuanced character of the nationalist debate but exemplify the distinct nature of each political party/movement.

The purpose of the program as stated in the preamble was to address “painful issues” as well as “create a feasible [and] common plan for Hungarian national development.”⁹⁹ The program is divided into twelve distinct sections touching on several important themes: 1) the protection of the Hungarian nation and recognition of Hungarian national identity, 2) the protection of Hungarian identity and population, and 3) increased sovereignty both domestically and internationally.¹⁰⁰ Most notably, Jobbik's policy positions begin with a belief that there needs to be a reorganization of the state and the nation as the nation faces threats from capitalism and Western intervention. To this end, Jobbik proposes that only “a strong, responsible, and active state can be the protection that protects society from the harmful effects of globalization and creates a basis for

⁹⁹ Bethlen Program, 2007, 1.

¹⁰⁰ The twelve themes/sections of the document are titled as follows: 1) State for the Nation, 2) State for the People, 3) Constitutionality, 4) Our Motherland, 5) “Multiply!”, 6) Family Background, 7) The Most Important Investment (Investing in Hungarian Education), 8) Our Past is our Source, 9) Order is the Soul of Everything, 10) Stop Environmental Destruction, 11) “Every Hungarian is Responsible for Every Hungarian,” and 12) Europe of Nations.

modern nationalism.”¹⁰¹ As such, they propose limiting private enterprise, a reorganization of public debt, severe penalties for those observed to be violating Hungarian law and working against the Hungarian economy, reassertion of the National Assembly’s (parliament) role in managing the economy and government funds, and finally ending liberalization policies for the energy sector. In the realm of education, Jobbik wanted to pass laws that emphasized vocational training in areas that align with “national strategic goals.”¹⁰² The emphasis here is on the protection and promotion of the Hungarian nation to compete within the global community.

The protection of Hungary’s cultural values, as well as the protection and emphasis of national symbols also were important features of the Bethlen Program. Section eight of the Program, titled “Our Past is Our Source,” states that the future survival of national traditions requires a “strengthening [of] our roots” and establishes several policies for protecting national symbols and traditions.¹⁰³ For example, establishing an institute for researching the Prehistory of the Hun-Avar-Hungarian community, protections for the Holy Crown, Turul Bird, and Arpadian Striped Flag.¹⁰⁴ Jobbik’s leadership also intended to tackle the historical legacy of communism, by

¹⁰¹ Bethlen Program, 2007, 1.

¹⁰² Bethlen Program, 2007, 4.

¹⁰³ Bethlen, Program 2007, 4-5

¹⁰⁴ Bethlen Program, 2007, 5. Specifically the Turul Bird and the Arpadian Striped Flag have become symbols of not only Jobbik, but nationalist civil society groups as well.

establishing a Hungarian National Traveling Theater to boost and promote rural cultural life, removing and replacing statues of communists leaders with figures of Hungary's past, and lastly creating and providing state funding for films, stage, and musical works.¹⁰⁵ The emphasis on establishing these cultural protections, as well as the level of detail and attention, provides an insight into the focus of the party.

Protection of the Hungarian identity and population is discussed at length in the Bethlen Program. Noted in sections five, six, seven, and eleven; Jobbik presents policies to prevent "social and economic collapse" by urging ethnic Hungarians to procreate and establishing state policies directed at encouraging the natural growth of the population. On procreation and maintenance of the Hungarian population, Jobbik espoused policies that include making abortion illegal, ending artificial infertility (i.e., a vasectomy for men and tubal ligation for women), and limiting "groups unsuitable for social assimilation" by ending mass immigration. Furthermore, their policies sought to create an environment that would be conducive to the development of the population noting that "a strong society can only be built on healthy and secure families, therefore legal protection and positive discrimination of the family institution is necessary for all areas of public life."¹⁰⁶ These policies include providing women with pay to stay home and take care of their children, providing women with 75% of their income when taking maternity leave, and support for public service that reflects "true national and universal human rights" in

¹⁰⁵ Bethlen Program, 2007, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Bethlen Program, 2007, 3-4.

media operations.¹⁰⁷ Jobbik's policies were also focused on emphasizing the role of ethics and religion in primary and secondary schools. As noted, these policies were developed to address the protection of the population within the country, while section eleven of the Program focused on the broader ethnic and national community. Section eleven, titled "Every Hungarian is Responsible for Every Hungarian," focuses on expanding the nation to those who might identify as ethnically Hungarian outside of the borders of Hungary. The Program states:

The bigger and more united a nation is, the easier it can be to survive the storms of history and be able to thrive, so it is necessary to cross borders [and support] cross-Hungarian reunification, healing the wounds of the Trianon disaster.¹⁰⁸

This short quote provides some important indicators of the party's position regarding membership in the Hungarian nation. First, it establishes that the Hungary nation is defined in ethnic terms and therefore is limited. Additionally, it also establishes the need for recognition and protection of the Hungarian nation beyond the boundaries of the state, which is critical for ethnically focused and exclusionary nationalist political parties. Moreover, the policies promoted within this section point towards the recognition and protection of the national community beyond the limits of state borders. Policies within this section focus on establishing broad connections through the Hungarian community with the recognition of shared symbols, such as a National Day of Remembrance and

¹⁰⁷ Bethlen Program, 2007, 3-4.

¹⁰⁸ Bethlen Program, 2007, 6.

recognition of the flag of Arpad as a national symbol to be shared. The policies in this section are also focused on creating buy-in from Hungarians in surrounding states. Jobbik's policy proposals consisted of supporting Hungarians abroad in their endeavors, restoring the Hungarian Permanent Conference for the diaspora, and providing Hungarian citizenship for those living in "separated parts of the nation."¹⁰⁹

As discussed in chapter [two], nationalist political parties rely on a fundamental belief that there is some perceived external threat to the nation. Such language is not excluded from the Bethlen Program. Not surprisingly the largest perceived threat is the impact of the European Union on Hungarian politics. Noted throughout the program, Jobbik establishes policies that seek to keep European affairs outside of Hungarian policies, while strengthening the role of national policymakers. For example, in section one of the program, the specific policy suggestion of having the National Assembly as the final and only authority to determine how funds provided by the EU are spent. Theoretically, these funds could then be used to finance some of the larger social programs noted above. Additionally, Jobbik advocates for a renegotiation of EU regulations and policies around key industrial sectors, specifically agriculture and land use.¹¹⁰ That said, Jobbik also argues that there is value in participating in the EU, but that the terms of any EU treaty would need to be renegotiated once a new and modern constitution is drafted in Hungary. Jobbik also seeks to create and develop relationships

¹⁰⁹ Bethlen Program, 2007, 6.

¹¹⁰ Bethlen Program, 2007, 1-2

and protections within the EU, for Hungarians living in other countries. Lastly, Jobbik argues that the party's policy should be to work with other regional parties and actors to ensure that their "common interests" are defended.

Over Jobbik's short development from 2003 to their eventual success in national elections in 2010, the Bethlen Program marks a critical moment in their development as it is the first moment that the party, and its leadership, provide a series of policies on which they intended to use in the then-forthcoming 2009 European Parliamentary elections and the national parliamentary elections in 2010. However, while the Bethlen Program provides a clear and concise understanding of Jobbik's at times conflicting political goals, the program provides a clear understanding of the party's political direction moving past the 2006 election. As such, the Bethlen program helps illuminate why Jobbik as a party is different from its competitors and provides an excellent example for the radical nationalist party group.¹¹¹

Building Support - The Magyar Garda and the Protection of the Nation

One of the more controversial policies identified in the Bethlen Program and then brought into existence in 2007 was the *Magyar Garda* (LeBor 2008: 35). In the Bethlen Program, the party provided policies that argued there is a need for two particular solutions to create order in society and prevent Roma and migrant crime.¹¹² First, Jobbik

¹¹¹ Specifically in comparison to Fidesz here, but also provides a clear distinction between Jobbik and the traditional liberal and left political parties in Hungary.

¹¹² Bethlen Program, 2007, 5.

sought to establish a “Roma Crime” division within the police forces in local counties and villages where a ‘crisis’ in crime was occurring. One of the main rhetorical elements of Jobbik’s policies was the notion that outsiders, and in particular the Roma population, were causing unrest within the country leading to increased criminal activity around the country. Notably, these “counties in crisis” were largely rural communities that had struggled with the liberalization of the economy, the return to agricultural production, and the migration of youth out of these towns and villages towards the larger metropolitan areas (Feischmidt 2020: 184). Conducting focus groups in villages like these, Feischmidt notes that in these towns and villages

[included] the most diverse set of problems, ranging from the consequences of migration, the depopulation of the villages, the difficulties of living off the land and from farming, hardships in rural life, the disintegration of civil and religious organizations, etc. do not appear on their own as topics of local public thinking. Each of these problems is framed by a one-track process that involves reducing the complexity to one single cause: the presence of the “Gypsies.” (Feischmidt 2020: 184)

This notion of “Gypsy” or Roma crime became a focal point of Jobbik’s further development in 2008. The second solution sought by Jobbik was the “[e]stablishment of a voluntary national guard organized on a territorial protection basis.”¹¹³ This national guard became the basis for the formation of the paramilitary force known as the *Magyar Garda*. The party’s support for the paramilitary *Magyar Garda* provided the party leadership with a means for connecting with populations that largely felt ignored with

¹¹³ Bethlen Program, 2007, 5.

real-life policy solutions even though the party lacked representation in government and throughout the country. This also allowed the party to solidify its position that sought to scapegoat the Roma for the problems noted in society and demonstrate the need to protect Hungarian identity.

While establishing a formal unit within police departments across the country would require formal legal measures and funding, both of which were opposed by the ruling socialist government, Jobbik leadership adjusted their focus to support the *Magyar Garda*. The *Magyar Garda*, which translated means ‘the Hungarian Guard’ is a voluntary paramilitary organization established to protect Hungarian territory.¹¹⁴ The guard was founded by the civil society organization the “Hungarian Guard Association for Preservation of Traditions and Culture”¹¹⁵ and was headed by Gabor Vona, the president, and leader of Jobbik. The guard promised to nurture Hungarian culture and the memories of shared history, provide disaster prevention and law and order services and strengthen national self-defense among other things.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, members of the Hungarian Guard were required to take an oath in which they swore allegiance to the “Holy Hungarian Crown” and that members will be loyal to their country, nation, and the

¹¹⁴ In the Bethlen Program (section nine) this is simply referred to as a “national guard” and did not specifically outline the parameters of what the organization would be responsible for.

¹¹⁵ Magyar Gárda Hagyományőrző és Kulturális Egyesület in Hungarian.

¹¹⁶ Magyar Garda – Founding Statement and the text of the Oath – 2007.
https://web.archive.org/web/20090228170637/http://magyargarda.hu/alapito_nyilatkozat

Hungarian people. There are several elements to the rhetoric here that require some analysis. First, swearing allegiance to the Holy Hungarian Crown is once again a reference to the existence of the Hungarian state before the Trianon Treaty and demarcates a belief in the importance of the Christian faith to Hungarian identity. Second, by swearing allegiance to the country, nation, and the Hungarian people, members of the Magyar Garda are committed to preserving the state (Hungary as we know it today), the nation (the community that transcends state boundaries), and their ethnic identity when referring to the “Hungarian peoples.” Shortly after its creation, the Magyar Garda became more active across Hungary by opening up local chapters, protesting government policies, and marching against what they viewed as Roma crime. One of the larger examples of this occurred in the village of Tatárszentgyörgy about 50km south of the city of Budapest; there 300 members of the guard held a demonstration “against Roma delinquency,” with a Jobbik official stating that “Roma delinquency is reproduced by an incestuous, degenerated stratum living in a subculture at the life strands of primitive communities.”¹¹⁷ Scenes and rhetoric like this became the norm from 2007-2009, as membership in the Magyar Garda grew and support for Jobbik continued to expand.

However, by late 2008 the situation around the Garda began to change with more militant leadership taking the helm and a division occurring between those who were more politically minded (i.e., Gabor Vona and Jobbik party members) and those who

¹¹⁷ “Anti-Roma March of the Magyar Garda” – The Budapest Sun, 12 December 2007.

were more militant (i.e., the Captain of the Garda). By October of 2008, the Garda dismissed its captain for “violation of the rules and regulations” and installed a new leader who was close to Jobbik leader Gabor Vona.¹¹⁸ Things only further unraveled for the Garda after the Hungarian courts ruled in December of 2008 and then again in July 2009 that the organization violated the minority protections provided in the Hungarian Constitution, was against the law, and needed to disband (Molnar 2020: 230). While the formal structure of the organization had disbanded – the work Jobbik had put into establishing the Garda provided a cohort for potential party membership, as well as laid the groundwork for the electorate to view Jobbik as the party that fought to protect and restore the Hungarian nation. Moreover, Vona and his supporters established “The New Guard,” an illegal organization in 2009-2010 to replace the Magyar Garda and continue to work in towns and villages across the Hungarian state (Molnar 2020: 230).

The Magyar Garda provides a clear insight into one of the important differences between Jobbik, their predecessor the MIEP, and more importantly Fidesz. Jobbik’s leadership is not only more extreme in their rhetoric and policy choices, but the party’s unfettered support for the Magyar Garda and its successor “The New Guard” is evidence of the extreme policies the party will take to ensure that its policy goals are met. Moreover, the Magyar Garda becomes an avenue through which party members can be courted and recruited, further underscoring the *purist* mentality of the party’s membership and limiting the potential for the party to shift its policies to more moderate

¹¹⁸ “Two Right-wing Groups Attempt to Settle” – BBC, 5 October 2008.

positions, which could potentially gain additional support. The support for the creation and establishment of the Magyar Garda becomes an important policy decision for the party as it underscores their commitment to protecting the nation, highlights and attacks perceived threats to growth and developments in Hungary (specifically the Roma population), and provides a means to identify potential voters and party members.

The 2009 European Parliamentary and 2010 National Assembly Elections

Jobbik's success with the electorate began in June of 2009 when the party was able to pick up three of Hungary's twenty-two seats, and 14.77% of the popular vote.¹¹⁹ This placed the party third in the result and only three points behind the governing socialist party.¹²⁰ Jobbik ran on a platform similar in structure and style to the Bethlen Program, with some increasingly hostile language toward the European Union (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 152). After the financial crisis of 2008 hit parts of the country hard, Jobbik increased its anti-EU language, moving away from a "Europe of regions" approach to an approach that viewed the EU as a foreign threat (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 152). This policy position was on the extreme at the time, with the governing socialists arguing that the EU institutions provided protection for the Hungarians, while the main opposition (and pragmatic nationalist party) Fidesz was making an argument to remain in the EU, but that more autonomy needed to be shifted back to the member-

¹¹⁹ <http://www.euractiv.hu/europai-parlament/linkdossziek/ep-valasztasok-2009>

¹²⁰ Note that Fidesz wins 56.36% of the vote and 14 seats in this election.

states.¹²¹ The result of the EU parliamentary elections for Jobbik was viewed as a large step forward and a reward for the attention received with the establishment of the Bethlen Program, the formation and media attention around the Magyar Garda, and Jobbik's increasingly skilled ability to create and support civil society organizations.

Shortly before the 2009 EU parliamentary elections Gabor Vona, President and Leader of Jobbik established the "National Fellowships Organization," which was an umbrella organization that brought together nationalist groups across Hungary and provided an option for "those who sympathize with the extreme right ideas dubbed national radical ideas but are averse to parties (i.e., Jobbik) and uniforms (i.e., Magyar Garda)."¹²² The leadership of the National Fellowships, besides that of Gabor Vona, was Gyorgy Szllagyi, a Jobbik party member and the sports policy spokesman for Jobbik. This approach to establishing a civil society organization in which people can express their allegiance to Hungarian nationalist principles and allow political parties to gain access to a potential pool of voters was inspired by the "civic circles" used by Viktor Orban in the early 2000s to help gain support and broaden his party's appeal. As noted earlier, Gabor Vona met Orban and was a Fidesz party member in one of these civic circles, so it is not surprising that Jobbik reprised the structure or the fact that it helped with the growth and development of the party.

¹²¹ "Navracsics Does Not Want Hungary to Withdraw from EU," *Nepszabadsag*, 29 January 2009.

¹²² "Here is Jobbik's Version of Civic Circles – National Fellowships Organized on the Pattern of Civic Circles," *Nepszabadsag*, 27 May 2009.

The 2009 EU Parliamentary elections established a key moment for Jobbik's development, as it began to be viewed as a serious political party with the ability to earn representation in the 2010 National Assembly elections (to be held in April 2010). As a result, the party began to take on a more public persona, establishing an accord with the country's largest police union¹²³, continuing to make alliances with civil society nationalist organizations¹²⁴, and increased rhetorical attacks against the Roma population.¹²⁵ While it was largely expected that the MSZP government would fall at the next election, the question was how much of a loss it would experience and how much the nationalist political parties would receive as a result. Fidesz was viewed as the official opposition to the MSZP and likely would be the winner of the 2010 elections. As a result, Fidesz and Jobbik were competing for some of the same constituents, Fidesz focused on those interested in a nationalist message, who aimed for a more centrist party/organization, while Jobbik sought to appeal to those with nationalistic beliefs, conservative social values, but also interested in a protective economic agenda (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 153-159). These policies were then placed at the forefront of an increasingly structured political party with the release of Jobbik's 2010 election

¹²³ "Police Labor Union's Agreement with Jobbik," *Nepszabadsag*, 19 May 2009.

¹²⁴ "Nauseating Game: Far-Right and Hungarian Opposition Party to Compete," *Nepszabadsag*, 19 June 2009.

¹²⁵ "The 'Gypsy Issue' and Fidesz," *Nepszabadsag*, 2 July 2009.

manifesto “Radical Change for National Self-Determination and Social Justice” (hereafter referred to as the Radical Change Program).¹²⁶

The Radical Change Program was a marked improvement in structure and policy positions compared to the 2007 Bethlen Program. While the Bethlen program was approximately seven pages with minimally detailed policy prescriptions, the Radical Change Program was a sophisticated election manifesto twenty-four pages in length and presented policies ranging from Eco-Social National Economics to Crime and Justice to Protection of Cultural Values.¹²⁷ That said, the general direction of the policies within the document echoed the nationalist message used in the Bethlen Program. Moreover, the party’s position became increasingly focused on addressing the concerns of the Hungarian Nation (including those communities beyond the country’s borders) rather than just focusing on the policy agenda of their constituents within the country. For example, in their “Eco-Social National Economics” plan which is the primary policy presented first within the document, it is noted:

Jobbik thinks in terms of a Hungarian economic policy for the Carpathian basin as a whole and considers Hungarian-populated territories beyond the border to be part of a unified protected Hungarian economic zone.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Jobbik 2010 Election Manifesto – *Radical Change for National Self-Determination and Social Justice*.

¹²⁷ Radical Change Program, 2010.

¹²⁸ Radical Change Program, 2010, 2.

There is an additional emphasis placed on protecting the Hungarian nation as a means to ensure economic protection as well. As stated in the Radical Change Program:

Calling a halt to our population decline is of vital importance not only in terms of national survival but also from the view of our economic capabilities. A threatening demographic catastrophe is also exacerbated by an ethnic proportional shift. Given that a nation's supporting foundations are formed from upstanding, hard-working multi-child families; their promotion is a defined strategic objective.¹²⁹

While the focus was on protecting the Hungarian Nation, it was also clear whom Jobbik viewed as the problematic elements of society. For example, the language about the Roma population had not significantly shifted from 2007-2010; "Gypsy Issues" is given its section within the document highlighting the increased tension between Jobbik and the Roma community. With the Radical Change Program, Jobbik argues that

The coexistence and cohesion of Magyar and Gypsy is one of the severest problems facing Hungarian society...The continuation of the Gypsy people's circumstances along their current course is nothing short of a potential time-bomb, and if it is not subject to concerted intervention, our mutual home could sink into a state of virtual civil war.¹³⁰

The policy prescriptions then provided to solve this divide include assimilation of the Roma population through education, churches, and civic and social institutions; reduction in "Gypsy crime" through the establishment of a Gendarmerie like the Magyar Garda or the New Guard; and increased social-welfare programs to ensure 'reform' occurs to assist

¹²⁹ Radical Change Program, 2010, 2.

¹³⁰ Radical Change Program, 2010, 11.

with their assimilation.¹³¹ Furthermore, Jobbik highlights the EU, the west more broadly, and internationalist organizations as all opposed to Hungarian interests and development. As a result, the party advocated for a more adversarial approach to the EU with the possibility of supporting an exit from the organization, turning trade policy to the east, and increasing national self-governance.¹³²

The policies in the Radical Change Program called for an overhaul of the state and societal structure that was different from the traditional politics, espoused at this point, by the existing main parties. Leading up to the 2010 election, Jobbik's party leadership was expecting to win somewhere around 10-11% of the popular vote, which would provide them with their first several seats of representation within the national legislature.¹³³ Instead, when the election was held in April of 2010, Jobbik achieved 16.7% of the popular vote in the first round of voting and was allotted 47 of the 386 parliamentary seats.¹³⁴ Jobbik skyrocketed from having no seats in parliament and increased its share of the popular vote by fourteen percentage points from the 2006

¹³¹ Radical Change Program, 2010, 11-12.

¹³² Radical Change Program, 2010. Note here that "national self-governance" refers to the nation as a whole, not just those in Hungary. Jobbik, more so than other parties, presents its policies with a distinct vision of serving the entirety of the Hungarian nation and restoring the "territorially-maimed" mother country by the Trianon Treaty.

¹³³ "The Essence of Jobbik: Complicated Questions in Simple Slogans," *Nepszabadsag*, 13 October 2009.

¹³⁴ 2010 Parliamentary Results – Hungarian Election office.
<https://static.valasztas.hu//dyn/pv10/outroot/vdin2/en/eredind.htm>

election setting up the party to be a major player in Hungarian politics after the 2010 elections.

Jobbik's Electoral Performance

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the nature of the exclusionary policies and rhetoric will limit the potential support among the electorate for a radical nationalist political party. Furthermore, radical nationalist political parties are predicted to encounter a ceiling of support among the electorate. Jobbik has been uniquely able to achieve a ceiling of 23% support in national elections since 2010. What are the factors that have contributed to Jobbik's success at the ballot box? The range in support during parliamentary elections for the party is as low as 2.20% in the 2006 election when Jobbik was in a coalition with the MIEP and with the maximum amount of support at 23.2% in the 2018 election. Biro-Nagy and Rona (2013) have argued that Jobbik is one of the most successful radical parties within Central and Eastern Europe, which provides a basis for the party to be examined as an exemplar for radical nationalist political parties (149).

Shift in Support 2006 – 2010

One of the largest shifts in support for the party occurred between 2006 and 2010, where support for Jobbik in the 2006 and 2010 parliamentary elections increases dramatically from 2.2% to 16.67% respectively. The theory presented in Chapter Two states that once a nationalist party decides to form, the decision or the selection to be a pragmatic, radical, or minority nationalist political party drives the potential for

establishing a voter base and potential for success. During the early years (2003-2006) Jobbik as a party did not have a clear ideology or set of policies other than the main political rivals – the MSZP and Fidesz were not doing enough to protect Hungarian identity. Furthermore, Jobbik’s decision to enter into an electoral coalition with the MIEP prevented the party from going through the necessary steps to identify what policies it stood for and where the party fits within the political system.

This changed after the 2006 election, as noted above when Gabor Vona takes control of the party and begins to lay out what Jobbik’s policy positions are; first, in the Bethlen Program, and then again in the 2009 European Parliamentary elections and the 2010 Radical Change document (Kovacs 2013: 226). It is under Vona’s leadership that the party becomes so closely aligned with “radical” ideology and places an emphasis on a newly constructed state that also limits the rights and membership of non-Hungarian citizens. The theoretical expectation is that we would see Jobbik perform where most radical nationalist political parties do - somewhere around 6-10%; however, in the 2010 election the party receives 16.67% of the votes and 47 (12.2%) parliamentary seats well above the expected result.

This unusually large increase in support can be explained by the particular ability of Jobbik to capitalize on moments of political opportunity. A moment of political opportunity operates as a moderating variable, through which the strength of the outcome can be affected. Two moments alter the relationship between 2006 and 2010. First, Gyurcsany’s speech in 2006 provided a platform for the party to show that the government was not interested in protecting the nation or its inhabitants, this event also

allowed Jobbik to seize on the outrage felt by the electorate (and fomented by Jobbik's rival Fidesz on the right). Without Gyurcsany's speech and the outrage in 2006, it is not clear that there would be a need to mobilize the party's resources and develop the Bethlen Program in 2007 (Wilkin 2016: 98). The second moment of political opportunity came after the economic recession of 2008-2009, where the parts of the country that were already struggling with the process of liberalization and migration out of those areas, were hit particularly hard by the economic downturn (Kovacs 2013: 228-213). This provided an opportunity once again for Jobbik leadership, though now with the added element of the Magyar Garda for Jobbik to reach out and connect with these communities; increasing their support within them and providing the voters with a place to express their frustration. These two events, the speech in 2006 and the financial crisis of 2008-2009 weakened the socialist and liberal coalition and led to an increased desire for alternative representation. Fidesz and Jobbik were able to attract new members with their anti-EU, pro-nationalist messages to the electorate. As a result, the large swing from 2006-2010 can largely be attributed to the ability of the party leadership to capitalize on the weakness of the government.

The Post-2010 Period – Jobbik as the Primary Opposition

In the period after the 2010 election, Jobbik was well on its way to becoming a political force in Hungarian politics. The party became the second largest party within the national parliament and was the official opposition to Viktor Orban's Fidesz-KDNP government. One of the first tasks of the Fidesz-led government was to revise the 1989

constitution, as well as the overall electoral system.¹³⁵ The changes in the electoral system provided benefits to existing parties with at least marginal strength (Fidesz was the primary beneficiary, while Jobbik benefitted as well) by adding more weight to the constituency seat elections, reducing the overall number of MPs, and increasing the threshold for parties trying to obtain seats through proportional means.¹³⁶ These changes to the voting system were also challenging to the weakened socialist and centrist political parties, who struggled to compete under the new electoral rules. The change in electoral rules, as well as the weakness and fracturing of the center-left political parties also had some pass-on effects for Jobbik in their 2014 election results, where the party obtained their highest vote total of 20.39% of the vote.

At the next election in 2018, Jobbik's share of the vote began to decrease receiving the support of 19.1% of the electorate.¹³⁷ This shift in electoral support can be attributed to several changes in Jobbik's policies. First, the increase of Syrian refugees

¹³⁵ This is discussed in more detail in the chapter on Fidesz.

¹³⁶ From Andras Bozoki & Louise Beaumais "The Hungarian electoral system at the time of the 2010 elections was a mix of direct election of representatives in a single-seat constituencies (176 members in the National Assembly), proportional representation (152) and 58 "compensation" seats, which were determined through a complex system in connection with voter turnout and votes that in each electoral round that did not get counted because they did not go to the winning member. The aim of this mixed systems was to try to optimally capture voter preference in the actual numbers of representations of each party in the Parliament."

¹³⁷ While receiving its largest number of votes, the number of parliamentary seats did not change very much. For Jobbik's time in parliament (2010-2022) the party has had 11-13% of the MPs in parliament.

around March 2015 led to a massive pushback against immigration in the country. As Hungary shares its borders with western European powers, refugees were using Hungary as a means to have the ability to circulate Europe. The Fidesz government and Jobbik strongly opposed the acceptance of Syrian refugees and stoked opposition to their migration through Hungary among the populace. Just as Jobbik had done to the Roma population from 2006-2010, so too did the party leadership use the Syrian crisis to identify potential supporters and advocate for a more exclusive nationalist message. However, it was also after the 2014 election that Jobbik's leader, Gabor Vona, announced that the party was adapting some of its policies by moderating its positions on Hungarian identity.¹³⁸ This was met with backlash from the grassroots supporters of the party and also contradicted some of the policy positions and announcements the party made in the period before the 2018 election, as the deputy leader of the parliamentary party stated "we did not leave it [the party] in a lurch; we only changed our image."¹³⁹¹⁴⁰ These moves were, however, unsuccessful in dramatically changing the electoral fortunes of the party.

The theory of nationalist party development presented here states that once a party has taken on a particular structure, in this case, radical nationalists, they will not be able

¹³⁸ Szigeti, Tom, "Hungarian Far-Right Jobbik Party Holds Year-Opening Conference," *Hungary Today*, January 30, 2017.

¹³⁹ "Every EU Member State Must Fulfil its Obligations," *Hungarian Official News Digest*, October 19, 2016.

¹⁴⁰ "Hungarian Far-Right Party Calls for Self-Defence," *Nepszabadsag*, July 6, 2015.

to achieve enough support that they are able to build a broad coalition of support. As a result, the party will have a ceiling of support. For Jobbik, this ceiling appears to be around 20% of the electorate. While the party was able to achieve that result in the 2014 election, the time between 2014 and 2022 has seen the party's support in opinion polling range anywhere from 21% a month after the 2018 election¹⁴¹ to a more regular and consistent average of 6% in the most recent polling.¹⁴² The party has displayed what would be expected in terms of performance and durability, that is under certain moments of opportunity, we would expect the party to show what the potential ceiling in support might be. With Jobbik that ceiling seems to be approximately 20% at its highest. Outside of those times of political salience, the expectation would be that the party should fall between the predicted range of 6-10%, which is the level of support for Jobbik in the most recent polling.

Limitations to Radical Nationalists

From 2006 until shortly before the 2014 parliamentary elections, Jobbik's policy focuses were on increasing advocacy for national interests, protecting of national identity, as well as seeking revisions to the structure of government. As discussed above, many of the perceived threats or concerns with society were heavily focused on Hungary's Roma population, EU institutions, and the international community more broadly. This brought

¹⁴¹ Zavecz Research, 6-13 May, 2018 (1000 respondents)

¹⁴² Polls from Nezoport, 11-13 July 2022 (1,000 respondents), Publicus, 20-22 July 2022 (1004 respondents), IDEA 29-April-9 May 2022 (1800 respondents), Zavecz Research, 25 April-4 May 2022 (1000 respondents)

a membership that was of the “purist” mindset, who were dedicated to the reorganization of society, participated in the Magyar Garda, and protested elements of society that the party deemed inappropriate or unacceptable. With such a committed base of supporters shifts in policy away from their traditional radical base would be expected to not be accepted by the membership more broadly.¹⁴³ This is evident when the party attempted to change its messaging shortly before the 2014 and 2018 parliamentary elections.

Shortly before the 2014 parliamentary elections, Gabor Vona announced that the party would be changing its messaging to focus less on issues of ethnicity and identity, and more on creating policies and institutions that helped and protect ‘ordinary’ Hungarians at home and abroad. While this slow transition occurred at the elite level, the general membership was not necessarily interested in shifting the focus of the party. Thus, the party adjusted the messaging around their policy positions, without necessarily adjusting their policy along with the party’s supporters.¹⁴⁴ When in 2017, Vona decided that the party would take on a more moderate message, he acknowledged that the party’s “...hardline supports felt cheated and its potential new voters need to be convinced [that

¹⁴³ It can be argued here that the party typology is too path dependent in that once a party ideology or policy framework is employed it is difficult or even impossible to shift. This is in fact what I am arguing here. Jobbik spent so much of its development at the beginning in defining itself as a radical nationalist political party, that it became difficult for the party members and electorate to continue to believe the party is radical in its beliefs and policy proposals.

¹⁴⁴ “Hungarian Far-Right Party Calls for Self-Defence,” *Nepszabadsag*, July 6, 2015. “Hungary’s Jobbik Ditches Far-Right Past to Challenge Orban in 2018,” *Reuters*, January 11, 2017.

the party had changed].”¹⁴⁵ This shows an understanding from Vona that the expectations and understanding the electorate had about Jobbik as a political party remained static in time, even as the party sought to change its messaging.¹⁴⁶

After the loss of the 2018 election, Gabor Vona stepped down and Jobbik was led by two new leaders after the 2018 election. Tamas Sneider was the first to succeed Vona after winning a close and bitter contest for leadership from Lazlo Toroczkai winning with 53.8% of the membership’s votes. Sneider was the more ‘moderate’ candidate of the two, with Toroczkai advocating for a return to the “original goals pursued by Jobbik, including to halt immigration, stop the emigration of Hungarian youth to the wealthier western EU countries, take a tough line on Hungary’s Roma Minority, and to support ethnic Hungarian minorities in neighboring states.”¹⁴⁷ After Sneider’s win, Toroczkai and several other members of Jobbik left the party to establish a new radical nationalist party – Our Homeland Movement.¹⁴⁸ While Sneider was the more moderate of the candidates, he was more conservative and much more of a party ‘purist’ than Vona had developed into. Sneider had a long history of challenging the Hungarian government and was the

¹⁴⁵ “Hungary’s Jobbik Ditches Far-Right Past to Challenge Orban in 2018,” *Reuters*, January 11, 2017.

¹⁴⁶ “Hardliners in Hungary’s Jobbik Demand Return to Far-Right Roots,” *Reuters*, May 22, 2018

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ “Brand New Far-Right Party Emerges from the Ashes of Jobbik,” *Hungary Today*. 25 June 2018.

founder of the National Youth Association – a skinhead group – in the early 1990s.¹⁴⁹ As time progressed Sneider became active in politics and within Jobbik more broadly, getting elected at the local level before entering parliament. After the loss of parliamentary members to Toroczkai’s new party, as well as internal challenges to the direction and content of the party’s focus, Sneider stepped down as leader and left the parliamentary group to join the newly created “Civic Response” party. Succeeding Sneider in the role of party leader and was the fellow parliamentarian and former deputy leader of the parliamentary party Peter Jakob. Jakob was a close associate of Gabor Vona and advocated for a continued “moderation” of Jobbik’s policy positions and messaging. In an effort to double down on this, Jakob entered Jobbik into the “United for Hungary” coalition where Jobbik was one of six parties that united to take (and replace) the Fidesz government in the 2022 election.¹⁵⁰ Jakob’s leadership of the party sought to moderate not only their message but to challenge the far-right and radical elements of the political party by ejecting members who did not adhere to the new policy programs of the party.¹⁵¹ The coalition was trounced in the 2022 election, and Jobbik only returned ten members to parliament and did not win any constituency votes in the election (Walker 2022: 15).

¹⁴⁹ “Tamas Sneider’s Journey to the Position of Vice President,” *Nepszabadsag*, July 5, 2014.

¹⁵⁰ “The Complete Opposition Coalition for 2022 was Born,” *index.hu*, December 20, 2020.

¹⁵¹ “Tamás Sneider, Gergely Farkas and Andrea Varga-Damm are also Leaving the Jobbik Faction,” *index.hu*, May 27, 2020.

In their first election, the Our Homeland Movement party won seven parliamentary seats and was viewed as the largest recipient of voter support from the collapse of Jobbik's support in the 2022 election (Walker 2022: 15). Under the policy frameworks presented in the theory above and with the stated goal of returning to some of Jobbik's more controversial positions, it is fair to argue that Our Homeland Movement may replace Jobbik as the radical nationalist political party within the Hungarian electoral system. While Jobbik is still attempting to find an acceptable middle-ground on the right of the political spectrum, there are a few things that we can take away from the party's struggles from 2018 to the present. First, attempts by radical nationalist political parties to shift their messaging to a more inclusive model may be unsuccessful. This is hypothesized above in that the party membership is more purist in their interpretation and beliefs in comparison to the more pragmatic elements of a pragmatic nationalist political party. Second, the example of Jobbik provides a possible new avenue for research that examines whether new radical parties form as former radical parties seek to moderate their message and in doing so attract more voters. Lastly, the durability of the party is hard to analyze here for the party type, as the attempt to shift the party's policy positions from one framework to the next ultimately led to the party's loss of support; as a counterfactual, would Jobbik's support had continued to grow and remain stable over time if the party had not shifted its policy positions? The evidence provided above seems to suggest that the process of moderation led to the loss of support. Thus, once able to capitalize on the 6-10% of the population, radical nationalist political parties should be durable over time – unless they shift their messaging.

Conclusion

Jobbik is presented here as an example of a radical nationalist political party, one where the content and overall trajectory of success of the party is different from its *pragmatic* and *minority* counterparts. Membership and rhetoric of radical nationalist political parties are more ideological in their policy prescriptions and present policies that require systematic change. Additionally, these parties have a more *purist* position on the structure and representation of the party (Biro-Nagy and Rona 2013: 152). These features are provided for in the analysis above, specifically, through the variations in infighting between membership to determine the nature and direction of the party towards pragmatic political goals in the fallout around the Magyar Garda or the direction of the party by Gabor Vona when he took over control of the party from David Kovacs. While Vona's restructuring of the party allowed for growth to occur, the targeted nature of their policies toward the Roma and their systemic proposals for overhauling Hungarian society did not attract the support they intended; and as a result, necessarily limited their overall support in society.

Strategic policy decisions by the party's leadership established a political voice to address the problems that the party elite felt were not addressed within Hungary's political system. Jobbik is a nationalist party due to its core focus on preserving and protecting the Hungarian nation both within Hungary and abroad as its primary policy concern.¹⁵² Moreover, the theory of nationalist political party development provides an

¹⁵² As noted in the *Bethlen Program* and the *Radical Change Program*.

explanation for Jobbik's success and development within the Hungarian political system. The loss of government to the socialists in 2002 and 2006, the perceived failure of the right to capture the electorate, and a belief that the existing right-wing parties do not provide policies that protect the nation provided the groundwork for Jobbik to develop a radical nationalist policy framework, which brought them back from the political brink to their eventual success in 2009 and 2010. The party displayed that the strict adherence to their policies limits their potential for success leading to moderate support among the populace, but an ability to remain a political force within Hungarian politics. Moreover, the attempt to shift the party's policies in a more moderate direction led to a collapse in support and develops a new set of questions about how radical nationalist political parties differ from their pragmatic and minority counterparts.

CHAPTER 5

MINORITY NATIONALISTS: UDMR

The United Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)¹⁵³ was established in 1989 as a representative organization for the Hungarian minority within Romania. The Hungarian minority in Romania accounts for six percent of Romania's population and is concentrated within the historical boundaries of Transylvania, between Hungary and the Romanian capital in Bucharest. Since its inception, the UDMR has advocated for the protection and support of the Hungarian community within Romania, specifically the protection and preservation of the group's linguistic and cultural identity.¹⁵⁴ The UDMR is different from the parties examined in earlier chapters as this party is not operating within the Hungarian political system, rather they represent Hungarian identity within the Romanian state, representing the third policy framework of *minority nationalism*.

Minority nationalist political parties are distinct from the two previous policy frameworks discussed in earlier chapters. Regardless of their actual policy positions, *responsive* and *radical nationalist* parties have the ability, in theory, to take over the state and create policies in support of protecting their national identity. This underscores the fundamental difference between minority nationalist political parties and their related

¹⁵³ UDMR represents the Romanian name for the party, RMDSz is the Hungarian acronym for the party, and UDHR is the English equivalent.

¹⁵⁴ "About Us" UDMR webpage: <http://dahr.ro/page/about-us>

counterparts. Due to the limited presence of a given minority community within the country, *minority nationalist* parties can only advocate for their community hoping that the national government or the national political parties will respond to their requests (Jenne 2007: 13-14). Since the minority nationalist framework is different from the other two discussed previously, this chapter proceeds in the following manner. First, I discuss the features and expectations of minority nationalist political parties and then shift attention to the case discussed in this chapter, namely the UDMR. Since the Hungarians in Romania do not share the same historical development as the Hungarian nation within Hungary, a concise history of the Hungarian minority in Romania is provided as well as a discussion of the contemporary status of the Hungarian population within Romania. Secondly, this chapter then examines the party development and policies of the UDMR showing that the party represents minority nationalism through an analysis of the party's political positions. In the third section, the chapter continues by discussing the theoretical implications of the UDMR utilizing the minority nationalist framework within Romanian politics. The chapter then concludes by discussing the rationale for why the minority nationalist framework provides captures the support and presence of the UDMR within Romanian politics over the alternative Romanian mainstream political parties.

Minority Nationalist Parties

Minority nationalist political parties exist as national identities within a state or region where there is a larger more dominant alternative national identity (Brubaker 1996: 60-61). Parties that belong to the minority nationalist framework represent a) a

historical notion of attachment to a different nation than the one they are currently occupying b) ethnocultural minorities within a dominant political culture demanding state recognition or autonomy for this distinct ethnocultural community, and c) assert that the ethnocultural community needs certain political rights.¹⁵⁵ Under this framework, the party representing these specific national and/or ethnic communities aims to assert their national identity, while asking for recognition of their distinct ethnocultural identity from the national government.¹⁵⁶ This can be in the form of an assertion of certain collective action rights, as well as nationality-based cultural and political protections.¹⁵⁷ The request for protection may take the form of demands for autonomy over specific issues and concerns or can take on a more extreme policy position in the form of separatism or complete autonomy for a geographical region (Brubaker 1996: 60). Unlike the *responsive*

¹⁵⁵ These principles align with Brubaker's (1996: 60-61) discussion of "National Minorities"

¹⁵⁶ There is a difference here between minority nationalists discussed here and ethnic political parties. Ethnic political parties represent a distinct ethnic identity and do not seek to have regional autonomy or separation from the state. For example, ethnic parties on the African continent do not seek to create separate national states but rather represent their ethnic identities and values often in competition with other ethnic identities within the state structure.

¹⁵⁷ Within minority nationalism there is a clear and distinct overlap between ethnic identity and national identity in that the national identity is built on the perceived difference or uniqueness of the minority group's ethnic identity. However, this does not mean that minority nationalist political parties are exclusionary. The UDMR for example, make claims about representing the interests of all Hungarian minority groups within Romania, whether they belong to the primary Magyar identity or one of the smaller groups. While other examples (i.e., the Scottish National Party) are more inclusive beyond Scottish ethnic identity.

or *radical* nationalist frameworks, there is more variation in the policy positions espoused by minority nationalists as membership in this framework is more focused on the desire for recognition and less on the reassertion or need to take over the mechanisms of the state to ensure the continuation of the identity, rather the focus is on making changes within the community or achieving autonomy and self-government if geographically concentrated. Moreover, parties under this framework may not be uniform in their desire to participate within the national government of the state. As will be discussed below, the UDMR has played an active role in the national political scene, serving as coalition members in several governments from both the left and right of the political spectrum (Jenne 2007: 113-120).¹⁵⁸ While the goal of *minority nationalists* is similar to parties in the *responsive* and *radical* frameworks, in that these parties seek protection for their national identity, the key distinctions are that the minority nationalist parties operate through aspects of the state where they have limited control.

Minority Nationalists – Electoral Goals and Expected Outcomes

Parties that exist under the minority nationalist framework are limited in their electoral outcomes since they only represent a minority of the population within the country; therefore, the party's overall support will be limited. Within broader national elections this would mean a small constituency (relative to the major/main political

¹⁵⁸ Other examples of minority nationalist political parties outside of Romania have chosen to remain outside of government or abstain from taking their seats within the national legislature.

parties) that may neatly overlap with the ethnonational identity group's population distribution throughout the country, but representation may also vary depending on whether the national political system has a majoritarian or proportional system for allocating representation. Minority nationalist political parties may have strong regional, territorial, or substate representation if members of the nation are geographically concentrated. If geographically dispersed, it will make it difficult for the party to solidify support within the community (Ishiyama 2012: 782-783).

When a particularly salient party representing minority identity is present at the national level, the expectation is that the party would maintain its durability over time, as well as its relative strength. If two or more political parties are claiming to represent the minority identity within national elections, the expectation is that support will be volatile over time. Furthermore, when the ethnonational population is concentrated within a particular part of the country regional centrality allows for the party to spend resources within a limited geographical area and contributes to party strength and durability.

The Hungarian Minority in Romania

Unlike the parties studied in the previous chapters, the UDMR is not a party that participates in the political system of the Hungarian state, nor does the party and the people it represents, share a history with the Hungarian people during the communist rule before 1991 or the development since. The unique historical circumstances that have led to the development of the Romanian state and the response of the minority Hungarian

community necessitate a discussion of how the Transylvanian region has developed, and how this development led to the creation of the UDMR.

The region known colloquially as ‘Transylvania’ has long been a point of contention within eastern European politics. The area, located south of the Carpathian Mountains and east of the Transylvanian Alps, can trace its foundation to the Roman province of Dacia under the Roman Empire (Berdichevsky 2004: 181). However, since the tenth century, the Transylvanian region has been claimed by the Hungarian Kingdom, then the Austrian Kingdom, followed by the Turkish, and then the Austrian Empire again (Berdichevsky 2004: 181). The Romanian state as we know it today is broken up into two regions, Transylvania and Wallachia, the historic base for Romanian identity, located to the east and south of the Transylvanian region (Berdichevsky 2004: 181). As the region shifted between kingdoms and empires, the preferential treatment by the ruling governments also seemed to shift between the people of Transylvania to the north and the Wallachians to the South. Specifically, during the Turkish occupation of Romania, the regime favored the Romanian-speaking population to the specific disadvantage of the Hungarian-speaking population, creating a hierarchy within the region and an overall adversarial relationship between the two groups (Berdichevsky 2004: 182). This shifted later when the Austro-Hungarian empire reclaimed the territory, allowing the Hungarians of Transylvania to discriminate against the Romanian-speaking population. These interactions only fueled animosity between the two groups while also driving the Romanian population to solidify their identity and seek to unite under a common Romanian ruler (Berdichevsky 2004: 183).

During the First World War, the Romanian population aligned with the Allied Powers, while the Hungarian-dominated Transylvanian region was supportive of the Central Powers, which resulted in Romania receiving official recognition as an independent state and receiving large swathes of land from Hungary for their support of the Allied Powers after the conclusion of the First World War (Berdichevsky 2004: 182).¹⁵⁹ Among the large pieces of land Romania received was the Hungarian-dominated Transylvanian region. However, this relationship did not last long, as the ownership of Transylvania was returned to Hungary in August of 1940 as a reward for Hungary's support for the German-Italian intervention in the region and support for the Axis Powers. At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the region once again was returned to the Romanian state (Berdichevsky 2004: 183).

In the early years of Soviet-communist rule, the Szekler population (the local name for about one-third of the Hungarians living in Romania) were permitted to govern themselves under the Magyar Autonomous Region as one of seventeen regional governments within the state.¹⁶⁰ However, while the region's name acknowledged the relationship between the population and the state, the ability to pass laws, write legislation, and make decisions independent of the national government was very limited

¹⁵⁹ The regions were granted under the Trianon Treaty of 1921. Of note is that this seems to be a unifying moment for Hungarian nationalist politics writ large, in particular since within Hungarian nationalist circles the Trianon Treaty is viewed *as an original sin* of European and Allied powers against the Hungarian state.

¹⁶⁰ This lasted from 1952 to 1968.

(Brubaker 2006: 80-81). The only element that made the region different is that it was governed by members of the Szekler population. Then in 1968, under the government of Nicolae Ceausescu, the regional system was removed and Romania returned to a county-based system of local government, ending the ability of the Szekler to represent themselves outside of their majority representation in several counties (Brubaker 2006: 83). Moreover, Ceausescu's government aimed to solidify Romanian identity within the country's leadership and remove national, ethnic, and cultural symbols that ran counter to Romanian national identity (Brubaker 2006: 83). As such, Hungarian institutions, language, and identity were suppressed in the years that followed (Brubaker 2006: 84-88).

The Ceausescu government would eventually fall after a series of uprisings challenged the legitimacy of the government (Brubaker 2006: 119-122). One of the most significant uprisings occurred in 1989 led by Hungarian Romanians in the town of Temesvar (Berdichevsky 2004: 183).¹⁶¹ During the government's final attempts to assimilate the Hungarians into Romanian culture, a vocal opponent in Temesvar, who was also a Hungarian protestant pastor, openly criticized the government and was arrested. As a result of his arrest, both members of the Hungarian ethnic community and protestant Romanians protested openly in the streets leading to an altercation with the state security police (Berdichevsky 2004: 183). The outrage over the use of force spilled into the streets and was one of the key events in ending the Ceausescu government.

¹⁶¹ Temesvar is the Hungarian name of the town. In Romanian it is known as Timisoara.

Although, as Berdichevsky (2004: 183) and Brubaker (2006: 122) note in their research, the unity between Romanians and the Hungarian populations did not last long. The new regime that succeeded Ceausescu began to express support for policies that reinforced Romanian identity and language while working to suppress the Hungarian language and identity. Berdichevsky (2004: 183) notes that:

Romanian policy has nevertheless tried to divorce Hungarian native-tongue speakers from any contact with Hungary as if they spoke their local dialect rather than a national language shared with another nation. Romanian authorities have taken extreme measures to bar access to all 'foreign' Hungarian-language media as well as church activities and university programs emanating from Hungary. (Berdichevsky 2004: 183)

Furthermore, the Romanian government has also made the Romanian language compulsory for government jobs, except in the two majority-Hungarian counties of Harghita and Covasna, where low-level government positions do not maintain a legal requirement to speak Romanian. The Romanian government mandates that the Romanian language and literature are a requirement for all pupils, as well as mandatory Romanian history and geography courses (Berdichevsky 2004: 184).

The short history outlined above provides a deeper insight into the historical relationship between the Hungarians living in Romania, the history of Transylvania, and the tenuous relations between Romanian and the Hungarian minority living within Romania. As noted in Berdichevsky's (2004) analysis of post-soviet policies towards Hungarian identity, the act of excluding the Hungarian population from government positions or limiting their access to Hungarian history and language education provides

fertile ground for a minority identity group to form in response to the major political parties of the state (Jenne 2007: 13-14; Koev 2019: 233; Stroschein 2011: 190).

The Hungarian Population in Romania

As noted at the beginning of the chapter, the Hungarian population within Romania makes up approximately six percent of the total population (2011 Romanian Census). Within that six percent are three ethnic identities: the main group is the Magyars (Hungarians) residing largely within the broader Transylvania region and in Bucharest (the capital city); the Szeklers the second largest group within the Hungarian community and who live predominantly in central Romania in the counties of Harghita, Covasna, and Mureş an area colloquially known as Szeklerland; and lastly, the Csángós a small subethnic group that lives in the Western Moldavia region of Romania.¹⁶² All three groups are ethnically Hungarian but adhere to different versions of Christianity, speak different dialects of Hungarian, and/or are geographically distinct.¹⁶³ The table provided below (Table 4), gives a summary of the population distribution by county as of the last national census in 2011.¹⁶⁴ A little over seventy percent of the Hungarian population resides within five counties and is geographically concentrated within the Transylvanian

¹⁶² Minorities at Risk – Assessment for Magyars (Hungarians) in Romania (2008). <http://www.mar.umd.edu/assessment.asp?groupId=36002>

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ “Rezultate 2011 – Recensământul Populației și Locuitorilor.” <https://www.recensamantromania.ro/rpl-2011/rezultate-2011/>.

region that connects present-day Hungary to the geographic center of present-day Romania.

County	# of Hungarians within the County Population	% of the Population that Identifies as Hungarian	The concentration of Hungarians within the Romanian Population
Harghita	257,707	85.21%	20.99%
Covasna	150,468	73.74%	12.25%
Mureş	200,858	38.09%	16.36%
Satu Mare	112,580	34.65%	9.17%
Bihor	138,213	25.27%	11.25%
Sălaj	50,177	23.35%	4.08%
Cluj	103,591	15.93%	8.43%
Arad	36,568	9.03%	2.97%
Braşov	39,661	7.69%	3.23%
Maramureş	32,618	7.22%	2.65%
Timiş	35,295	5.57%	2.87%
Bistriţa-Năsăud	14,350	5.23%	1.16%
Alba	14,849	4.61%	1.21%
Hunedoara	15,900	4.04%	1.29%
Sibiu	10,893	2.93%	0.88%
Caraş-Severin	3,276	1.19%	0.26%
Bacău	4,373	0.75%	0.35%
Bucharest	3,463	0.21%	0.28%

The distribution of the population, or its concentration in one particular region, is important for measuring the outcomes of a minority nationalist political party and will become more salient later in the chapter (Ishiyama 2012: 782-783). However, what is

¹⁶⁵ Hungarian identity here is inclusive of the three major ethnic groups. Data from the 2011 Census.

important to note from a cultural and communal standpoint is that the Hungarian community in Romania is relatively stable and does maintain some geographic dominance, especially within Szeklerland. The proximity and concentration allow for Hungarian identity to remain a key focal point for politics within the country and help explain why Hungarians can mobilize into a political force in comparison to other minority groups within Romania (Strohschein 2011: 202-203; Birnir 2007: 77-78).

Development of the UDMR – December 1989 to May 1990

On December 25, 1989, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) was founded a week after the end of communist rule in Romania.¹⁶⁶ In the short time before the twenty-fifth, Hungarian intellectuals and political leaders were meeting in and around Romania to begin working on the mobilization of the ethnonational movement and representation of ethnic Hungarians within the Romanian political system (Brubaker 2006: 122-123). Several proclamations were issued after these meetings and specifically:

called for Hungarians to participate as “a collective personality” in the economic, political, and cultural life of Romania and called for “legal and institutional guarantees for the free use of the mother language, and the re-establishment of a system of education in Hungarian at all levels. (Brubaker 2006: 123).

¹⁶⁶ RMDSZ. About us. [Http://Dahr.Ro/](http://Dahr.Ro/). Retrieved September 17, 2022, from <http://dahr.ro/page/about-us>. Not that this formation was initially as a political organization and interest group, not necessarily as a political party. The UDMR as a formal political party occurs during the first set of national elections in May of 1990.

As a political organization and not yet a political party, the UDMR functioned as an umbrella organization for all the major Hungarian associations and was tasked with representing the Hungarian minority on all policies within a newly democratic Romania. Policies governing culture, charitable organizations, religious institutions, education, recreation, and economic policies were under the purview of the UDMR as a political organization and became the focal point for their particular concern for the political organization and the organization as a political party as well (Brubaker 2006: 123).

The early moves by the Hungarian minority were seen as a deliberate action to take advantage of the unrest that followed the collapse of the communist regime and government and took some in the Romanian political class by surprise (Cinopeş 2010; Brubaker 2006: 124). Cinopeş (2010) states that the fervor through which the Hungarian community responded to the politically advantageous moment within the country was equally met with pushback from Romanian nationalists and supporters of the former Ceausescu government within Transylvania. The Romanian nationalists were concerned with a retrenchment of Hungarian identity and therefore took a defensive posture leading to a breakout of violence within Romanian and Hungarian integrated communities in the early part of 1990 (Cinopeş 2010; Brubaker 2006: 124). As a response to the creation and development of the UDMR the Vatra Romaneasca (Romanian Hearth) political organization was formed, as well as the Party for the National Union of Romanians in Transylvania (PUNRT) to ensure Romanian identity was protected throughout the Transylvanian region and aimed to limit whatever gains the UDMR attempted to make (Cinopeş 2010; Brubaker 2006: 124). However, as will be discussed later the PUNRT

was unable to attract members of the Romanian community in the way that the UDMR was able to. Additionally, the PUNRT's leadership and party membership were volatile in a way that the UDMR did not experience (Cinopeş 2010; Brubaker 2006: 124-125). This underscored the difference in salience for each communities' identities, but also the level of uniform support the UDMR was able to capture among the Hungarian population.

The decision to create the UDMR as early as the leadership did, proved to be pivotal for the eventual party's success as it solidified the support of the Hungarian community behind one singular organization and political party. As argued in Chapter 2, there are three critical antecedents to the development of a nationalist political party, which hold for minority nationalist parties as well. These critical antecedents are outlined in the table below. The first critical antecedent is the weakness of the competitors within the political system. When the UDMR formed, there was an explosion of political parties representing a variety of interests in Romanian politics, as well as different identity groups. However, the early movement and strength of the UDMR political establishment took some of the Romanian political leaders by surprise (Brubaker 2006: 124-125). For example, the party representing the provisional government, the FSN, was initially supportive of requests for the protection of Hungarian identity. Brubaker (2006) notes that the provisional government under the FSN placed Hungarians in leadership positions throughout statewide, county, and municipal governments (125). Furthermore, the FSN introduced a declaration on the rights of national minorities that criticize Ceausescu's regime's policies of "forced assimilation" and endorsed constitutional guarantees of

minorities' individual and collective action rights (Brubaker 2006: 124). However, the FSN was not prepared for the extensive policy requests the claims being made by the UDMR and quickly did an about-face on the policies mentioned above. Instead, the leader of the FSN Ion Iliescu spoke out against Hungarian separatism (Brubaker 2006: 124). As a result, the FSN was no longer trusted by members of the Hungarian community and the UDMR announced their support for the main opposition to Iliescu and the FSN, the National Liberal Party (PLN). The FSN's appeal to Romanian national identity made it a weak alternative to the UDMR and strengthened its claim as the best defender of Hungarian identity within the Romanian political system.

Early assertions by the UDMR, and the Hungarian community more broadly, allowed the UDMR to be an early mover and take advantage of earning support among the Hungarian community (Brubaker 2006: 124-125). This coupled with the anti-Hungarian politics of the Ceausescu government provided an environment where voters showed hesitation in supporting the major political parties within the Romanian political system (Brubaker 2006: 125). This is evidence of the second critical antecedent of nationalist political party development, namely that voters expressed apathy or anger towards the major political parties. Anger here can also be used to describe uneasiness or fear among the Hungarian community of what the traditional Romanian political parties' policies would be. This drove voters to not only support the party at the polls but within a few days of the party's founding, more than 300,000 people (roughly 20% of the Hungarian population within Romania) signed up to be members (Cinopeş 2010).

The third and final critical antecedent is a belief that the other political parties would be insufficient in defending the national (Hungarian) identity. This was in part a function of the Ceausescu government's policies towards assimilating Hungarians into Romanian culture, by limiting government resources and social services to only the Romanian language and making Romanian history and cultural symbols essential elements of all schooling (Berdichevsky 2004: 183-184). The goal of government policies was to limit and weaken the Hungarian population within Romania. The early development of the UDMR after the collapse of Ceausescu's authoritarian rule provided the perfect opportunity for the party to establish itself as the main political force for the protection of Hungarian identity. As mentioned above, the party leadership released a set of demands in December 1989, which included

The immediate development of an education system, which guarantees the opportunity for minority language instruction at every level...the reestablishment of the independent Hungarian University in Kolozsvár [Cluj], the establishment of independent Hungarian Schools of engineering, agriculture, medicine and pharmacology, teaching, and fine arts, and the re-opening of the centuries-old Hungarian high schools...the introduction of mandatory bilingualism in Transylvania, with administrative and judicial proceedings conducted in the Romanian and Hungarian languages...the right of local government by democratically elected officials, and the restoration of the Hungarian autonomous towns, regions, and counties where the majority of the population is Hungarian...the establishment of a Ministry of Nationalities and the convening of a Hungarian Nationality Congress. (Cinopeş 2010)

These policies spoke specifically to the Hungarian minority within Romania and to what types of policies they should expect the UDMR to advocate for them, as well as the types of rights and protections sought by the party.

While initially supportive of the measures, the FSN and other political parties within Romania largely supported the idea of a unified Romanian nation that was not supportive of the extent to which the UDMR sought protections and collective action rights for the Hungarian community (Brubaker 2006: 124-125). As a result of this, the political organization decided to run as a political party in the 1990 parliamentary election. The ability of the UDMR to consolidate support under its banner is also evident from the party's electoral performance. Support for the UDMR as a party has been consistent from election to election, winning around five to eight percent of the vote in national parliamentary elections from 1990 through the most recent elections in 2021 (Nohlen and Stoeber 2010; Romanian Electoral Authority 2011-2021). The support the party achieves is reflective of the roughly six to seven percent of the Romanian population that identifies as Hungarian, showing that the party's representation is largely supported.

The UDMR's development from December 1989 to May 1990 established the political organization and eventually the political party as the primary representative of Hungarian identity within Romanian politics. With the fall of the communist government, the Hungarian minority's ability to adapt quickly, seize the opportunity to capitalize on that volatility, and solidify quickly behind a single united movement solidified the party's place within the Hungarian community and the broader Romanian political scene. The failure of the Romanian political parties to capture the Hungarian vote has led to the UDMR becoming the voice of the community and a dominant figure in Romanian politics, even for its relatively small size.

Minority Nationalist Political Party - UDMR

The UDMR represents a coalition of Hungarian organizations within the Romanian political system and has attempted to strike a balance between requests for greater autonomy while reassuring the Romanian government that the goal of formal separation is not within the party's strategic political goals.¹⁶⁷ There is relative stability in the policy positions of the UDMR throughout its development. Party leadership states that the main goals of the UDMR are:

The RMDSZ [UDMR] aimed to elaborate, and work towards the adoption of a legislative proposal for autonomy, including but not limited to territorial autonomy. We call for decentralization and applying the principle of subsidiarity. Towards this end, we look to the positive examples of self-governance in Europe and draw from the positive traditional ethnic coexistence in Transylvania.¹⁶⁸

As stated above the party's main objective is to have self-government and control over the regions and municipalities where Hungarians are the majority or make up a significant portion of the population. More specifically, the policy concerns of the UDMR are those around education policy, protection for cultural identifiers (e.g.,

¹⁶⁷ This has been a point of contention for some within the Romanian-Hungarian community, as a second political party has developed at the local level within Hungarian majority counties arguing for full regional autonomy and a harder line on separation. The Hungarian People's Party of Transylvania advocates for Romania to be divided along ethnic lines and have the new divisions of the country governed by regional parliaments. While present, the party has not been successful in holding only six county councilor seats (out of 1,434) and 207 local council seats (out of 40,067) in Romania.

¹⁶⁸ "About Us" UDMR webpage: <http://dahr.ro/page/about-us>

language, traditions, religion), opportunities for economic advancement, and equal participation and treatment within the national government in the form of autonomy and collective action rights.¹⁶⁹

Education Policies

Education policy has been a principal concern for the UDMR and the main element of its policy agenda. The Romanian national government has limited the means through which students are educated within the country, requiring students to learn Romanian, read Romanian literature, and learn about Romanian history (Berdichevsky 2004: 184-185). This is done through public institutions that are structured around the Romanian language and identity. This in particular has been viewed as problematic by the Hungarian minority, especially within the counties and regions where Hungarian identity is in the majority, is a significant portion of the community, or has a significant cultural heritage. For example, the city of Cluj-Napoca has been a central focus for scholars¹⁷⁰ as only a small portion of Hungarians live in the city and county, with approximately sixteen percent of the population living within Cluj County and roughly half of that population centrally located in the city of Cluj-Napoca.¹⁷¹ The city is a

¹⁶⁹“About Us” UDMR webpage: <http://dahr.ro/page/about-us>

¹⁷⁰ See Brubaker (2006) *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* and Stroschein (2011) “Demography in Ethnic Party Fragmentation: Hungarian Local Voting in Romania,” *Party Politics*, 17(2), 189-204.

¹⁷¹ “Rezultate 2011 – Recensământul Populației și Locuitorilor.” <https://www.recensamantromania.ro/rpl-2011/rezultate-2011/>. Of note is that Cluj-

cultural hub for Hungarian identity with the UDMR's headquarters located within the city, several Hungarian research institutes, as well as the largest public university within Romania which includes Hungarian language and cultural studies as a central education program.

Requests for control over education within the Hungarian community have been a central concern for the UDMR since its first party manifesto was published in 1990. Within the 1990 party manifesto, the party requested local autonomy over schooling, language instruction, the establishment of both public and religious schools, the language of instruction and language learning classes to be in both Hungarian and Romanian, as well as the re-establishment of a Hungarian University in Cluj, and the establishment of a Museum of Transylvanian identity to be constructed.¹⁷² These themes remained central throughout the 1990s. Chiribuca and Magyari (2003) note that these identical policies were central to the UDMR's 1992 and 1996 election programs; and fundamental to the party's request for joining the coalition government in 1996 (82-83). While participating in the 1996-2000 coalition government, the UDMR was unable to make significant gains on these education policies, as well as other policy areas leading to a general skepticism of the Romanian national party that also occupied the coalition government (Chiribuca and Magyari 2003: 84-85).

Napoca has the second-largest concentration of Hungarians residing in a urban area within Romania.

¹⁷² Program of the Hungarian Democratic Union in Romania, policy positions 36-44.

The party was able to make some educational policy gains in the parliament from 2008-2012. Written in their 2012 party program, the party was able to advocate for, and successfully pass, an education reform law that was favorable to the interests of the Hungarian community.¹⁷³ Specifically, the party was able to achieve the concession that children could be educated about Romanian history in Hungarian, additional support for the Hungarian elements of the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj, as well as the ability to establish several small private Hungarian universities.¹⁷⁴ While the Romanian national government agreed to some of these changes, the UDMR has still been requesting greater levels of autonomy and control over elements of technical and trade education, all aspects of the educational process, and increased education of Hungarian identity among disadvantaged and smaller ethnic communities.¹⁷⁵

Education policy, specifically the ability to instruct Hungarian children in the Hungarian language has been a central focus of the UDMR since its creation in 1989. Focus on education has been a central concern in the preservation and maintenance of Hungarian identity within Romania. Education policy is also interesting because we can

¹⁷³ *Trust, Safety, Future – Always Together*, UDMR Electoral Program 2012-2016.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* The importance of having an education policy under the control of the Hungarian minority is due to the general displeasure among the Hungarian community for how Romanian history is taught. For example, traditional Romanian educational texts present Hungarians as oppressors, using only the Romanized names of places and people, and leaving out key moments of Hungarian national events, and the historical multicultural nature of Transylvania is downplayed or ignored (Chiribuca & Magyari 2003).

¹⁷⁵ See UDMR party platforms for 2012 and 2016.

see the overlap of several concerns regarding threats to the national identity of Hungarians within Romania. Economically, access to the Romanian and Hungarian languages would prove useful for students wishing to participate within Hungarian communities where Hungarian identity is the majority, but also the ability to have access to employment within the Romanian economy. Culturally, the concern is over the protection and continued maintenance of the Hungarian language and unique cultural institutions. Lastly, using educational policies as a proxy for further discussions over autonomy and greater control from the Romanian national government. Even as the UDMR makes gains in educational policies, one of its main electoral goals has been the continued devolution of educational policies to local governments or Hungarian-focused boards and educational councils.¹⁷⁶ When viewing the policy objectives of minority nationalist political parties, it makes sense that they would focus on education as one of the main policies of interest, as it has the greatest impact on preserving the national identity, language, and cultural community.

Cultural Protections

One of the central features of any nationalist political party is the concern over the threat to national culture and cultural identifiers like language, customs, traditions, as well as significant cultural markers. This is heightened among minority nationalist discourse because of the potential for replacement by the majority within the country. It

¹⁷⁶ UDMR party Programs 2012 and 2016

is therefore a central plank within the UDMR's policies that there should be protections for the distinct cultural identity of Hungarians within Romania. Revisiting the first party platform of the UDMR from 1990, the party requested complete autonomy over the protection of cultural identity, not just for the Hungarian population, but for all ethnonational and religious minority communities throughout the country.¹⁷⁷

Furthermore, the party advocated for the use of the Hungarian language for public signage, the reinstatement and use of Hungarian place names, and the recognition of locations of particular cultural significance.¹⁷⁸ The party also sought government funds for the creation of minority identity museums, the establishment of cultural unions, and the funding and establishment of means for spreading minority cultural identity through publicly funded presses, artistic endeavors, and cohesive relationships with the Hungarian government.¹⁷⁹

As Romania democratized and competition between Hungarian and Romanian nationalists increased in the 1990s, the UDMR emphasized the need for recognition and protection of Hungarian culture (Chiribuca and Magyari 2003: 87-88). During the party's time in the coalition, they were able to achieve some protections for Hungarian identity, including the use of Hungarian names for locations on signs in areas where the Hungarian population exceeded twenty percent of the population (Chiribuca and Magyari 2003:83).

¹⁷⁷ Program of the Hungarian Democratic Union in Romania, policy position 45, 1990.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, policy positions 46-50.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*.

The language laws were expanded in the early 2000s to include government services and leadership in the ability to speak and use Hungarian within those communities where the proportion of the population exceeds twenty percent. However, by 2012 and 2016 the UDMR was arguing that the Romanian national government had not done enough to protect these legislative gains and was not following through with enforcement.¹⁸⁰ The idea of protecting the national identity feeds into the greater requests for autonomy and collective action within the Hungarian community viewing themselves as the best possible defenders of Hungarian culture, identity, and language.

Economic Advancement

The last policy area that is a regular and recurring trend within the UDMR policy positions is the need to advocate and ensure economic advancement is possible within the Hungarian communities. The early days of the post-Ceausescu Romanian government placed strict rules on the use of Hungarian within public and private sector places of business (Chiribuca and Magyari 2003: 77-81; Berdichevsky 2004: 183; Brubaker 2006: 88). The UDMR held that these practices were discriminatory against the Hungarian population and were one of the reasons that the Transylvanian region is not as economically successful as other parts of Romania. To address these policy concerns the party initially sought to advocate for educational opportunities in Hungarian, including technical and vocational training opportunities so that members of the Hungarian

¹⁸⁰ Party Programs 2012 and 2016.

minority were able to be more competitive in the workforce, the return of private ownership and autonomy of industry within the country, as well as increased participation in the international economy.¹⁸¹

In the early days of the newly democratized Romania, the UDMR was focused on increasing the economic viability of Transylvania and Transylvanians more broadly. This meant increased privatization of industry, protections for cultural identity to ensure that Hungarians would not be discriminated against in hiring relations, as well as the transformation of the Romanian economy into a market economy that could compete within Europe and the international community.¹⁸² This was not out of step for parties of the time within the Romanian political system, as most political parties sought to liberalize the economy as a shift in policy from the Ceausescu government. Throughout the continued development of the UDMR from 1990, the party espoused support for increasingly diversifying the economy of Romania, promotion and protection of the agricultural industry, and starting with the 1996 election – advocating for entry into the European Union.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ 1990 Program of the Hungarian Democratic Union in Romania, Section titled “Fundamental Economic Principles.”

¹⁸² 1990 Program of the Hungarian Democratic Union in Romania, Section titled “Fundamental Economic Principles.”

¹⁸³ A primary feature of UDMR party platforms from 1990-2016 though the policy did shift from election to election-specific policies.

On this last point, we can specifically see a divergence in the policy positions and rhetoric minority nationalist political parties use when discussing the EU or other international organizations. The UDMR views these institutions as a means for protecting minority identity rights and forcing the Romanian government to comply with anti-discrimination and oversight of the Hungarian community. When discussing responsive and radical frameworks for nationalist political parties, international institutions were used as a wedge issue with voters and a point of contention challenging state authority. Thus, one of the key differences between the three frameworks is in their willingness to interact within the international community.¹⁸⁴

The classification of the UDMR as a minority nationalist political party rests on a couple of concepts noted within this section. The party has expressed policy positions and claims of discrimination within the broader Romanian community. Additionally, the policies targeted at limiting the use of the Hungarian language, the centralized control of educational policy, and the perceived barriers preventing minority participation within the economy capture the perceived threats of nationalist political parties more generally, but it is the specific focus on limiting elements of the Hungarian minority's identity, as well as the centralized response of the Romanian government to concerns over greater autonomy leading to rhetoric around separatism for the Transylvanian region solidifies the party as a minority nationalist political party.

¹⁸⁴ See party platforms from 2012 and 2016 in particular where the party emphasizes increasing ties within Western and European organizations.

European Politics

One of the policy aspects that contributes to the main differences between minority nationalist parties and other variations of nationalist political parties discussed in earlier chapters, has been their support and embrace of participation within EU politics. From the early days of the UDMR, they have advocated for and aligned themselves with political parties that were seen as pro-European (Niessen 2005: 767). This is due to the distinct role that the EU provides in protecting minority nationals around the continent. The UDMR is actively involved with organizations like the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) an organization that coordinates the representation of Europe's national minorities.¹⁸⁵ This organization serves as a mutual support community at all levels of European, regional, and national government.¹⁸⁶ Additionally, the party is active in the Minority Safepack Initiative, which aims to protect linguistic minorities, create policies around language equality, and support policies at the national level of government that seeks to create equal protection and treatment for cultural minorities.

The UDMR has also been adept in its participation within European institutions, joining the largest parliamentary group, the European People's Party (EPP), and seeking concessions and support among its members. For example, in their 2012 domestic election program the UDMR touted their ability to have the EPP include in their EU

¹⁸⁵ Federal Union of European Nationalities. <https://fuen.org>

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

election program a promise to pass policies that protected historical minorities in Europe and achieve assurances and protections for minority linguistic rights.¹⁸⁷

UDMR Party Performance

Minority nationalist political parties' electoral performance is different from its responsive and radical nationalist counterparts in that support for minority nationalist political parties will be limited to the minority community within the country. Within that minority community, the party may not be able to capture the support of the minority group (Ishiyama 2012: 202). Furthermore, geographic concentration will play a role in the overall success of a minority nationalist party, regardless of whether the party participates in a proportional or majoritarian electoral system (Ishiyama 2012: 202). This is due to the need to mobilize voters enough to support the party in regular elections. Within a proportional system, the electoral districts may be larger and able to account for the support of a particular political party; however, unless the national electoral system is a singular district, the party will need to rely on the concentration of potential voters to get them above electoral thresholds and ensure representation. Under majoritarian systems, it becomes even harder to elect minority nationalists, as the party will need to either obtain a majority or a plurality of votes within an electoral district meaning that there needs to be a geographic concentration of minority to ensure representation; since it

¹⁸⁷ UDMR 2012 Election Program *Trust, Safety, Future – Always Together*

is unlikely that voters that do not belong to the minority would support the minority party over other possible options (Grofman and Lijphart 1986).

As a minority nationalist political party, the UDMR has been extremely successful in winning and solidifying support within the Hungarian community. As the table below shows, the party generally receives between 5-8% of the vote, which overlaps with the distribution of the Hungarian minority within Romania as well.¹⁸⁸ While 6-8% of the seats in parliament is a relatively small amount in comparison to the major parties, the UDMR has been able to use its small contingency to effect on several occasions by joining or openly supporting the national government in exchange for support towards the UDMR's policy goals (Stroschein 2011: 202). Moreover, the concentration of the Hungarian community within the Transylvanian region, and specifically within a handful of counties, provides the party with its best means to be successful at the local level. As of the most recent elections, the UDMR held control of four county governments (out of 41) and maintained a significant presence at the local level throughout Transylvania in areas where the Hungarian population made up a majority or a significant portion of the population.¹⁸⁹ The ability of the UDMR to be successful in local elections displays the ability of the UDMR to not only mobilize support for their party but limit opposition from within the minority community. Birnir

¹⁸⁸ Autoritatea Electorală Permanentă from <http://www.roaep.ro>

¹⁸⁹ County/local governments are elected via first-past-the-post, therefore the results achieved by the UDMR within these elections are evidence of success within geographically concentrated communities.

(2007) notes that electoral support for ethnic minorities within Romania broadly, but more narrowly within the Hungarian community, is particularly stable and as a result more effective in making their policy demands.

Support for the UDMR

In those tumultuous few days after the collapse of the Ceausescu government, several Hungarian identity organizations made claims about the goals and objectives of the Hungarian community within Romania, but as discussed earlier, the UDMR was successful in removing competition to the organization and solidifying support (Brubaker 2006: 122). This level of support within the community has held firm in the years since, except when support has drifted to independent candidates of Hungarian identity at the local level or the most recent rise of the political party – the Hungarian People’s Party of Transylvania (HPPT) at the local level as well (Strohschein 2011: 190).¹⁹⁰ While the UDMR has been moderate in its approach to the political scene within Romanian politics and aimed to represent the broad interests of the community, the HPPT has argued that more drastic measures need to be taken. Additionally, the HPPT identifies with more radical nationalist policy preferences, advocating for a complete restructuring of

¹⁹⁰ Partidul Popular Maghiar din Transilvania (PPMT) in Romanian, Erdélyi Magyar Néppárt (EMNP) in Hungarian

Romanian society and the state around ethnic community identity.¹⁹¹ The HPPT has been the most significant challenge to the UDMR since its founding; however, the HPPT has only been able to elect six county councilors at the local level and has received less than one percent of the vote in national elections.¹⁹²

The UDMR has not only been stable and durable as a political party but its continued influence and representation of the Hungarian community within Romanian politics have also been relatively unchallenged. While there may be some disagreement within the community about the scope, pace, and/or need for regional autonomy or cultural protections, the party leadership has established a party that is seen as one of the only means for protecting Hungarian identity and representing the community's interests.

UDMR in Government

On several occasions, the UDMR has been a member of a coalition government at the national level and as a result, has been able to achieve certain legislative successes. The party's first time in government was in 1996 as it became a very junior member of

¹⁹¹ Cultural autonomy and territorial federalism: Two voting options for Hungarians in Transylvania. Nationalia. from <https://www.nationalia.info/new/9672/cultural-autonomy-and-territorial-federalism-two-voting-options-for-hungarians-in-transylv>

¹⁹² Stroschein (2011) provides an interesting analysis of the development of opposition to the UDMR within Romania, specifically, her study argues that vocal opposition to the UDMR within the Hungarian community comes only from those areas where the Hungarian minority represents a large portion (majority or plurality) of the population. However, in areas where they are a smaller portion of the population, Hungarians remain aligned with the UDMR or UDMR backed candidates from other parties.

the coalition government. After the 1996 election had concluded the Democratic Convention and the Social Democratic Union jointly received sixty percent of the vote and therefore, did not need to invite the UDMR to join the coalition government. However, the UDMR has been supportive of the Democratic Union's presidential campaign and largely delivered the Hungarian votes for their candidate (Chiribuca and Magyari 2003). Additionally, the new government sought to include the UDMR for pragmatic and political reasons, which included: building image-capital with the international community during a time of regional interethnic conflicts, the two parties (the Democratic Convention and the Social Democrats) shared ideological differences, and had a somewhat strained relationship, therefore, the inclusion of the UDMR created a cushion of support within the coalition, and it provided a genuine reason for the national parties to take up the legislative causes of the Hungarian minority (Chiribuca and Magyari 2003). As a part of the coalition agreement, the UDMR was given three cabinet posts: Minister for Healthcare, Minister for the Protection of National Minorities (a new position/department), and the Minister for Education (Chiribuca and Magyari 2003). While only given three posts, this was disproportionately high compared to their presence within the coalition and was over three areas of strategic importance to UDMR party officials. At the next election, the UDMR party leaders argued that participation within the coalition was successful and yielded policy achievements around increased privatization, increased local autonomy, the launching of several regional development programs, the increased use of minority language in education, and most importantly

initiating a new system of legal provisions to regulate minority rights (Chiribuca and Magyari 2003).¹⁹³

After 2000, the UDMR would shift alliances and support for several of the main national political parties always searching to find what would yield the best legislative results for the Hungarian community. The party operated as formal coalition members and also traded formal support in exchange for the passage of policies favorable to the community. As a result, the party was able to achieve concessions on educational policies, the passage of the language laws in the 2008-2012 parliament, which increased the ability to use and communicate in Hungarian in formal settings, and lastly, achieved some limited autonomy to govern the counties where there is a significant Hungarian population.¹⁹⁴ The opportunistic and pragmatic approach of the UDMR is displayed in these relations, as the party seeks to make political partnerships for legislative and policy advantages rather than relying on left or right political distinctions.

Conclusion

The UDMR provides an exceptional exemplar of the potential success a minority nationalist political party can find if they are geographically concentrated, pragmatic

¹⁹³ There is some disagreement over the “successes” of the UDMR during the 1996-2000 government coalition with some elites within the UDMR arguing that the reforms and legislative achievements did not go far enough or do enough for the Hungarian community.

¹⁹⁴ UDMR Electoral Program 2012 – *Trust, safety, future – always together*

political operators, and can find willing partners at the national level. Some of the success of the UDMR is heavily reliant on the geographic concentration of Hungarians within several counties, but the rest of their success is largely driven by their ability to prevent challenges to their political authority and maintain the majority support of the Hungarian community behind the party.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Nationalist political parties present a unique challenge to researchers' understanding of party families as they are often misclassified due to aspects of the party overlapping with competing party classifications or also being limited by the tradition of identifying political party family members through their party names (Mair and Mudde 1998: 220-221).¹⁹⁵ To correct this, included in Chapter One was a new analytical definition of how we should define NPPs that aims to identify members of the NPP family through their rhetoric and policy positions; a proposition also echoed by Mudde in his study of populist radical right parties (Mudde 2007: 39). This new definition argues that a political party belongs to the NPP family if it is a party that prioritizes a singular nation or national identity, expressing a belief that this nation or national identity is unique, and as such requires political action to ensure its protection and survival. This definition pulls the focus away from identifying NPPs by name or a narrow ideological category and is able to capture the sometimes-incoherent policies presented by NPPs.

Furthermore, NPPs' rhetoric and policy proposals are framed around three alleged threats to the nation. First, is the perceived feeling of economic precariousness in society and a feeling of loss of economic security through institutional change. This is the threat

¹⁹⁵ However, subnational separatist organizations seem to fall through the cracks here too. As Sinn Fein (Ireland), Bloc Quebecois (Quebec, Canada), or the Scottish National Party (Scotland, United Kingdom) are often classified as "regional" political parties, rather than nationalist in the Manifesto Project Database.

of economic insecurity and presented itself differently among the three parties discussed in the previous chapters. After the party transitioned to a nationalist party in 1995, Fidesz regularly expressed concerns over the economic policies enacted by the MSZP-led governments of 1994-1998 and 2002-2010 (Wilkin 2016: 54-55, 60). Fidesz, and its leader Viktor Orban, argued that the government was not working in the interest of the nation, rather they were focused on appeasing foreign powers through overreaching neo-liberal reforms in the 1990s and then ignoring the needs of Hungarians during the financial crises of 2006 and 2008 (Szabo 2015: 310-311). Jobbik made a similar argument but maintained that all major parties were complicit in the lack of economic protections for the Hungarian state (Kovacs 2013: 226). The notion Hungary had never fully transitioned in the 1990s and early 2000s provided Jobbik with the opportunity to argue that serious change needed to occur to ensure the economic survival of Hungary (Kovacs 2013: 226-227). Taking a slightly different approach, minority nationalists, and in this case, the UDMR in Romania were focused on access to the economy and protections for the national identity within the Romanian national system.¹⁹⁶ The leadership of the UDMR requested protections for workers within the economy, whether that was through language protections or through educational and training opportunities for the Hungarian minority.¹⁹⁷ Through all three examples, the role of economic insecurity helped frame and shape each party's policy responses.

¹⁹⁶ See UDMR Policy Platforms

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

The second alleged threat is around national sovereignty, which is defined as the contention that the state or nation has lost the ability to control its institutional structure or policies. This again was a common critique thrown around by Fidesz against the governing socialist administration of the MSZP, especially during the 1998 and 2006 Hungarian parliamentary elections (Szabo 2015: 310). Orban as leader argued that the MSZP-led government's desire for recognition around the globe made it subservient to the will of the international community, specifically "Western" interests like the European Union and the international banking community (Wilkin 2016: 64). These appeals were seen as weakening Hungary's sovereignty because they allowed for increased foreign investment, ascension to the EU¹⁹⁸, and a loss of control over portions of the country's borders (Wilkin 2016: 76-78).¹⁹⁹ Jobbik's position on Hungarian sovereignty was not that different from the positions taken by Fidesz; however, the party also stressed a limiting of Hungarian state power through the original sin of the Trianon Treaty, which carved out large swaths of Hungarian land and gave it to neighboring countries (Kovacs 2013: 231). The UDMR by contrast due to their minority status within Romania structures their concerns over national sovereignty through policy proposals that would permit self-government and autonomy for those of Hungarian descent living in

¹⁹⁸ While initially in support of Hungary's ascension to the EU, Orban and Fidesz later changed the party's position after the ascension took place in 2004. Orban has only grown more critical of EU practices over time and continues to make arguments that EU institutions infringe on Hungary's sovereignty.

¹⁹⁹ Specifically, during the 2015 migrant crisis, Hungary was extremely aggressive in response to the migrants crossing into Europe through Hungary.

Romania (Strohschein 2011: 192-193). More specifically, the UDMR argues that the only way to guarantee cultural protection is through granting more autonomy for the Hungarian minority to govern itself within the Romanian institutions of the state (UDMR Election Program 2016: 4). Unique to specifically the European NPPs discussed here is the relationship between the parties and the European Union. Fidesz and Jobbik view the EU as an adversary that infringes on Hungary's sovereignty, whereas the UDMR (and minority nationalists more broadly) view the EU as an ally in the protection of their identity and a supporter of their autonomy and protection within Romania (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 198-199; UDMR Party Program 2012: 8). Therefore, these outside supranational or international institutions are seen differently depending on the broader goals of the type of nationalist political organization and whether such an institution will be an advantage to the NPP at home.

The third and last threat perceived by nationalist political parties is the threat of cultural dilution defined as the fear of losing cultural identifiers including language, cultural artifacts, and customs. Early after they transitioned to an NPP, Fidesz focused on the development of cultural identifiers through the advocacy of Hungarians' "civic" participation (Fowler 2004a: 86; Wilkin 2016: 53, 60). This was later extended to cultural identifiers around Christianity (with recognition of the church's place in Hungary's early establishment),²⁰⁰ protection for Hungarian "values" around the family and as a justification for anti-LGBTQ+ policies, as well as protections from outside influence on

²⁰⁰ An example is the inclusion of St. Stephen within the Hungarian constitution.

language and culture through immigration or institutional restrictions (Fowler 2004b; Wilkin 2016: 54-55). As a radical nationalist political party, Jobbik took the need for cultural protection to the extreme, arguing that the Roma population within Hungary is diluting Hungarian identity, promoting a need to protect Hungarian cultural institutions both in and outside of Hungary's borders, as well as advocating for policies that would increase the Hungarian population (Feischmidt 2019: 183-185). For Jobbik, the protection of the cultural identity became the central theme of their campaigns and their connection to groups in civil society (i.e., the Magyar Garda), especially from 2006-2010 (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 189-194; Kovacs 2013: 227-228). Here the UDMR is also unique in its rhetoric as the party represents a population that is a minority within a larger nation. Thus, the UDMR expresses its greatest concern over the protection of identity-based rights, such as language, cultural institutions, and education policies (Brubaker 2006: 122-124). For the UDMR the greatest threat to the national identity is that of diluting or removing the Hungarian minority's cultural signifiers. This too yields an interesting difference between the three parties in that the UDMR has found a willing partner in EU institutions in the protection of their minority identity, whereas Fidesz and Jobbik focus on the way that EU institutions infringe on their ability to protect and manage their cultural communities.

By analyzing party policies and rhetoric through these three threats and the party's prioritization of protecting the national identity, we can begin to identify parties that would otherwise have been missed through previous classification methods. This is important because it will allow researchers to identify nationalist political parties across

the political spectrum rather than limiting it only to those that espouse far-right ideology or self-identify as a nationalist political party. Furthermore, this classification will help researchers in analyzing the behavior of these parties by making sense of their, at times somewhat erratic, behavior. The identification and classification of NPPs as a distinct party family can present a fresh perspective of parties within Central and Eastern Europe and possibly in other parts of the world.

Revisiting the Theory of NPP Development

The theory discussed in Chapter Two emphasized that there are several key aspects as to why there are differences among NPPs within the party family. Specifically, the theory argues that these parties develop during critical choice points, and in doing so, the party elites make a determination about the party's particular goals and policy positions in courting specific aspects of the electorate. These policy positions and ultimately the goals of the party determine their overall structure and posturing within the political system. The cases studied here the Fidesz and Jobbik parties of Hungary and the UDMR of Romania each represents one of the party policy frameworks available to nationalist political parties: pragmatic, radical, and minority nationalist respectively. In addition to the timing of the party's development, two other features are crucial for the party's identification within one of the frameworks: the membership of the party and the party's leadership structure. The ability of the party to adapt and set the agenda within the political system is bound by the freedom through which the party leaders can maneuver (Panebianco 1988: 23; Mudde 2007: 260). Parties that are power-seeking and pragmatic

in order to build an electorate that will lead them to power, will be realistic about which other parties to work with or the policies the party chooses to support and will function differently than a political party with a purist base where the membership believes only their views are the solutions to the problems of the nation. How did this vary among the cases analyzed?

The first case examined in Chapter Three is that of the Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Party. Fidesz is coded as an example of the *pragmatic nationalism* framework because of its unique development and political positioning. As noted in Chapter Two, *pragmatic nationalism* is grounded in the belief that there is a singular national identity under threat and asserts a need to actively participate in state institutions to protect the nation. Fidesz fits within this policy framework as the party has defined its policy positions and governing agenda around the need to protect the middle-class, commercial interests, and conservative principles of Hungarian identity from the influence of outsiders (Wilkin 2016: 54-55). For example, Szabo (2015) argues that after the loss in 2002, the party adopts its policy positions and rhetoric to reflect five basic policy positions: 1) the party became anti-establishment and anti-elite; 2) it reinforced national, ethnic, and cultural identity – especially against the Socialist-liberal parties and their allies domestically; 3) accused institutional processes of ignoring the national interest and will of the people; 4) created a civil society organization to merge national, civic, and religious symbols; and 5) remade the party to have both broad appeals, yet maintain its dominance within the center-right of the political spectrum (310). These policy positions fit well within the pragmatic nationalism framework as they all contend that the Hungarian national identity

and an individual's connection to civic action as a Hungarian citizen are under threat from outside forces, therefore Fidesz positions itself as the only political party in Hungary that can ensure that the institutions of the state are used to protect the population from these outside influences. The broad set of policy positions, as well as the ability of Orban to usher through changes and adaptations to those policies with very little opposition from within the party; creates the opportunity for Fidesz to construct a large electorate to not only gain power but keep it over time (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 201; Bocksei and Molnar 2019: 10-15). This is where Fidesz has been particularly astute as the party's unique founding as an anti-communist social movement and an early opposition party of both the first post-communist government and the post-communist successor party, provided Fidesz with the ability to keep their distance from the institutions that transitioned after the end of communism (Fowler 2004a: 85-86; Szabo 2015: 304). Moreover, the attachment to notions of civic nationalism and the strategic positioning of the party as the only 'center-right' political party that can achieve government, shows an adeptness at responding to political change that is missing within the other policy frameworks (Wilkin 2016: 52-53).

In Chapter Four the Hungarian political party "The Movement for a Better Hungary," more commonly referred to as *Jobbik*, is examined as an ideal type for the radical nationalist framework. *Jobbik* fits the *radical nationalist* framework as it was established under the simple belief that the Hungarian party system in the early 2000s lacked a party that could represent the values of the Hungarian people (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 188-189). The goal of the party is not to simply gain power but reimagine the state

in a way that involves returning national sovereignty to every element of political life (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 194). Under Jobbik's *Bethlen Gabor Program*, the party argued that the state plays a central role in building the national economy, which entailed nationalizing sectors of the economy of national interest, the relegation of monetary policy to national interests, nationalization and extension of welfare provision, and the nationalization of private pension funds (Wilkin 2016: 98). Furthermore, members of the party argued that Hungary never officially went through a change in political system after the end of the Cold War, since those in power and competing for power, are elites who dominated politics in Hungary in the 1990s (Kovacs 2013: 226). Thus, Jobbik would bring about a radical change in revising the system to work in favor of the Hungarian people. This would also include a reassertion of Christian values and identity, as well as the removal of those non-Hungarian elements of society like the Roma and internationalist elite (Kreko and Mayer 2016: 194). Since the party was founded as a breakaway from Fidesz, the membership and leadership of the party have been more steadfast in their policy positions and beliefs, representing a more purist membership base (Wilkin 2016: 100). Attempts by the party leadership, specifically Gabor Vona in 2015-2016, to moderate party policies and reduce the rhetoric against the Roma populations, was met with backlash from party members and ultimately led to his resignation and the formation of a new more extreme nationalist breakaway party.²⁰¹ This

²⁰¹ "Hungary's Jobbik Ditches Far-Right Past to Challenge Orban in 2018," Reuters, January 11, 2017.

underscores the difference between pragmatic and radical nationalists in that the party membership will be torn between those that are pragmatic and want to achieve power within state institutions and those that are more pure or extreme in their beliefs. Radical nationalists are therefore not as resilient a political party as their pragmatic counterparts, which may have a limiting effect on their overall success.

The Third and final case examined in chapter five was the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania or more commonly known as the UDMR. The UDMR is identified within the minority nationalist framework because they represent a distinct and unique minority national identity within Romania where the connection between ethnic and national identity is distinct (Strohschein 2011; Birnir 2007; Brubaker 2006). Parties that subscribe to the minority nationalist framework will claim that their identity is weak within the state where they reside because the nation makes up only a small portion of the population. The party then seeks to rectify this imbalance by pursuing protection for its national identity through its relationship with the state (Brubaker 2006: 80-81). In advocating for regional and political autonomy for the Hungarian minority and the protection of their cultural identity, the UDMR meets this basic qualification. Unlike its pragmatic and radical nationalist cousins, it is less clear whether the membership of the party makes a difference in the set of policy decisions made by the party (Strohschein 2011: 193). In the case of the UDMR, the fact that the party begins as a cultural organization that sought to unify and advocate on behalf of the Hungarian minority provides some clues that the membership may be more pragmatic over the policy decisions made by the leadership (Brubaker 2006: 122). This is evident in the party's

participation within national coalition governments, as well as its active participation within EU institutions, as the membership may believe this is the best pathway for the protection of their national identity (Cinopes 2010). That is not to say that disagreement does not exist within minority nationalist political parties; however, the suggestion here might be that to be a successful minority nationalist political party, the membership may also need to be pragmatic (Stroschein 2011: 190).

In the examination of the three parties noted above, there is a common element that can be taken to be indicative of all nationalist political parties regardless of their classification. Overall, the leadership within each of these parties is relatively strong, as they typically have one leader for long periods who has some freedom and latitude to shape and structure the party in their own image. It is not clear if this is a function of nationalist political parties overall or representative of the more contemporary developments of political parties being defined and associated with their party leaders. This needs to be investigated further when classifying nationalist political parties.

The implications of both understanding the ways in which nationalist political parties develop, as well as their classification within one of the policy frameworks provides a structure for analyzing party behavior that is currently not accounted for within the social science literature. The policy frameworks provide a basis for identifying and developing some predictive elements of how nationalist political parties will behave. This provides researchers and the public alike with the ability to determine ways to interact with these parties and to understand how they may move and operate within the political system.

NPP Shadow Cases

In this section, I briefly discuss three additional examples of NPPs that fit within the theoretical framework discussed in chapter two. Each party has been identified as a nationalist political party through secondary literature or their classification using the manifesto project dataset. The first party is the Latvian National Union: For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Party (TB/LNNK) another case of the pragmatic nationalist framework, the Bulgarian Ataka party is another example of the radical nationalist framework, and lastly the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (EAPL) as an example of the minority nationalist framework.

The For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement (TB/LNNK) was founded in a merger of two parties in 1997 and lasted until 2010 when it entered into another merger with another nationalist political party. The first party in the 1997 merger, Latvian National Independence Movement (LNNK), has been coded historically as a moderate nationalist or conservative political party (Bennich-Bjorkman and Johansson 2012: 586). The LNNK began in 1988 as a protest and liberation movement that sought to liberate Latvia from communist rule and eventually became a political party competing in the 1993 parliamentary elections (Bennich-Bjorkman and Johansson 2012: 591; Morris 2004: 553). The For Fatherland and Freedom Party (TB) was established in 1993 as one of the first national mass movements demanding the restoration of democracy, the advocacy of Latvia's independence, as well as the representation of Latvian nationalist philosophy (Bjorkman and Johansson 2012: 591). Membership within both parties moved back and forth between the TB and LNNK in the

early years of the democratic transition as Latvian politics experienced a large amount of instability (Morris 2004: 553). This led to the decision to unite political forces through a party merger in 1997 (Bennich-Bjorkman and Johannson 2012: 591). Similar to Fidesz's unification of the center-right in Hungary, the TB/LNNK merger was seen as a pragmatic move to limit vote splitting among nationalist-oriented political parties and unite the parties within the national parliament. Within the merger, TB was the more ethnically focused nationalist organization and actively advocated against the notion of granting citizenship to anyone who was not of Latvian descent within the new Latvian state, whereas the LNNK was seen as having a more moderate set of policy positions (Bennich-Bjorkman and Johannson 2012: 594). The united party actively sought to form the government and operate within government coalitions and was a member of governing coalitions through 2004 (Morris 2004: 555-563; Bennich-Bjorkman and Johannson 2012: 594). At the merger, the party leader of For Fatherland and Freedom Maris Grinblats stated that the parties' policies would be focused on "national values, the inviolability of the fundamental principles of the constitution, passage of a tough citizenship law, promotion of the repatriation of aliens and the preservation of the 'purity of the Latvian language'" (Morris 2004: 556). From 1997-1998 the TB/LNNK led a coalition government under Prime Minister Guntars Krasts, who was responsible for moderating the party's position on the question of nationality and moderated the party's stance on admission to the EU and NATO (Smith-Silvertsen 2004). While the TB/LNNK would hold ultimately exclusionist views based on ethnic identity, the party moderated its positioning once it entered the coalition around issues of economic liberalization and

social policies (Jungerstam-Mulders 2006: 57). Additionally, the party moved to strengthen Latvian language laws and soften its opposition to modifications to national identity laws. In this short example, the coding of a pragmatic nationalist policy framework fits due to the pragmatic nature of the TB/LNNK party. The party was able to adapt to changes within the political system to achieve its ultimate goal of governing the state and having influence over policies.

The next party under examination is the Ataka party of Bulgaria. Founded in April 2005 by talk-show host Volen Siderov, the Ataka party was built on the political beliefs of its leader that the Bulgarian government suffered from

The inability and/or unwillingness of the Bulgarian state to curb raging Roma crime, which purportedly terrorized the majority of the Bulgarian population; the rising threat of “Turkification” of the country, promoted by Ahmed Dogan’s DPS...and its partners in the governing coalition, aided by the West under the guise of “minority rights,” and abetted by Bulgarian human rights non-governmental organizations; and the moral bankruptcy of the entire political establishment, which stole from the Bulgarian people through crooked privatization, shady foreign debt deals, and ubiquitous corruption and nepotism. (Popova 2016: 261)

However, Siderov experienced some difficulties when initially trying to register the new party prior to the 2005 election (Popova 2016: 262). As a result, he formed a coalition with four small existing parties²⁰² and together they established a succinct twenty-point platform (Popova 2016: 262). Popova (2016) notes that the platform espoused by the coalition was difficult to place on the “left-right” spectrum as it contained typical right-

²⁰² This included the registered parties of The National Movement for the Salvation of the Fatherland and the Bulgarian National-Patriotic Party and the grassroots-led Union of Patriotic Forces and New Dawn parties.

wing positions, such as protection of “sacred symbols”, tough-on-crime attitudes, and skepticism of multicultural values; however, it also included traditionally left-leaning policy positions including the introduction of the minimum wage, support for state intervention in the economy, and the establishment of more public goods (263). In the first parliamentary elections, Ataka gained approximately 9.3% of the vote and was the fourth-largest party within the parliament (Marinos 2015: 274). In 2006, Siderov would run for the presidency and captured 24% of the vote, coming in second place behind the winner Georgi Parvanov of the Social Democratic party (Popova 2016: 263, Marinos 2015: 274). In subsequent elections, the party was unable to receive more than 9% of the vote, leading many observers to believe that the party would not be able to last (Marinos 2015: 274-275). However, the party has been able to maintain steady support within the Bulgarian electorate and has only increased its opposition to the West and the EU (Marinos 2015: 275). Marinos (2015) notes that Siderov and the Ataka platform calls for significant change to how the Bulgarian state operates with the need for a complete overhaul of the “non-sovereign, anti-national framework which eliminated us [Bulgaria] as a state with its own economy and foreign policy” (283).²⁰³ Similar to Jobbik and the radical nationalist policy framework discussed in Chapter Four, Ataka’s party structure seems to push against the state arguing for extreme policies of both the left and the right (Marinos 2015: 284-285). Moreover, it advocates a dramatic change to the state structure, scapegoats the Roma population by blaming that community for the crime within the

²⁰³ Marinos quoting Siderov from a 2011 gathering of the Ataka party.

country, and is heavily skeptical of international institutions (Marinos 2015: 285-287). The membership is extremely steadfast in its critiques of the state and is unwilling to participate in government as the party views the government and governing parties as corrupt (Marinos 2015: 293).²⁰⁴ Lastly, the party's extremist rhetoric and advocacy for radically changing the Bulgarian government seemed to limit its overall appeal within the electorate (Marinos 2015: 281-282).

The third and final example to discuss here is the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (EAPL). This party is a case of the minority nationalist framework as it is a political party that represents Polish nationals living within Lithuania. The Polish population is approximately 5.6% of the total population and largely lives along the border between Poland and Lithuania (Janusauskiene 2016: 578-579). Not the largest ethnic minority within Lithuania,²⁰⁵ what makes the Polish community unique is its concentration outside of the capital Vilnius and along the southeastern border (Janusauskiene 2016: 578-579). In several districts, the Polish population makes up the majority or a plurality of the ethnic identity present within the community. The party was established in 1994 after the adoption of a new law that only allowed political parties to take part in municipal elections in Lithuania (Janusauskiene 2016: 582; 2021: 143). The party originated as a political organization known as the Association of Poles in

²⁰⁴ Although they do not participate in government, the party was supportive of the ruling conservative party for most of the 2009-2013 term (Marinos 2015).

²⁰⁵ The Russian minority is approximately 9% of the population.

Lithuania but changed its official name to the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (EAPL) when the party became officially recognized by the Ministry of Justice (Janusauskiene 2016: 582). The EAPL has been able to maintain an electoral monopoly over the Polish national minority within Lithuanian politics and has received roughly 5% of the vote in the most recent parliamentary elections (Janusauskiene 2016: 583). The party has historically advocated for the protection of the Polish language and culture, while also requesting guarantees from the Lithuanian government for autonomy around education and economic policies (Janusauskiene 2016: 583-584, 2021: 143-144). In comparison to the case discussed in Chapter Five of the UDMR, the EAPL development story is very similar in that it springs from a social movement and becomes the dominant force in defense of the national minority within Lithuanian politics. Part of the success within the Polish community is the concentration of the Polish minority within a particular geographical region of Lithuania, as was the case with the UDMR in Romania (Strohschein 2011; Janusauskiene 2016: 578-579). Moreover, the issue areas between the UDMR and the EAPL are extremely similar in that both seek to have cultural protections for language, attempt to have regional autonomy where the population is concentrated, as well as secure economic opportunities for the population.

While admittedly brief, the three additional cases discussed in this section show that the theoretical considerations around party position and development have a promising application outside of the Hungarian and Romanian contexts. More investigation is needed to see if the critical choice points framework discussed in chapter

two would also apply here, but there is a seemingly clear connection between the types of nationalist policy frameworks and their ability to be applied to additional cases.

Future Research

The focus of this project has been on two areas within the study of nationalist political parties. The first, addressed in Chapter One, dealt with the conceptual clarity and identification of nationalist political parties, focusing on their rhetoric and policy positions as the main drivers for identification. This aspect needs to be developed further and would benefit from a comprehensive examination of party rhetoric through the use of textual analysis (see Mudde 2007: 39). Since the individual review of party policy platforms, public speeches, or parliamentary records would be an expensive and time-consuming process; the use of textual analysis would be useful for capturing whether the trends noted in the conceptual definition are present within the rhetoric of the parties under investigation. As an example of this, data is currently being collected on the speeches of members of the Hungarian parliament (specifically party leaders). The expectation is that this will provide substantial support to the notion that the party's rhetoric is a preferable way to identify nationalist political parties within a particular political system.

The second avenue for future research is to test the external validity of the theory presented in Chapter Two of the dissertation. Initially, this would be to investigate the cases discussed above in this chapter for a more complete analysis of whether they fit within the theoretical claims made in the second chapter, with a specific focus on the

development of the party around the critical choice point and a more detailed analysis of the parties' memberships and political operations. From that point, future researchers should test the external validity of the theory by examining nationalist political parties within Western Europe. Do parties like Vox in Spain, the Front National in France, or the Alternative for Germany in Germany fit within the policy frameworks? Does their development tell a different story than those in the Central and Eastern European context? Moreover, since one of the main rationales for the analysis of Central and Eastern European countries was to focus on the development of parties within countries in the process of democratization, there is a natural question as to whether the theory presented has any applicability within other democratic political systems that have gone or are going through the democratization process, testing the ability of the theory to explain the development of nationalist political parties beyond the European continent. Lastly, there may be some additional variation within subnational variants of nationalist political parties, particularly within Western countries where there are strong movements around national identity with examples from Catalonia, Quebec, and Scotland serving as the primary examples of these movements. As seen in the cases around minority nationalism, which largely focused on participation within the national political system, there is possibly some competition and variation within the subnational variations of these claims to national identity, which should be explored further (Stroschein 2011; Jenne 2007).

This research agenda may be too broad or may only be minimally accomplished; however, as nationalist political parties continue to have a presence within democratic

political systems it is important to understand why, how, and when they develop. Additionally, understanding this party family's behavior through an improved classification method will provide scholars and the public alike the ability to identify and analyze party behavior. This can help in responding to the claims of these parties, addressing their often disjointed policy positions, and avoiding the rise of the anti-democratic nationalism that is so often associated with these parties.

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