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In One's Own Right: Party Competition and Ideological Control in Post-Communist Hungary and Poland

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Abstract

In their 1997 paper "Are Transitions Transitory?", Milada Vachudova and Timothy Snyder predicted that the ethnically homogenous states of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) would experience an uncomplicated democratic transition. In their formulation, three such states – Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic – would encounter success in this process as a result of three factors: their ethnic homogeneity, their relatively strong economies, and their successful breakages from communist rule. At once the scholars predicted that three other states, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, would fail to democratize, particularly because they were not characterized by these three factors. The key differentiating factor in the paper, and in turn what the three factors were expected to correlate with, was the degree of ethnic nationalism in each state's respective politics. By contrast, the situation in 2017 looks decidedly different. Hungary under Viktor Orbán has sunk to Romania- and Bulgaria- levels of democracy, and Poland's recent re-election of the populist Law and Justice (PiS) party seems to signal the emergence of an analogous trend in that state. Further, both of these parties have at once mobilized ethnic nationalist rhetoric in order to legitimize their own political ambitions. The aim of this paper, then, is to answer two questions relating to Vachudova and Snyder's 1997 formulations. The first question concerns why, contrary to the expectations of these scholars, Hungary and Poland have seen the emergence of ethnic nationalist politics. The second question concerns why Hungary, though seemingly identical to Poland in its initial democratic conditions, has seen the mobilization of ethnic nationalism to a far more extreme and anti-democratic degree.

In One's Own Right:
Party Competition and Ideological Control in Post-Communist Hungary and Poland

By

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Abstract

In their 1997 paper "Are Transitions Transitory?", Milada Vachudova and Timothy Snyder predicted that the ethnically homogenous states of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) would experience an uncomplicated democratic transition. At once the scholars predicted that three other states, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, would fail to democratize, particularly because they were not characterized by these three factors. The key differentiating factor in the paper, and in turn what the three factors were expected to correlate with, was the degree of ethnic nationalism in each state's respective politics. By contrast, the situation in 2017 looks decidedly different. Hungary under Viktor Orbán has sunk to Romania- and Bulgaria- levels of democracy, and Poland's recent re-election of the populist Law and Justice (PiS) party seems to signal the emergence of an analogous trend in that state. Further, both of these parties have at once mobilized ethnic nationalist rhetoric in order to legitimize their own political ambitions. The aim of this paper, then, is to answer two questions relating to Vachudova and Snyder's 1997 formulations. The first question concerns why, contrary to the expectations of these scholars, Hungary and Poland have seen the emergence of ethnic nationalist politics. The second question concerns why Hungary, though seemingly identical to Poland in its initial democratic conditions, has seen the mobilization of ethnic nationalism to a far more extreme and anti-democratic degree.

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I owe thanks to my peers from the honors seminar, and to my brothers in Mask and Wig (Spencer and Tai chief among them), for their camaraderie and for their inimitable friendship.

I owe thanks to Julia, who disrupts the world's disorder just by virtue of her grace.

And I owe thanks to my parents, who chose to leave communism behind.

"You can never quarantine the past."

–Pavement, "Gold Soundz," 1994

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1. Introduction

In their 1997 paper "Are Transitions Transitory?", Milada Vachudova and Timothy Snyder predicted that the ethnically homogenous states of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) would experience an uncomplicated democratic transition.[1] In their formulation, three such states – Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic – would encounter success in this process as a result of three factors: their ethnic homogeneity, their relatively strong economies, and their successful breakages from communist rule.[2] By contrast, the scholars predicted that three other states, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, would fail to democratize particularly because they were not characterized by these three factors.[3] The key differentiating factor in the paper, and in turn what the three factors were expected to correlate with, was the degree of ethnic nationalism in each state's respective politics.[4]

By contrast, the situation in 2017 looks decidedly different. Hungary, for one, has become recognized during the tenure of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his party, Fidesz, for its rejection of liberal democracy in favor of Putin- or Erdogan-style governance.[5] And more recently, Poland has re-elected the populist Law and Justice party, whose incumbency has already resulted in censure from the European Union (EU) over its unlawful actions in relation to Poland's constitutional tribunal, among other anti-democratic moves.[6] Further, as we will see, both of these parties have at once mobilized ethnic nationalist rhetoric in order to legitimize their own political ambitions. As such the dual cases of Hungary and Poland appear to controvert

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[1] Milada Anna Vachudova and Timothy Snyder, "Are Transitions Transitory? Two Types of Political Change in Eastern Europe Since 1989", *East European Politics and Societies* 11, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 2.
[2] Vachudova and Snyder, "Are Transitions Transitory?", 2-3.
[3] Vachudova and Snyder, "Are Transitions Transitory?", 3.
[4] Vachudova and Snyder, "Are Transitions Transitory?", 2.
[5] Zoltan Simon, "Orban Says He Seeks to End Liberal Democracy in Hungary," *Bloomberg* (New York), July 28, 2014.
[6] "Safeguarding democratic rule within the EU," *The Economist* (London, UK), May 23, 2017.

entirely Vachudova and Snyder's 1997 expectations, both as pertains to the deteriorating conditions of their democracies, and relatedly, the mobilization of ethnic nationalist rhetoric therein.

The aim of this paper, then, is to answer two questions relating to Vachudova and Snyder's 1997 formulations. The first question concerns why, contrary to the expectations of Vachudova and Snyder, Hungary and Poland have seen the emergence of ethnic nationalist politics. The second question concerns why Hungary, though seemingly identical to Poland, has seen the mobilization of ethnic nationalism to a far more extreme and anti-democratic degree than Poland has.

This thesis will proceed in three main chapters. In the next chapter I will review the literature on the nature of nationalism in CEE. This investigation will reveal two main errors in the formulations of Vachudova and Snyder, which in turn will help to organize the rest of this paper's argument. Namely the review of the literature suggests first that Vachudova and Snyder overplayed the influence of the aforementioned factors in anticipating the development of ethnic nationalism. By contrast, the scholars failed to anticipate that nationalism is a much deeper and more historically-rooted phenomenon for post-communist CEE on the whole. Accordingly, section 3.1 will respond to the historical motivations for ethnic nationalism in post-communist CEE, particularly as aggravated by the experience of communism after the Second World War. Section 3.2 will respond to the specific historical motivations for Hungarian and Polish nationalism, in order both to respond to Vachudova and Snyder's incomplete formulations, and in turn to give necessary context for subsequent political developments in each state. Section 3.3 will affirm Vachudova and Snyder's categorization of Hungary and Poland as politically similar, but will do so with a sensitivity to underlying historical trends within the region on the whole.

As such, Vachudova and Snyder's second error had to do with their overly conflating the development of ethnic nationalism with anti-democratic trends in post-communist states (though, given their formulations, these claims failed even to extend to Hungary or Poland). That is, while the findings from section 3 will show that the ethnic nationalist traditions of Hungary and Poland are on the whole rather similar, their distinct courses in the post-communist period suggest the importance of another factor in linking ethnic nationalism to anti-democratic trends in these two states. In the view of this paper, the variable that best helps to explain this is the degree of pluralism in each country's respective right (i.e., the diversity of each given state's conservative element). As such, in section 4 I will analyze the courses of Hungarian and Polish democratization to argue, essentially, that the greater prevalence of anti-democratic trends in the former was facilitated by a weaker degree of pluralism on the right. Section 5 will conclude and summarize the paper's findings in greater detail.

Altogether this paper affirms that ethnic nationalism is, as ever, an important factor in the politics of all post-communist CEE states (and given recent developments, for the West on the whole). In so doing this paper will reject Vachudova and Snyder's claim that ethnic nationalism is strictly a negative political force in itself. In fact, as the review of the literature will reveal, ethnic nationalism is at once a useful political tool in the post-communist space for moving past the legacy of communism. In turn, this paper argues that ethnic nationalism is only dangerous to the health of a state's democracy when it is coupled with a lack of competition on the right. This situation allows, as we will see in the case of Hungary, for one politician to mobilize ethnic nationalist sentiment in order to consolidate his own power and in so doing achieve anti-democratic ends.

2. Literature review

There exists a diversity of perspectives on the subject of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). In order to better understand the incomplete nature of Vachudova and Snyder's 1997 approach, it will be instructive to review some of the relevant literature on this subject. This will proceed in three parts: first by characterizing the more traditional 'fixed' view of CEE, next by presenting some scholarly refutations of this first view, and finally by synthesizing these competing views through some more contemporary accounts of the region. It is worth mentioning that this review of the literature is fitted to the formulations of Vachudova and Snyder and as such does not comment on the more general ideas of nationalism studies on the whole.

A discussion of these three sets of ideas will in turn give us the necessary tools to respond to Vachudova and Snyder's incomplete formulations. Generally the literature suggests their misunderstandings were twofold. First it suggests that the scholars overplayed the roles of superficial factors, ethnic homogeneity chief among them, in the development of ethnic nationalist sentiment in CEE. By contrast a review of the literature suggests that for the region on the whole, nationalism is a much deeper and more historically-rooted phenomenon than what Vachudova and Snyder anticipated. Second it suggests that Vachudova and Snyder overly conflated the degree to which this nationalist tradition would necessarily affect, one way or the other, democratic trends in these states. While this paper will only respond to the specific developments in Hungary and Poland, even a cursory overview of the politics of the region implies (as suggested in section 1) the need for a different, though related, variable in explaining the trends in CEE politics.

2.1. The 'fixed' view of nationalism

One of the overarching schools of thought on CEE nationalism takes a general view of Europe that can best be described as Manichean. John Plamenatz offers one of the clearest articulations of this view in his 1989 essay "Two Types of Nationalism." Plamenatz takes the view of CEE nationalism as being motivated by an inherent attention to ethnic considerations.[7] By contrast Western European (WE) nationalism is animated by civic considerations.[8] Stefan Auer explains that for Plamenatz, and for the 'fixed' camp generally, the nationalism of CEE developed from the region's delayed historical development, and in turn presumes a kind of *ressentiment* which points to, as Auer argues, the superiority of the political traditions of the West.[9] Implicit in this assumption is that the differences between these nationalist traditions are fundamental and as such 'fixed.'

Another noteworthy voice from the 'fixed' camp is that of György Schöpflin, a Hungarian scholar and Minister of European Parliament (MEP) for Fidesz. Schöpflin offers a scathing criticism of what he holds to be Western scholarly inattention to the centrality of ethnic considerations within CEE nationalism. He characterizes these accounts, which will be discussed in section 2.2, as representing a "denial of [...] the ethnic underpinning of our plausibility structures."[10] Schöpflin submits that an accurate account of post-communist development, along with the role played by nationalism therein, would respond to such ethnic considerations rather than eschewing them in favor of civic, liberal democratic ideals.[11] Schöpflin's view reiterates the

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[7] John Gledhill, "The Power of Ethnic Nationalism: Foucault's Bio-power and the Development of Ethnic Nationalism in Eastern Europe," *National Identities* 7, no. 4 (2005): 350.

[8] Gledhill, "The Power of Ethnic Nationalism," 350.

[9] Stefan Auer, "Two Types of Nationalism in Europe?" *Russian and Euro-Asian Bulletin* 7, no. 12 (December 1997): 5-6.

[10] György Schöpflin, "Liberal Pluralism and Post-Communism," in *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported?*, eds. Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 112.

[11] Schöpflin, "Liberal Pluralism and Post-Communism," 112.

point that CEE nationalism is at once inherently motivated by ethnic considerations and further

that it is less mature than that of the West.[12]

The notion of 'fixed' nationalisms is also articulated by John Gledhill in his essay "The

Power of Ethnic Nationalism." Here Gledhill argues that the nationalist traditions of CEE can be

explained through Michel Foucault's notion of 'biopower' (i.e., the control of and use of human

bodies for political ends).[13] Moreover, Gledhill emphasizes the importance of shared "cultural

bonds" such as language and religion within CEE societies for the region's in-group

psychology.[14]As such for Gledhill nationalist ideas in CEE developed along familial lines, and

this in turn explains the persistence of ethno-cultural traditions within those states (i.e.,

Schöpflin's "ethnic plausibility structures").

Moreover, Gledhill's ideas about CEE nationalism are animated by the intellectual

tradition that came out of the German Enlightenment and Romantic periods.[15] He points to the

contradictions between the ideas of Johann Gottfried Herder, the German Enlightenment figure

known in part for his emphasis on the *volk* (ethnic people) with those of civically-minded

thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill.[16] Gledhill claims that these

differences had a real effect on the development of nationalism in CEE, writing:

> [The] fusion of the legitimating idea of an ethno-nation with the political unit of
> the state served to entrench and institutionalise the exclusionary ideas of ethnic
> nationalism in Eastern Europe. So, while some in Western Europe sought to
> actively aggregate the 'exotic' East, intellectual undercurrents flowing from the
> West served to undermine this project and so independent ethno-national
> identities and states developed in Eastern Europe.[17]

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[12] Auer, "Two Types of Nationalism in Europe?" 1.
[13] Gledhill, "The Power of Ethnic Nationalism," 348.
[14] Gledhill, "The Power of Ethnic Nationalism," 350.
[15] Gledhill, "The Power of Ethnic Nationalism," 348.
[16] Gledhill, "The Power of Ethnic Nationalism," 349.
[17] Gledhill, "The Power of Ethnic Nationalism," 366.

Rogers Smith in turn offers an explanation of this perceived inattention by Western scholarship to ethno-cultural considerations. Smith argues that the absence of a theory of 'people-building' (that is, to match theories of state- and nation-building) in the Western intellectual tradition can be understood as a function of American and Western European political thought being predominantly concerned with questions of the individual against the rule of aristocracy as opposed to, for instance, matters of group identity.[18] Smith, though not a scholar of CEE nationalism in his own right, aptly communicates the differences between the intellectual traditions of CEE and WE and in turn provides further context to Gledhill's claim.

As suggested, the 'fixed' nationalist camp also takes evidence from the history of the CEE region. Lonnie Johnson for one points to the region's "peculiar, belated feudalism," which he describes as a "second serfdom" that emerged from the Thirty Years' War.[19] This in turn is believed to have stunted the economic growth of CEE, again animating the notion of the region's inferiority to the West.[20] Johnson explains further that the developments of the (British) Industrial Revolution, along with the political developments of the French Revolution had a diminished effect on the nations of CEE and as such further exacerbated the differences in development between these so-called two halves of Europe.[21] While Johnson, like Smith, is not a scholar of CEE nationalism outright, his historical account helps explain the qualitative differences motivating the view of CEE nationalism as tied to its history.

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[18] Rogers M. Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 9.
[19] Lonnie R. Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010): 90.
[20] Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 90.
[21] Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 92.

2.2. Rejoinders to the 'fixed' view

In contrast to the 'fixed' view of CEE nationalism, there exists a substantive literature that pushes back on the notion of CEE nationalism as being inexorably inferior to that of the West. While it is difficult to ascribe one overarching label to this set of views, they are all in agreement that the notion of CEE nationalism as 'fixed' is irrelevant, either for reasons of historical inaccuracy, lack of insight into contemporary politics, or otherwise.

To begin, one of Gledhill's most ardent critics is Will Kymlicka, who argues that a number of contemporary liberal democracies (e.g., France, Britain, and the United States) have pursued illiberal, undemocratic, and ethnically-motivated policies of assimilation toward their minority populations.[22] Kymlicka claims that while these democracies have in the modern day embraced, or perhaps evolved toward, civic versions of their nationalist traditions, they nonetheless must grapple with their attempts at constructing overarching nations instead of recognizing the autonomy of their minority populations.[23] The tragic histories of American slavery or British and French imperialism, for instance, can hardly be said to have been motivated by civic considerations, Kymlicka argues. As such Western political history, or political history on the whole, has been motivated by ethnicity, and it is disingenuous to overemphasize the existence of this trend in CEE.

Further, a number of scholars reject 'fixed' views of CEE nationalism along practical lines. Kataryna Wolczuk and Galina Yemelianova argue that the tendency by Western academics to think in overly general terms about CEE nationalism during the region's early post-communist democratization had subsequent implications on the policies of international organizations like

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[22] Will Kymlicka, "Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe," in *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported?*, eds. Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 25-26.
[23] Kymlicka, "Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe," 25-26.

the EU.[24] And Auer responds specifically to the differentiation of nationalisms between the various parts of CEE. He draws attention to the fact that by extension of the 'fixed' view, the states of Central Europe were seen as better disposed to Western ideals of nationalism than their Eastern counterparts, which in turn lent itself to its own form of nationalist mythmaking about the region.[25] Auer explains that 'fixed' accounts of Central Europe as being less backwards than Eastern Europe had the paradoxical effect of delegitimizing the democratic progress of the latter, in turn fostering a 'superiority complex' that undermined liberal values.[26]

Finally, in stark contrast to the view of CEE nationalism as 'fixed' is the school of thought that advocates for an evolution away from ethno-cultural considerations entirely. Thinkers associated with this set of ideas include Jan-Werner Mueller, most famously for his notion of constitutional patriotism,[27] as well as Jürgen Habermas for his prolific account of post-national citizenship.[28] This set of ideas, which for its part fits into the civic nationalist or perhaps post-national aspirations of the EU, is surely a desirable framework of ends for democratic citizenship. It is worth noting that this set of ideas developed in relation to the intellectual climate of the immediate post-Cold War period (i.e., the end of a non-ethnic political struggle). However it seems given contemporary Western political developments that this view is ahead of its time, or at least out of fashion presently.

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[24] Kataryna Wolczuk and Galina Yemelianova, "When the East Meets the West: Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Eastern Europe," *Nationalities Papers* 36, no. 2 (2008): 184.

[25] Stefan Auer, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe* (London: RoutledgeCourzon, 2004): 21.

[26] Auer, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe*, 21.

[27] Jan-Werner Mueller, *Constitutional Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[28] Klaus-Gerd Giesen, "The Post-National Constellation: Habermas and the 'Second Modernity," *Res Publica* 10 (2004): 1-13.

2.3. Synthesizing the views

In addition to these competing sets of views is a third group that points to a synthesis. This group contains a number of contemporary accounts of CEE, which look at the specific motivating factors for the region's nationalist traditions along with the ends to which they have been deployed. This set of ideas in turn points us to a number of useful conclusions in responding to Vachudova and Snyder.

Scholars in this third group agree with the 'fixed' claim that the CEE nationalist tradition is motivated by unique historical factors. However this group rejects that these historical factors are necessarily and inexorably related to WE nationalism. Instead they argue that the nationalist traditions of CEE have little in common with those of WE, and that this in turn suggests that they should be examined as one distinct, collective unit. To begin, Klaus von Beyme points to the persistence of irredentist politics among CEE states as a problem that is persistent within and unique to this region's politics.[29] Further, André Gerrits warns against conflating CEE nationalism with that of WE given their different applications in the regions' respective politics. He argues that in CEE nationalism is used by elites as a means to consolidate power while presenting an alternative ideology to communism, whereas in the West it is predominantly used as a response to globalization and immigration.[30] Sarah Cramsey and Jason Wittenberg argue that the nationalisms of CEE and WE are further distinguished by their experiences with imperialism. They demonstrate that while WE empires sought to integrate various kinds of minorities, those of CEE did not develop nearly as coherent or aggressive such policies.[31] Taken together all of these arguments point to a careful longer-view consideration of the nationalist

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[29] Klaus von Beyme, *Transition to Democracy in Eastern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996): 51.

[30] André Gerrits, *Nationalism in Europe Since 1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016): 135-136.

[31] Sarah Cramsey and Jason Wittenberg, "Timing Is Everything: Changing Norms of Minority Rights and the Making of a Polish Nation-State," *Comparative Political Studies* 49, no. 11 (2016): 1484.

traditions of CEE. Moreover these accounts suggest that the nationalist traditions of CEE are rather closely interrelated.

Additionally this third set of views affirms that CEE nationalism is indeed ethnic in nature. However this group goes further, arguing that despite the potentially violent or fragmentary nature of ethnic nationalism, this tradition has nevertheless played a progressive function in the region's politics. Gerrits describes ethnic nationalism as having had a modernizing role in CEE's breakage from communist occupation, writing that "nationalism, democracy, and modernity [became] inseparably connected." [32] Charles King substantiates this point, characterizing the "homeland" identities of post-communist states as critical to their democratic developments.[33] Further, in characterizing the resilience of ethnicity to the region's politics, King rather pointedly submits that "no amount of preaching from liberal Western – usually American – democracy builders will change this fact."[34] Auer also challenges the characterization of CEE nationalism as a strictly dangerous force despite its tragic uses during the 20th century. It follows that for Auer a nationalism of a liberal or civic type could be achieved in the region, but only in dialogue with each state's existing ethno-cultural tradition.[35] Smith too, in his 2003 book *Stories of Peoplehood*, puts forth the general claim that an accurate account of any society or its politics must anticipate the use of "chauvinistic political narratives" in properly theorizing its development.[36] In his argument Smith seems to invoke the work of

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[32] Gerrits, *Nationalism in Europe Since 1945*, 17.

[33] Charles King, *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the End of Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 153.

[34] King, *Extreme Politics*, 153.

[35] Auer, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe*, 1.

[36] Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood*, 9.

Anthony Smith, who argued that ethno-cultural narratives are extremely resilient phenomena, and so must be readily anticipated by political theorists.[37]

Taken together, this set of ideas points to a number of useful takeaways that respond to and build on the ideas of the previous two schools. First, in keeping with the views outlined in section 2.1, these accounts affirm the importance and resilience of ethnic considerations to CEE nationalism on the whole. However, at once, in accordance with the views outlined in section 2.2, these accounts reject the notion that the ethnic element of CEE nationalism renders it necessarily inferior to that of the West, or otherwise incapable of democratic progress. This in turn suggests that the emergence of ethnic nationalism in CEE, like any political ideology, could, but would not necessarily, signal anti-democratic trends in the region's politics. Rather this third set of views makes clear that the nationalist traditions of CEE on their own, and the ends to which they are employed, are dynamic and ought to be considered with nuance. Indeed this point is affirmed by King:

> What scholars need to explain, then, can depend on when they get around to explaining it. There is little sign that the dependent variables in this field will become less mercurial as time passes [...] For theorists, this means that a certain degree of humility is still in order. [...] the ability to predict which direction change is likely to go, solely from deductive theorizing rather than on the basis of intimate familiarity with the facts on the ground [...] Getting used to politics as cycles of change, not as transitions [...][38]

King, like many of the aforementioned scholars, points to an overview of the history of the region in order to better understand its nationalist traditions. This then points us to a refutation of Vachudova and Snyder's approach.

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[37] Daniele Conversi, "Globalization and Nationalism in Europe: Demolishing Walls and Building Boundaries," in *Multiplicity of Nationalism in Contemporary Europe*, eds. Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski and Andrzej Marcin Suszycki (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010): 85-86.

[38] King, *Extreme Politics*, 98.

2.4. Responding to Vachudova and Snyder

A review of the literature on CEE nationalism gives us all of the information we need in order to assess the shortcomings of Vachudova and Snyder's theory. First, it is clear that at the heart of Vachudova and Snyder's predictions were factors that, though important to an analysis of politics at the time, failed to respond to the deeper nature of nationalism in CEE. That is, while their claims reflected legitimate 1989-era distinctions between two groups of states in post-communist CEE, their formulation missed the broader underlying trends affecting the region as a whole. For this reason Vachudova and Snyder failed, as demonstrated in section 1, to predict the course of Hungarian and Polish politics past 1997. To frame this in terms of the literature, Vachudova and Snyder took an overly 'fixed' view of the ethnically fragmented states (Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia) and, more relevantly to this paper's argument, an overly 'blind' one of the ethnically homogenous ones (Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic). They overestimated the degree to which ethnic nationalism in the former group would necessarily stifle its democratization and at once overestimated the degree to which the latter group would be able to move toward a liberal or civic nationalism.

From this we can determine that Vachudova and Snyder arrived at their conclusions on the basis of transient factors, rather than the broader underlying trend as discussed. As such, in order to better understand this, the next section will closely examine the historical trends affecting the region's nationalist traditions on the whole, as well as the traditions of Hungary and Poland specifically, in order to better characterize what Vachudova and Snyder missed and what has actually transpired in the two states in consideration. Section 3 will first review some literature on the experience of the region on the whole, particularly as pertaining to communist rule, in order to better characterize overarching trends. It will then turn to the specific

experiences of Hungary and Poland in order to give context to subsequent political developments.

Second and relatedly, this review of the literature suggests that the nationalist traditions of CEE, while characterized by ethno-cultural considerations, are more complicated and dynamic than what Vachudova and Snyder expected. That is, in addition to misunderstanding the nature of nationalism in CEE and its mobilizing factors, they further mischaracterized the relationship between this nationalist tradition and its implications for the health of CEE democracies. This at once suggests that ethnic nationalism on its own does not tell the whole story, and in turn points us to another, related variable, which will be discussed in section 4.

3. Historical background

The experience of communism aggravated the nationalist sentiments of the post-communist CEE states and had important complications for their futures as democracies. This first suggests that Hungary and Poland are closer to Bulgaria and Romania than Vachudova and Snyder expected, and helps to explain, contrary to their expectations, subsequent political complications in the former group. But this alone does not tell the whole story. These developments, along with their different ends in Hungary and Poland, will be discussed in section 4. For now it is important to note that Vachudova and Snyder ran into problems with their predictions insofar as (1) their formulations regarding the nature of ethnic nationalism and its development (discussed in this section), and (2) the means through which ethnic nationalism stalls democratic progress (discussed in the next section).

In the first part of this chapter I will argue that Vachudova and Snyder missed the underlying historical experiences of CEE on the whole, and for this reason took an overly 'blind' view of Hungary and Poland. This will help to better understand the nationalist political developments in those states, which were missed by their 1997 paper. In the second part of this chapter I will first demonstrate that, as with the rest of post-communist CEE, the nationalist traditions of Hungary and Poland are deep and dynamic. This will further reveal why Vachudova and Snyder were wrong to take an overly 'blind' view and in turn give us important context for political developments in Hungary and Poland over the past quarter-century. After reviewing the traditions of Hungary and Poland I will then affirm Vachudova and Snyder's treatment of the two states as politically similar, albeit with a renewed attention to the overall ubiquity and influence of the nationalist moods of post-communist CEE.

3.1. The legacy of communism in CEE nationalism

To begin, we must look to the literature regarding CEE's experience of communist rule in order to better characterize the overall role played by nationalism in the region. This investigation, like the next, will give insight into subsequent political developments in the two states in consideration. The review of the literature here reveals that nationalism was a broader phenomenon in post-communist CEE on the whole, being aggravated by general historical experiences, than what Vachudova and Snyder concluded on the basis of more transient factors. This of course is an important consideration, given the subsequent nationalist developments in Hungary and Poland that motivated this research design.

There is a substantive literature on the importance of communist context to an understanding of both (1) the development of ethno-cultural nationalism in post-communist Europe and relatedly (2) the democratization processes of all of the post-communist states. Cheng Chen for one demonstrates that area studies accounts of post-Leninist states, as compared to comparative ones, argue a far less optimistic view of democratization.[39] In this view democratization through institution building is seen as secondary to a comprehensive understanding of the states' nationalist sentiments.[40] Howard takes this point further, demonstrating that while in the more immediate post-communist period, scholars of CEE were quick to jump at the new opportunities of the present (i.e., social and economic policies), a more measured approach would take a closer look at the region's experience with communism and draw conclusions from there. This affirms the earlier conclusion that communism had an overarching effect on the nationalist sentiments of CEE, and in turn points back to one of the

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[39] Cheng Chen, "Illiberal Nationalism in Post-Leninist States," Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2003: 58.

[40] Chen, "Illiberal Nationalism in Post-Leninist States," 58.

misunderstandings of Vachudova and Snyder's 1997 framework in overemphasizing distinctions between the nationalist sentiments of the two sets of post-communist CEE states.

The development of nationalist sentiment in all of the states of post-communist CEE has roots in the Soviet regime's treatment of ethnicity. Kataryna Wolczuk and Galina Yemelianova explain that while the Soviet regime officially embraced an internationalist ideology, this in turn complicated the status of ethnicity by "[granting it] explicit political recognition" while at once forging the supra-national identity of the Soviet people (*sovetskii narod*).[41] This process entailed the mandatory adoption of the Cyrillic alphabet, as well as the institution of Russian as the *lingua franca* of the Soviet Union.[42] Moreover the regime's treatment of its many ethnic groups was often arbitrary and inconsistent, further complicating and undermining the status of ethnicity for several generations.[43] Will Kymlicka adds that in spite of all of these policies, the Soviet regime was unable to totally erase national allegiances, but rather only succeeded in suppressing them (therein setting the stage for resurgences after its collapse).[44] He writes: "Despite a complete monopoly over education and the media, Communist regimes were unable to get Croats, Slovaks and Ukrainians to think of themselves primarily as 'Yugoslavs', 'Czechoslovaks', or 'Soviets.'"[45] This is salient in formulating a response to Vachudova and Snyder, who as discussed expected a readiness by Hungary and Poland to embrace the civic nationalism of WE. These accounts, by contrast, suggest that all post-communist CEE states would be interested in reclaiming their national identities after the experience of communism.

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[41] Wolczuk and Yemelianova, "When the West Meets the East," 178-179.
[42] Wolczuk and Yemelianova, "When the West Meets the East," 178-179.
[43] Wolczuk and Yemelianova, "When the West Meets the East," 178-179.
[44] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Gloucestershire: Clarendon Press, 1996): 185.
[45] Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 185.

In addition to specifically complicating the nature of ethnicity and nationality, the experience of communism in CEE had the effect of homogenizing the populations of all post-communist CEE states. To be sure, this was felt more sharply in the ethnically fragmented states, as ethnic hostilities between different groups were subordinated and repressed only to come immediately to the fore in the post-communist period. However it was at once readily experienced by the ethnically homogenous states. Katherine Verdery for one offers that the experience of communism had a homogenizing effect on all states of post-communist CEE that in each of them generated an "us"/"them" mentality, which she explains lent itself to ethnic antagonism by the ethnic majority against the regime.[46] Further Verdery suggests a general relationship between national identities and "economies of shortage," in turn suggesting the inevitable resurgence of nationalism in all of the formerly communist states.[47]

Wolczuk and Yemelianova contend that this homogeneity was not only limited to the realm of ethno-cultural considerations but to ideological ones as well. They make this point rather eloquently, explaining that "communism could not and did not create the means of resolving the conflicts that derived from modernity—the normal contest of ideas, interests, institutions—because it insisted on a very high level of ideologically determined homogeneity and thus could not provide the cognitive and concrete instruments for resolving the problems of complexity it had created."[48] As such it seems that, given communism's homogenizing nature, both directly in terms of the ethnic majority against the regime and furthermore for all citizens along ideological lines, all of the post-communist states would be characterized by ethnic nationalist moods once communist influence left the picture. As discussed, this affirms that

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[46] Katherine Verdery, "Nationalism, Postsocialism, and Space in Eastern Europe," *Social Research* 63, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 82.

[47] Verdery, "Nationalism, Postsocialism, and Space in Eastern Europe," 82.

[48] Wolczuk and Yemelianova, "When the East Meets the West," 188.

Vachudova and Snyder were not incorrect to draw distinctions based on ethnic diversity per se. Indeed it makes sense that the ethnically fragmented states simply ruptured in the transition due to internal conflicts that had existed beneath the surface, while the homogenous states were able to move more steadily through democratization. But Vachudova and Snyder nonetheless failed to anticipate underlying trends aggravating nationalism, and this in turn explains why they missed that homogenous post-communist states would also inherit these sentiments and legacies, which in turn would complicate democratization efforts in the longer-run.

Finally, nationalism of an ethnic character came to play such an outsize role in the developments of all post-communist CEE states because of a third factor, namely the absence of civil society as inherited from communism. Owing to the monopoly by communist regimes over institutions of civil society, post-communist politics were instantly characterized by a deep mistrust of such institutions and the elites in charge of them.[49] Marc Howard argues that despite differentiation among the states of their experiences with communism, all of their politics went on to feature a hostility between the citizenry and the state's political and economic elites (affirming this broader underlying trend).[50] As discussed in section 2, this is why von Beyme argues that post-communist elites turned to nationalism of an ethno-cultural type in order to mobilize and reintegrate their states.[51] Wolczuk and Yemelianova add to this point by demonstrating that post-communist elites jumped to ethnic nationalism as a replacement for the ideology of communism.[52] While it seems likely that this was moreso the case in ethnically fragmented states (where the level of democracy consolidation was lower to begin with and which were characterized by weaker regime breakage) than in ethnically homogenous ones, it is

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[49] Marc Morjé Howard, "Introduction," in *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 5.

[50] Howard, "Introduction," 5.

[51] von Beyme, *Transition to Democracy in Eastern Europe*, 50.

[52] Wolczuk and Yemelianova, "When the West Meets the East," 181.

nevertheless true that the mobilization of ethno-cultural nationalism acted as a key social fabric for all post-communist CEE states.[53] However this in turn placed a disproportionate level of importance on the role of ethnic nationalism where civic nationalism and institutions would normally play a unifying role, which, as we will see in section 4, would complicate democratic progress in its own right.[54]

Perhaps obviously, Howard points to the weakness of civil life in post-communist states as dangerous to the health of those states' democracies.[55] He explains that while a weak civil life alone will not cause the crumbling of a state's democracy, it nevertheless opens up a possibility for alternative political forces to take advantage of the system.[56] Valerie Bunce further corroborates the notion that strong civil society is important to the health of any democratic system, shedding further light on the challenges faced in post-communist transition.[57] In her account of democratization Bunce points to the role that institutions of civil society can play on constraining nationalism, which is as discussed mobilized by elites to consolidate their own power.[58] This is because while civil society can be a point of organization against authoritarianism, nationalism by contrast has a demobilizing effect.[59] While the extent to which civil society is a more or less useful tool for democracy consolidation is debated (i.e., some scholars of CEE believe in the specific value of ethno-cultural nationalism), it is clear that, for better or worse, all of the post-communist states had to deal with the legacy of ethno-cultural nationalism in their paths of democratization. This affirms the first point, namely that Vachudova

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[53] Wolczuk and Yemelianova, "When the West Meets the East," 181.
[54] Howard, "Introduction," 10.
[55] Howard, "Introduction," 13-14.
[56] Howard, "Introduction," 13-14.
[57] Valerie Bunce, "The Tasks of Democratic Transition and Transferability" (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2008): 30.
[58] Bunce, "The Tasks of Democratic Transition and Transferability," 30.
[59] Bunce, "The Tasks of Democratic Transition and Transferability," 30.

and Snyder missed the underlying historical trends motivating nationalist sentiments in post-communist CEE.

Even before considering its effects on nationalist sentiment in Hungary and Poland, we can reasonably conclude that communist occupation in particular damaged to some extent the chances of all of the post-communist states at becoming healthy democracies. We can agree that Vachudova and Snyder's distinctions were correct insofar as their superficial distinctions between the two categories, but conclude further that the scholars ultimately missed systemic problems that would detriment the development of all of the states in the region. In turn we can draw similar conclusions about ethnic nationalism. Namely that communism aggravated nationalist sentiment in all of the post-communist CEE states, rather than just the ethnically fragmented ones. With this in mind, we can move on to a discussion of the specific nationalist traditions of Hungary and Poland to better understand their nature, and subsequent mobilizations, in the post-communist era. As mentioned what this investigation will not yet reveal is the relationship between ethnic nationalism and anti-democratic trends in the two states in consideration, a question to be resolved in section 4.

3.2. Hungary and Poland's nationalist traditions

In section 3.1 we concluded that the experience of communism had an overall ubiquitous effect on the states of post-communist CEE. In this section I will review the importance of the specific nationalist traditions of Hungary and Poland in order to demonstrate further Vachudova and Snyder's error in failing to respond to them. These findings in turn suggest that Hungary and Poland are indeed rather similar, both in their experiences of communism and in their nationalist traditions generally. This at once affirms Vachudova and Snyder's initial framework but in turn updates their misguided conclusions, with a renewed attention to the nature of that ever important variable, ethnic nationalism.

3.2a. The Hungarian nationalist tradition

As discussed, the experience of communism exacerbated nationalist tendencies across all of communist CEE, and so Hungary was readily affected by this as well. However Hungarian nationalism as a political tradition predates communism. The aim of this subsection, then, is to give a cursory overview of the Hungarian nationalist tradition in order to respond to Vachudova and Snyder's overly 'blind' formulations about that state.

We can begin to examine Hungary's nationalist tradition in the context of its unique political and geographic circumstances. Judith Fai-Podlipnik explains that from their earliest settlement in Europe, the Magyar people were both linguistically and ethnically isolated on the European continent (by contrast, for instance, to the Slavs).[60] Given their isolation, then, it follows that Hungarian nationalism developed with a heavy emphasis on blood ties and ingroup favoritism and as such would be defined along ethno-cultural lines. Another important factor

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[60] Judith Fai-Podlipnik, "Hungary's relationship with Poland and its refugees during World War II," *East European Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 74.

within Hungary's nationalist tradition is its geopolitics. In characterizing the historical importance of ethnicity to the Hungarian notion of statehood, Will Kymlicka presents the view of the influential Hungarian political thinker István Bibó. Kymlicka writes that for Bibó, minority groups in Eastern Europe were viewed with extreme suspicion by regimes out of fear that they would secede and join forces with their co-ethnic neighbors.[61] In this sense, then, the exclusive nature of Hungarian nationalism may have developed out of a need by Hungary to securitize in a turbulent political climate.

In addition to Hungary's geopolitical circumstances, there are a number of key historical events that inform the state's nationalist tradition. However in considering these events, it is worth noting that myths regarding territory or conflict are meaningless as ends in themselves. That is, territorial transfers and conflicts in the time before late modernity had little consideration for mass populations; rather, they were decided by rulers and elite bodies.[62] By contrast, the manner in which these historical events have been exploited by Hungarian leaders in more recent history helps shed light on the development of contemporary authoritarianism in a given state. To that end, Charles King demonstrates that nationalism has been used by Hungarian political elites consistently since at least the 19th century.[63] He argues that while nationalism has been used for various ends and with varied degrees of success, that its repeated mobilization points to an overall importance in the Hungarian political imagination.[64] In turn we can conclude that nationalism is indeed a very prevalent element of Hungarian political life.

To that end Hungary's nationalist tradition may in a sense be self-perpetuating. Lonnie Johnson explains that Hungary, like Poland and in contrast to Czechia, takes pride in its history

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[61] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 194-195.

[62] von Beyme, *Transition to Democracy in Eastern Europe*, 49.

[63] King, *Extreme Politics,* 44.

[64] King, *Extreme Politics*, 44.

of national uprisings, and that this in turn should be anticipated by analyses of Hungarian politics.[65] King adds that Hungarian nationalism was met with some success in 1867 during the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (as has, he writes, the nationalism of the present day).[66] By contrast King considers the nationalist moments of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 and the aftermath of the First World War in 1920 to have been failures of Hungarian nationalism.[67] Already, then, the development of Hungarian nationalism ought to be expected as a rather consistently available factor in Hungarian political life.

As such we can turn to some of the specific historical factors motivating Hungarian nationalism. One of the main motivating factors of contemporary Hungarian nationalism is the legacy of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon following the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. In a sense the nationalist sentiment surrounding this loss of territory can be seen as analogous to Weimar Germany's stab-in-the-back myth following the conclusion of the First World War.[68] This treaty stripped Hungary of roughly two-thirds of its land and reduced its population by roughly two-thirds in turn. Further the treaty deprived Hungary of key resources and access to the sea.[69]Jan-Werner Mueller argues that the Treaty of Trianon continues to inform an irredentist, ethnically motivated conception of nationalism in Hungary to this day.[70] Notably, as we will see, this event has been mobilized in recent Hungarian politics to justify irredentist claims.

As for many states of the former Soviet Union, the experience of the Second World War reinforced the importance of ethnicity to Hungarian nationalism. While the Hungarians did not

[65] Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, 92.
[66] King, *Extreme Politics*, 44.
[67] King, *Extreme Politics*, 44.
[68] "Trianon, Treaty of," *The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed*, *Encyclopedia.com*, http://www.encyclopedia.com/reference/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/trianon-treaty (accessed February 18, 2017).
[69] "Trianon, Treaty of," *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (accessed February 18, 2017).
[70] Jan-Werner Mueller, "The Hungarian Tragedy," *Dissent* (Spring 2011): 7.

embrace ethnic homogenization policies to the degree of the Poles for fear of retribution, neither were they resolutely opposed to this idea.[71] At once it is worth considering the legacy of Miklós Horthy, Hungary's leader during the Second World War and a onetime ally of Adolf Hitler.[72] Despite his rather unsavory history, the controversial figure's memory has seen a revival in recent years.[73] It follows that the legacy of the Second World War continues to motivate the Hungarian nationalist tradition along ethnic lines.

The experience of communism, from the years of 1949 to 1989, further complicated and energized the role of ethno-cultural nationalism in Hungarian political life. As discussed in section 3.1, the experience of communism aggravated nationalist sentiments in all of the states of post-communist CEE. This came as a result of their heightened self-conceptions as ethnic nations rather than as communist republics.[74] Given this, we can reasonably conclude that nationalism of an ethno-cultural type was instrumental in the Hungarian resistance to communism, and in turn has continued to inform the country's political tradition in its post-communist period.

In order to get a sense for the importance of kinship to the Hungarian resistance to communist occupation, we may examine a few case studies that speak to the function of ethno-cultural sentiment in communist Hungary and the legacy this may have on contemporary Hungarian society. In his essay "The Extraordinary Career of *Feketevágó Ur*: Wood Theft, Pig Killing, and Entrepreneurship in Communist Hungary," Karl Brown recounts the story of János S. and his illegal butchering business. Brown's narrative focuses not on János S. specifically, but rather argues that his "individual activities were only the tip of the iceberg in his small town: everyone he knew, at all levels of the rural social hierarchy, was complicit in his and similar

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[71] Cramsey and Wittenberg, "Timing Is Everything," 1484.
[72] "Hungary's past: His contentious legacy," *The Economist* (London, UK), November 8, 2013.
[73] "Hungary's past: His contentious legacy," *The Economist* (London, UK), November 8, 2013.
[74] Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 185.

schemes."[75] This willingness by János S.' community to work together for their communal benefit and to the detriment of the regime signals an importance of kinship in Hungarian society, which, if anything, was tested and reinforced by the experience of communist occupation.

Further, Brown's account demonstrates how communist occupation exacerbated ethnic tensions in Hungary. In certain respects, communism not only strengthened ethnic sentiments among majority populations but isolated them even further from minority groups such as Roma gypsies. As Brown explains, Roma gypsies more than any other group had little incentive to collaborate against the regime, considering that communist rule had afforded them a level of preferential treatment, which felt rather welcome after centuries of persecution and ethnic cleansing.[76] It follows that the communist precedent of (at least nominally) defending minority rights would reignite ethnic sentiments by Hungarians in light of EU accession, which also placed a heavy emphasis on the fair treatment of minorities.

Brown's account, as well as that of Taras Dombos and Lena Pellandini-Simanyi in their essay "Kids, Cars, or Cashews? Debating and Remembering Consumption in Socialist Hungary," both shed light on the connection between ethnic Hungarian kinship and subsequent economic reforms that took place in communist Hungary. In the same article, Brown points to economic practices such as the ones demonstrated by János S. and his community as instrumental to the eventual collapse of communism.[77] This is all to say that following the unrest of Hungary's 1956 Uprising, many of the social and economic reforms undertaken by Eastern Bloc regimes simply entailed the legalization or semi-legalization of already existent economic practices.[78] That these

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[75] Karl Brown, "The Extraordinary Career of *Feketevágó Ur*: Wood Theft, Pig Killing, and Entrepreneurship in Communist Hungary, 1948-1956," in *Communism Unwrapped*, eds. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuberger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 289.

[76] Brown, "The Extraordinary Career of *Feketevágó Ur*," 290.

[77] Brown, "The Extraordinary Career of *Feketevágó Ur*," 294.

[78] Brown, "The Extraordinary Career of *Feketevágó Ur*," 294.

laws were ultimately adopted during Hungary's democratic transition suggests a kind of implicit kinship from the very foundations of post-communist Hungary, which continued to inform its political and economic developments. On the whole, then, it is clear that communism had a significant impact on Hungarian conceptions of ethnicity and kinship, which in turn influenced later conservative politics in Hungary as well as the state's democratic transition on the whole.

It is also instructive to consider the legacy of communist occupation on Hungarian social and political life, particularly in the period of time directly following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Wilkin points to the resilient trends of alcoholism and suicide among Hungarians, along with widespread discrimination against women, as well as the overall struggle to develop a civil society independent of the government.[79] Additionally, Wilkin describes Hungarian politics in the immediate post-communist period as being characterized by a monopoly of left-liberal policies and a general embrace of neoliberalism by Hungarian elites.[80] By contrast at this point the right-wing was rather bare, which represented the overall hindering nature of communism on transitional politics, and, as we will see, spelled danger for the health of Hungary's democracy.

This cursory review of Hungary's nationalist tradition helps to further inform Vachudova and Snyder's misguided assumptions about that state. This is to say that their expectation that Hungary, and ethnically homogenous states in general, would simply leap out of their communist legacies without any mobilization of their nationalist traditions was rather short-sighted indeed. An analogous review of Poland's nationalist tradition will reveal the same.

3.2b. The Polish nationalist tradition

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[79] Peter Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*: *The Road to Serfdom* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016): 26-27.

[80] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 49.

Like Hungary, Poland has a rich nationalist tradition. As with Hungary, we can conduct our examination of contemporary nationalist developments in Poland by examining this tradition in context. In certain respects Poland's ethno-cultural nationalist tradition has been more aggressive than Hungary's, even. This first and foremost affirms that Poland, like Hungary, has a strong nationalist tradition, and second suggests that Vachudova and Snyder were shortsighted in failing to include it in their formulations.

One of the most brazen examples of Poland's nationalist tradition was demonstrated by the movement known as National Democracy (*Narodowa Demokracja*), or the Endeks (*Endecja*). This group rose to prominence in Poland following the end of the First World War, and their ideology was encapsulated by their slogan, "Poland for the Poles."[81] Cramsey and Wittenberg describe how the Endeks were remained of the most popular political factions for a number of years during the interwar period.[82] They demonstrate further that the Endeks were one of the strongest forces in favor of polonization (i.e., forced cultural assimilation), which was mobilized toward the Slavic peoples to Poland's East and South.[83] Notably, polonization was not directed at Poland's German or Jewish inhabitants, indicating a preference for homogeneity within the nationalist tradition.[84] It follows that here we can begin to see the virulent undercurrents of ethnic homogeneity.

Poland's homogenization efforts were more aggressive than those of Hungary or Czechia (or, for that matter, Romania). Contemporaneous with this was an internationalist discourse of the interwar period, largely emphasized by the victorious Western powers, which privileged the

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[81] Cramsey and Wittenberg, "Timing Is Everything," 1487.
[82] Cramsey and Wittenberg, "Timing Is Everything," 1487.
[83] Cramsey and Wittenberg, "Timing Is Everything," 1487.
[84] Cramsey and Wittenberg, "Timing Is Everything," 1487.

rights of ethnic minorities.[85] While Poland's homogenization efforts became even more aggressive following the Second World War, in some sense the development of polonization strategies in the interwar period may have set a precedent for Polish disregard of directives from foreign bodies on the whole (such as the Soviet Union or the EU).[86] The main geographic target of the polonization strategy were the *kresy*, an interwar territory that comprised parts of modern day Western Ukraine and Western Belarus.[87] As we will see, the legacy of polonization and the nationalist tradition therein continues to complicate its political life.

Another example of extremism in the Polish nationalist tradition is the organization All-Polish Youth. Citing this organization's contemporary incarnation as an example of Poland's resilient nationalism, Ewa Sidorenko writes that All-Polish Youth was one of the most militantly anti-Semitic organizations in Poland during the interwar period.[88] Fox and Vermeersch add that the organization has a history of promoting extreme devotion to Catholicism and a commitment to an ethnically homogenous Poland.[89]

As with Hungary, the experience of the Second World War forms a major part of Poland's nationalist tradition. One of the most consequential events for contemporary Polish nationalism was the Katyń massacre, in which tens of thousands of Polish military officials were executed by the Soviet NKVD (*Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del*; KGB predecessor). Indeed this event not only serves as a key example of the Polish nationalist tradition but further illustrates how nationalist myths are manipulated by later generations of politicians. That is, despite (or more charitably for lack of knowledge of) the gruesome actions of the Soviet secret

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[85] Cramsey and Wittenberg, "Timing Is Everything," 1484.
[86] Cramsey and Wittenberg, "Timing Is Everything," 1486.
[87] Jon E. Fox and Peter Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," *European Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 2 (2010): 341.
[88] Ewa Sidorenko, "Which way to Poland? Re-emerging from Romantic unity," in *Reinventing Poland*, eds. Martin Myant and Terry Cox (New York: Routledge, 2008): 120.
[89] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 350.

police, the immediate post-war years were characterized by collaboration between Poland's nationalists and communists (who were by all means an extension of the Soviet regime). Cramsey and Wittenberg explain that the Endek and brother of the Polish prime minister Stanisław Grabski collaborated with Josef Stalin and his ethnically Polish associate Wanda Wasilewska in order to achieve a more ethnically homogenous Polish state.[90] At this point the Soviet regime had come to view homogenization favorably after encountering difficulties with minority politics, though the relationship between ethnicity and Soviet ideology would become more complicated during communist occupation of the Eastern Bloc.[91] This again demonstrates the aggressive history of ethnic homogeneity in Poland, and further sheds light on the richness and complexity of the Polish nationalist tradition.

As with our examination of Hungary, we can look to a case study of communist occupation for some insights into the effects it had on aggravating nationalist sentiment. In her essay "Keeping It Close To Home: Resourcefulness and Scarcity in Late Socialist and Postsocialist Poland," Małgorzata Mazurek details the heightened importance of family ties that came about as a result of Poland's economy of shortages (in turn calling to mind Verdery's point about communist society generally).[92] Mazurek demonstrates further that this was particularly evident during the Polish economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s, during which the national economy thoroughly failed, and familial ties became more than ever critical to subsistence.[93] Mazurek characterizes the socialization of trust in kin networks over the government: "[...] Having been thrown back on their own resources, Poles turned to their family

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[90] Cramsey and Wittenberg, "Timing is Everything," 1488.

[91] Cramsey and Wittenberg, "Timing is Everything," 1488.

[92] Małgorzata Mazurek, "Keeping It Close To Home: Resourcefulness and Scarcity in Late Socialist and Postsocialist Poland," in *Communism Unwrapped*, eds. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuberger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 298.

[93] Mazurek, "Keeping It Close To Home," 298.

networks, which, contrary to the Party-state, remained trustworthy and efficient."[94] It follows from this account that, as demonstrated previously, communism had the effect of amplifying the culture of kinship reliance in Poland, which in turn would prove central to its political culture in the post-communist period.

Poland's experience of communism, then, along with the implications for its nationalist tradition therein, influenced its democratic transition in the years immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Aleksandra Wyrozumska and Gerd Meyer illustrate the distance between attempts at reform by the government and holdover practices from communism among the general population, writing that "many informal, traditional, or even illegal practices [were] left intact."[95] Indeed M. Steven Fish points to the example of Poland's Small Constitution, an intermediary document that attempted to mediate between the legislative and executive branches of its government, as well as with local governments across the newly democratic state, which he explains served as the country's official constitution until 1997.[96] Considering this in relation to King's claim that "[the] institutional arrangements inherited from previous regimes and the decisions that policymakers take in the early years of systemic reform are crucial, [...]," we can reasonably conclude that the discord inherited from communism negatively impacted Poland's democracy while at once aggravating its nationalist tradition.[97] This in turn contradicts Vachudova and Snyder's expectation that superficial factors alone would make for an unproblematic democratic transition.

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[94] Mazurek, "Keeping It Close To Home," 299.

[95] Aleksandra Wyrozumska and Gerd Meyer, "Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Poland," in *Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Gerd Meyer (Leverkusen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2006): 213.

[96] M. Steven Fish, "Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 1 (January 2006): 7-9.

[97] King, *Extreme Politics*, 96.

To sum up, Poland, like Hungary, has a rich nationalist tradition, and Vachudova and Snyder were shortsighted in their failure to recognize it in lieu of seemingly favorable democratic conditions. As with Hungary, then, we can conclude that nationalism would come to play a decisive role in Poland's post-communist politics, complicating its democratic progress in turn.

3.3. Conclusions on nationalism in post-communist CEE

Following this review of their nationalist traditions, Hungary and Poland appear to be rather similar. I will affirm this point with several other key facts pertaining to their historical experiences, particularly in relation to each other. I will then tie these conclusions into a discussion of Vachudova and Snyder's formulations on the whole.

As mentioned, given this paper's comparative aim, it will be instructive to consider Hungary's relationship with Poland during the Second World War. In her paper "Hungary's relationship with Poland and its refugees during World War II," Fai-Podlipnik details the special treatment afforded by Hungary to Polish citizens throughout the war despite their formal military opposition to one another. She argues that the mutual respect between the two warring states was partly motivated by a shared legacy of Habsburg incorporation through the end of the First World War.[98] Fai-Podlipnik rejects the notion that the mutual sympathy stemmed from the states' shared Roman-Catholicism, given that Hungary's clergy was distinctly sympathetic to the Nazis; however it seems possible that their shared religion could have at least animated positive feelings among their non-clerical citizens.[99] Nevertheless it remains that the treatment of Poles by Hungarians was decidedly generous, as it included the freedom of speech and the general protection of Polish citizens by the Hungarian army.[100] This of course contrasted sharply with both states' vicious treatments of their Jewish populations, all of which is to say that even during the Second World War, a distinct political outlook was shared by Hungary and Poland despite the political differences at play.[101] This in turn suggests a sameness to Hungarian and Polish political culture.

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[98] Fai-Podlipnik, "Hungary's relationship with Poland and its refugees during World War II," 63.
[99] Fai-Podlipnik, "Hungary's relationship with Poland and its refugees during World War II," 63.
[100] Fai-Podlipnik, "Hungary's relationship with Poland and its refugees during World War II," 73.
[101] Fai-Podlipnik, "Hungary's relationship with Poland and its refugees during World War II," 73.

And while the experience of communist rule was ubiquitous to an extent, we must keep in mind that it was experienced to varying degrees. Tiemann characterizes the communist legacies of both Poland and Hungary as 'national-accommodative' (notably the only such two in his framework, to which he ascribes a 1.0 rating), a situation in which the regime was characterized by a weak state apparatus and governance structures as a result of its emergence from semi-democratic or authoritarian interwar polities.[102] Herbert Kitschelt adds that in 'national-accommodative' systems industrial class conflict was not as pronounced as the tension between urban elites and rural peasants, and that in turn the communist regime was hindered by the absence of a working class constituency.[103] This was compounded by the presence of a doggedly independent church (which, as evidenced by Fai-Podlipnik, might already have been stronger in Poland than in Hungary).[104] It is interesting then to note that, according to Tiemann's framework, Romania and Bulgaria (in addition to Russia and Ukraine) are described as inheriting 'patrimonial' communism (a 0.0 rating), which in turn suggests that underlying factors may have helped Vachudova and Snyder to explain the differences between those states on the one hand and Hungary and Poland on the other.[105] Again this affirms the notion that Hungary and Poland were in a class of their own, but nonetheless a class that was subjected to communist rule.

To conclude, given the aforementioned relationship between ethnicity as a mechanism of resistance and its mobilization against communist rule, it follows that at least some of Hungary and Poland's post-communist incumbents would embrace an ethnic nationalist platform in advocating a move away from communism. Indeed Wolczuk and Yemelianova shed light on this

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[102] Guido Tiemann, "The nationalization of political parties and party systems in post-communist Eastern Europe," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45 (2012): 79-80.

[103] Herbert Kitschelt, *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 25.

[104] Kitschelt, *Post-Communist Party Systems,* 25.

[105] Tiemann, "The nationalization of political parties and party systems in post-communist Eastern Europe," 79-80.

phenomenon: they argue that because Hungary and Poland were subjected to assimilationist strategies particularly strongly during communist occupation, their emergence as territorially intact states invited them to re-energize their nationalist traditions in a vigorous fashion.[106] This again demonstrates both the importance of the nationalist tradition during the states' democratic transitions, as well as the similarity between the two states insofar as their nationalist traditions are concerned.

In turn, this overview of nationalism as relating to the historical experiences of both post-communist CEE generally, and Hungary and Poland specifically, offers several useful conclusions in responding to Vachudova and Snyder. First, as discussed in section 3.1, the nationalist traditions of post-communist CEE ought to be considered to some extent as similar. This in turn helps to explain the later development of ethnic nationalism in both Hungary and Poland, like in Romania and Bulgaria, contrary to the predictions of Vachudova and Snyder. Second, as demonstrated in section 3.2, Hungary and Poland do indeed have distinct nationalist traditions, and, as we will see, Vachudova and Snyder's failure to respond appropriately to them ultimately resulted in their paper's subsequent inaccuracies. Third and relatedly, the nationalist traditions of Hungary and Poland are in point of fact especially similar, which in turn points us back to the integrity of Vachudova and Snyder's framework. This is to say, then, that Vachudova and Snyder's framework made local sense but failed to respond more generally to the political realities of the region.

Finally, in turning to the experiences of Hungary and Poland over the past quarter-century, we are tasked with responding to their divergent paths along the course of democratization. Their similarity prior to democratization in turn suggests the need for another variable in explaining the relationship between ethnic nationalism (a present factor, as

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[106] Wolczuk and Yemelianova, "When the West Meets the East," 182-183.

demonstrated) and anti-democratic trends (more pronounced in Hungary than in Poland, as we will see). This consideration brings us to section 4.

4. Another variable: pluralism on the right

As we saw in section 3, contrary to the analysis of Vachudova and Snyder, both Hungary and Poland had vibrant ethnic nationalist traditions as they entered the post-communist period. In turning to contemporary developments in Hungary and Poland, we will see that none of the factors identified by Vachudova and Snyder as preventive of ethnic nationalism (ethnic homogeneity, strong economy, or a strong break from communism) stemmed the tide of ethnic nationalist sentiment in either of those states. However in at once attempting to explain the different courses of their democratic progress (or lack thereof), we must turn to another variable that better helps to characterize the situation in both states. The variable best suited for this, as I will argue, is the degree to which each country's right-wing politics were characterized by a degree of pluralism.

As we will see, while the condition of ethnic nationalism in Hungary and Poland was seemingly equivalent at the onset of democratization, Hungary's conservative element was far less pluralistic than Poland's at this time. This in turn facilitated the earlier and more successful rise of an authoritarian, personalistic politician in Hungary than in Poland. These conclusions at once affirm the importance of ethnic nationalism in stalling democratic progress but update it with a consideration for the role played by pluralism on the right. Namely, I will argue that ethnic nationalism is successfully mobilized in the post-communist CEE context toward anti-democratic ends only in the condition of, and at once for the purpose of, consolidated political power on the right.

This section will proceed first by discussing the course of politics in Hungary within the context of pluralism on the right. In so doing we will see how Viktor Orbán managed to drag Hungary down to Romania- and Bulgaria-levels of democracy by pursuing a two-fold strategy of

mobilizing ethnic nationalist sentiment and consolidating power on the right. I will then turn to

an analogous discussion of Poland. In so doing I will first point to some controverting factors,

which distinguish the plurality of its conservative element from that of Hungary, and will then

track the course of Polish politics over the same period of time within that framework. Finally I

will use the findings from these two cases in order to draw some conclusions about why Poland

has not regressed as sharply as Hungary into authoritarianism.

4.1. Conservatism was the Viktor: the case of post-communist Hungary

Political allegiances and ideologies in Hungary's immediate post-communist period were ambiguous. However by all measures the left-wing was far more pluralistic than the right at this time. As such an analysis of Hungarian politics, and in turn an explanation of Viktor Orbán's rise to political power through the lens of pluralism on the right, will reveal how ethnic nationalism was successfully mobilized toward anti-democratic ends in that state, and more generally how this is accomplished in the post-communist CEE context.

This section will argue that because Hungary's right was poorly represented during the immediate post-communist period to begin with, Orbán faced little competition in mobilizing ethnic nationalist rhetoric for his own political gains. The argument will proceed chronologically in order to demonstrate how Orbán accomplished this consolidation of power on the right over time. In turn the conclusions from this section will help to formulate a response to Vachudova and Snyder's incomplete conclusions regarding the relationship between ethnic nationalism and anti-democratic trends in post-communist CEE. That is, the case of Hungary will show how ethnic nationalism poses a threat to democratic prospects only when coupled with a lack of pluralism on the right, rather than being a detrimental factor in itself.

Vachudova and Snyder rightly characterized the immediate post-communist moment in Hungary as lacking an ethnic nationalist character but failed to anticipate later ethnic nationalist developments. As we will see, an analysis of this situation through the lens of pluralism of the right better explains both the absence of such rhetoric initially, as well as its subsequent re-emergence and its use for anti-democratic ends. This in turn will better prepare us to analyze analogous developments in Poland.

4.1a. 1989-1998: The rise of Fidesz

To begin, the scarcity of conservative political options during Hungary's early period of democratization can be explained as an inheritance from the legacy of late communist rule. In the years leading up to its dissolution, Hungary's communist regime undertook a number of political changes that in turn complicated and destabilized the politics of the immediate post-communist period. For one, the formal replacement of General Secretary Janos Kádár, who had been in power for 32 years, by the moderate Károly Grósz in May 1988 signaled a liberal turn by the authoritarian regime.[107] Grósz in turn was swiftly replaced by the even younger and more reform-minded Miklós Németh later that year.[108] The appointment of Németh signaled an unprecedented embrace of liberalism by the regime, which complicated the efforts of the burgeoning liberal opposition to claim a distinct political position.[109] Wilkin argues that the period of time between March and October 1989 was marked by a formal delegitimization of the old communist elite in favor of this newfound liberalism, which, as mentioned, was contemporaneous with the development of a separate liberal opposition.[110] As such the incumbent regime, as well as its contender – altogether a sizable majority of the political landscape – were concentrated on one side of the ideological spectrum.

In turn the lack of ethnic nationalist rhetoric in Hungary's early post-communist years can be attributed to this conflict for supremacy on the left. This is because transitional politicians from the opposition were chiefly concerned with eradicating the influence of communism in favor of their liberal doctrine. Roman David explains that the most prolific lustration campaigns, aimed at eradicating all holdover influence from communist rule, were seen in Hungary, Poland,

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[107] Wolfgang Saxon, "Janos Kadar of Hungary Is Dead at 77," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), July 7, 1989.

[108] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 35.

[109] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 35.

[110] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 33.

and the Czech Republic.[111] (This in turn suggests that the ethnically homogenous post-communist states had more leverage to move past their communist legacies than their ethnically fragmented counterparts, to Vachudova and Snyder's point.)

It was in this political context that Orbán first began his political career as a university student in Budapest. At this time the young Orbán was a member of the liberal Democratic Opposition, a coalition between his Alliance of Young Democrats (*Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége*, Fidesz) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége*, SZDSZ).[112] Altogether this faction represented one of the three main groups present at the roundtable discussions that had brought an end to communist rule.[113] As such, the Democratic Opposition's ranks began their political careers above all else as foes of the communist regime and its continued influence in post-communist politics.

That Orbán began his career as an opponent of communist ideology is noteworthy in analyzing his later consolidation of rhetoric and political power. That is, while he initially cast himself within the guise of young and progressive politics with the supposed aim of bettering Hungary's democratic prospects, Orbán at once positioned himself ideologically as a defender of the Hungarian people against perceived outside threats. As we will see, this only became a problem for Hungary's democratic prospects once Orbán was able to successfully shift his rhetoric to the poorly represented right. In so doing he was able to mobilize the same political strategy, albeit with an updated ideology, aimed not only at defending Hungarians from communist influence but from threats that were, generally speaking, ethno-cultural in nature.

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[111] Roman David, *Lustration and Transitional Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011): 145.

[112] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 31.

[113] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 31.

By 1994 Fidesz appeared incapable of distinguishing itself within the diversity of political parties on the left. Dingsdale and Kovacs explain that in that year's election there were 140 political parties, 34 of which were able to field a candidate.[114] The 1994 parliamentary election in turn saw the victory of the Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt*, MSZP) with a total of 54% of Hungary's overall parliamentary seats and 149 of its 176 single-member constituency seats, along with the second-place victory of the aforementioned SZDSZ with a total of 18% of the overall parliamentary seats and 16 of the 176 single-member constituency seats.[115] This is particularly noteworthy given that these electoral results led to a coalition between the two victorious parties, in turn compounding the already prodigious representation of the left and at once representing a suspicious coalition between former communists and their onetime opposition.[116] David adds that such a partnership failed to develop in both Poland and the Czech Republic.[117]

Moreover, the 1994 election at once saw the drastic loss of the incumbent, center-right Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*, MDF), which had prevailed in the 1990 election and had at the time represented a coalition of conservative perspectives.[118] Dingsdale and Kovacs explain that the MDF's loss in the 1994 election owed in large part to the dissatisfaction of the Hungarian electorate.[119] At once, the other noteworthy conservative parties of the day performed rather poorly and as such remained altogether fringe in the scope of mainstream politics. The right-wing populist Independent Smallholders (*Független Kisgazda*, FKgP), for instance, garnered an unremarkable 8.8% of the popular vote (though admittedly

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[114] Alan Dingsdale and Zoltan Kovacs, "A Return to Socialism: The Hungarian General Election of 1994," *Geography* 81, no. 3 (July 1996): 268.
[115] Dingsdale and Kovacs, "A Return to Socialism," 268.
[116] David, *Lustration and Transitional Justice*, 145.
[117] David, *Lustration and Transitional Justice*, 145.
[118] Dingsdale and Kovacs, "A Return to Socialism," 267.
[119] Dingsdale and Kovacs, "A Return to Socialism," 267.

more impressive than Fidesz' 7.02%), while the Christian Democratic People's Party (*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt*, KDNP) garnered 7.02% and the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party (*Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja*, MIÉP) failed to make it onto the map entirely.[120] Taken together, these political circumstances explain why in 1994 Hungary was characterized by a thoroughly enervated right, and further help inform Vachudova and Snyder's 1997 conclusions about the lack of ethnic nationalist rhetoric in Hungary at the time.

But at once this lack of pluralism of the right represented an ideal opportunity for an aspirant politician to claim its rhetoric. Fidesz, then, following its disappointing fifth-place performance in 1994, recast itself in the mid-1990s as a conservative party in order to gain greater political distinction.[121] The shift was by all measures the project of Orbán. Bill Lomax argues that Orbán took motivation from the 1994 election results in part because his party's poor performance was more reflective of strategic voting against the incumbent government rather than a rejection of Fidesz, or conservatism, as such.[122] It follows that Orbán's shift to the right was no accident, but rather an opportunistic strategy aimed at claiming its rhetoric in place of the discredited MDF – a strategy that paid off handsomely in 1998.

In filling the vacuum of the right, Orbán not only co-opted its rhetoric but at once reshaped Hungarian politics on the whole. For one, Fidesz' rise in the period leading up to the 1998 election was facilitated by Orbán's populist political style, which lent itself to an unprecedented personalization of Hungarian politics. András Bozóki and Eszter Simon argue that Orbán's success in 1998 came in part from this ability to leverage his charismatic style, which he

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[120] Jason Wittenberg, "The 1994 Hungarian Election in Historical Perspective," in *The 1994 Election to the Hungarian National Assembly*, eds. Gábor Tóka and Zsolt Enyedi (Berlin: Sigma, 1999): 158.

[121] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 329-330.

[122] Bill Lomax, "The 1998 elections in Hungary: Third time lucky for the young democrats," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 15, no. 2 (1999): 114.

used to differentiate himself from the majority of Hungarian politicians.[123] Further, Bozóki and Simon describe how Orbán frequently employed wit and a degree of personal excitement in his public appearances, which in turn set him up for a personalistic style as an incumbent and at once demanded a corollary response from his competitors.[124] All of this was further cemented by Orbán's numerous appearances on media channels and his overall high personal visibility, which drew major attention to him alone in addition to his party and its platform.[125]

Moreover, in the lead-up to the 1998 election Orbán was able to distinguish himself from his competitors by adopting a forward-looking vision of Hungary. By contrast most other Hungarian politics at the time had been known for focusing on the ills of Hungary's past (i.e., the experience of communism).[126] In so doing, Orbán further managed to put forward a progressive, though conservative, vision of Hungary in order to challenge the predominant post-communist ideology of neoliberalism. Bozóki and Simon describe this strategy as once again unprecedented in Hungary's short history as a democratic state.[127] It is here that we can begin to see the emergence of a coherent conservative ideology as tied to one distinct politician, which as demonstrated was facilitated by the lack of competition on the right.

At the same time Orbán's consolidation of the right in the years leading up to the 1998 election coincided with a series of troubling developments for the incumbent government. For one the government under Gyula Horn was faced with an economic crisis almost immediately after taking office, and the situation worsened with the resignation of its finance minister, László

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[123] András Bozóki and Eszter Simon, "Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Hungary," in *Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Gerd Meyer (Leverkusen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2006): 173-174.
[124] Bozóki and Simon, "Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Hungary," 173-174.
[125] Bozóki and Simon, "Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Hungary," 173-174.
[126] Bozóki and Simon, "Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Hungary," 173-174.
[127] Bozóki and Simon, "Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Hungary," 173-174.

Békesi, in January 1995.[128] Following this, the government turned toward the neoliberal strategy of shock therapy, which it adopted in the form of the Bokros package in 1996. Wilkin argues that an understanding of the Bokros package and the socioeconomic climate surrounding it is critical to an understanding of how Fidesz managed to come to power in 1998.[129] The package enacted cuts in public spending, which in turn led to a decrease in living standards and a drop in real wages by 25%.[130] This was followed by another crisis in September 1996 known as the "Tocsik Affair," a graft allegation led by Fidesz against a lawyer affiliated with the incumbent government.[131]

As such, as these developments unfolded, Fidesz was well positioned to reap the benefits of being the most prominent of Hungary's conservative opposition and it readily took advantage of the opportunity. Much as the left had prevailed in 1994 subsequent to the failures of the center-right MDF government, in 1998 the pendulum would swing back in the favor of the other side of the ideological spectrum, and indeed this resulted in an electoral triumph for Fidesz. However one cannot fully understand Orbán's 1998 victory without understanding the decisive role played by ethnic nationalism in his doing so. Indeed it was this variable, coupled with Fidesz' unique political position, that handed the aspirant authoritarian his first major opportunity to consolidate power and reverse the course of Hungary's democratization.

In the lead-up to the 1998 election Fidesz took a relatively low-key approach and, indeed, in the first round came only in second to the incumbent MSZP (Socialists), garnering 29% of the

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[128] Lomax, "The 1998 elections in Hungary," 115.
[129] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 60.
[130] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 56-57.
[131] Lomax, "The 1998 elections in Hungary," 116.

vote to their 33%.[132] In turn, subsequent to the runoff neither Fidesz nor MSZP was successful in obtaining a constitutional majority. Lomax explains:

> [In] the final result [...] the Socialist Party still won five per cent more votes than were cast for Fidesz candidates standing alone together with Fidesz candidates standing on joint tickets with the Democratic Forum, but it won fewer individual constituencies (54 as against Fidesz's 90). At the same time, a further 15 Democratic Forum candidates were elected on joint tickets with Fidesz, in addition to two standing alone. Yet, with 165 seats altogether, Fidesz and the Democratic Forum did not have an overall majority, although they did have more seats than those of the Socialists and Free Democrats combined, at 158.[133]

Lomax goes on to explain that, given the situation, Fidesz managed only able to obtain its constitutional majority after partnering with the aforementioned Independent Smallholders, who had obtained 48 parliamentary seats in their own right.[134] Moreover the aforementioned Justice and Life Party, a far-right group by all measures, managed to garner a full 5% of the popular vote, along with a full 14 seats in parliament, in a shocking demonstration of the salience of ethnic nationalism.[135] For their part Fidesz chose not to partner with the Justice and Life Party, but the results of the 1998 election remained clear: conservatism was the victor, and ethnic nationalism was decidedly relevant to Hungarian political life.

As such the stage was set. A partnership with the Smallholders (and in turn an embrace of ethnic nationalism) had proven the decisive factor in Fidesz' first electoral victory. And Orbán's centrality within this coalition altogether poised him to become the face of Hungary's right. On the whole then we can conclude that Orbán's two-fold strategy, first of personalizing politics in the lead-up to 1998, and second of consolidating conservative and ethnic nationalist rhetoric around his party's constitutional majority, was an altogether successful one.

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[132] Lomax, "The 1998 elections in Hungary," 119.
[133] Lomax, "The 1998 elections in Hungary," 122.
[134] Lomax, "The 1998 elections in Hungary," 122.
[135] Lomax, "The 1998 elections in Hungary," 120.

This in turn points us back to Vachudova and Snyder. At once we can conclude that Vachudova and Snyder were indeed mistaken not to anticipate the emergence and strategic importance of ethnic nationalism in Hungarian politics. Further, we can conclude that Vachudova and Snyder mischaracterized the relationship between ethnic nationalism as an end in itself with a given country's democratic prospects, though in Vachudova and Snyder's formulation this argument failed even to extend to Hungary. As we will see, the use of ethnic nationalist rhetoric for anti-democratic ends during Orbán's first term was facilitated by way of his further consolidation of the right (i.e., a weakening of pluralism), not by a mobilization of the rhetoric on its own. This will prove important to our later examinations of analogous developments in Poland.

4.1b. 1998-2002: Orbán's consolidation of power during his first term

Actions taken by Fidesz during their first term in office were plainly aimed at a consolidation of ethnic nationalist rhetoric on their own terms. As we will see, this was evidenced in part by Orbán's manipulation of rhetoric during Hungary's accession negotiations into the EU. Further, the parliamentary elections of 2002 demonstrate the extent to which Orbán was indeed successful in consolidating Hungary's right after his first term in office. Finally, after reviewing these two points, we will turn to the actual impact of Orbán's first term in office on the health of Hungarian democracy in order to assess his consolidation of power.

The abuse by Orbán and Fidesz of EU ideology was put on full display during Hungary's accession negotiations, which lasted from the start of Orbán's first term in 1998 until the state's accession in May 2004. In this vein, one of Orbán's most controversial pieces of legislation came at a time when Hungary had already made significant progress in the process of accession. On

the face this provision, the 2001 Act on Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries (otherwise known as the Status Law), aimed to ease the conditions for Hungarian co-ethnics (i.e., ethnic Hungarians in Hungary's neighboring states) to work and study in Hungary.[136] King, however, argues that this provision was in fact a clever manipulation of EU rhetoric by Orbán and Fidesz against the EU, on the EU's own terms.[137] This is to say that while the rhetoric surrounding the bill was couched in concern over the rights of ethnic minorities (an important tenet of the EU accession process), in reality it was intended to allow Hungary to assert an openly irredentist position on behalf of its co-ethnics in Slovakia and Romania.[138]

The law's aggressive undertone was not lost on Hungary's neighbors. The Romanian government, for one, described the law as "contrary to the European spirit."[139] Yet the EU's singular objection to Austria's inclusion in the list of states included in the provision signaled a tacit acceptance of Fidesz' actions in post-communist CEE, perhaps because the rhetoric regarding Hungarian co-ethnics was believably well-intentioned.[140] Indeed King points to the precedent set by Article 15 of a 1996 accord between Hungary and Romania, the longest of all the document's sections, which emphasized the mutual good treatment of their states' minorities, as an example of Hungary's widely-held positive democratic consolidation at the time.[141] To be sure, without the benefit of hindsight it is reasonably clear why, not unlike Vachudova and Snyder, the EU would have given Hungary the benefit of the doubt. However with Orbán's later career in mind, it follows that his mobilization of ethnic nationalist rhetoric, as evidenced by

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[136] "Hungary 'Status Law' Irks Neighbours," *BBC News* (London, UK), June 19, 2001.
[137] King, *Extreme Politics*, 135.
[138] King, *Extreme Politics*, 135.
[139] "Hungary 'Status Law' Irks Neighbours," *BBC*, June 19, 2001.
[140] "Hungary 'Status Law' Irks Neighbours," *BBC,* June 19, 2001.
[141] King, *Extreme Politics*, 135.

irredentist provisions like the Status Law, was intentioned at tacitly and gradually consolidating

his own power.

On the whole then, Orbán managed to recast the ideology of EU accession, aimed at

evolving Europe into a post-national body (recall the discussion of the 'blind' view of

nationalism from section 2.2), into a referendum on Hungarian nationhood on his own terms.[142]

This in turn allowed Orbán to co-opt the rhetoric regarding Hungary's borders, which had proven

so central to the state's nationalist tradition ever since its devastating loss in the First World War

(recall the discussion of the Treaty of Trianon from section 3.2b).[143] Indeed Michael Stewart

argues that by framing Hungarian accession into the EU as a reunification of Hungarian co-

ethnics, Orbán cleverly leveraged the guise of postmodern politics in order "to legitimize old-

fashioned, nationalist political goals," and in turn augmented Hungary's dominance within the

CEE sphere.[144] Jon E. Fox and Peter Vermeersch confirm that this legislation amounted to

traditional irredentism in the guise of progressivist posturing, adding that in so doing, Orbán

went on to advocate for a similar outlook on behalf of Hungary's neighboring states.[145] Fox and

Vermeersch argue that this amounted to a hijacking of liberal democratic rhetoric from the EU,

by Orbán, into an ethnic nationalist posture within the post-communist sphere that was aimed at

the consolidation of his own power along nationalist lines.[146]

Orbán's cunning manipulation of EU rhetoric for anti-democratic ends offers an insight

into Vachudova and Snyder's misguided conclusions regarding Hungarian democratization. The

contrast is further evidenced by Vachudova's more recent article, "Democratization in

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[142] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 330.
[143] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 330.
[144] Michael Stewart, "The Hungarian Status Law: A new European form of Transnational Politics?"
Diaspora 12, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 90.
[145] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 337.
[146] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 337.

Postcommunist Europe." Here Vachudova contends that the process of EU accession had the effect of liberalizing all of the post-communist states – even those, she argues, that had been plagued by illiberal rule subsequent to their early democratic transitions.[147] Vachudova extends this line of reasoning to argue that the slow and oftentimes absent progress of illiberal post-communist democracies became subsumed within the progressive power of EU accession, particularly because these negotiations often delegitimized corrupt and holdover incumbents by effectively "'rewriting' the rules of the game."[148] This seems a touch ironic given that, as demonstrated, it was Orbán who rewrote the terms of EU accession along the lines of his own political ambitions.

As such, it seems what Vachudova again missed, and in turn what was missing from Vachudova and Snyder's initial 1997 formulation, was a proper understanding of the role played by ethnic nationalism as it relates to anti-democratic trends. Instead, if analyzed through the lens of mobilization by Orbán of ethnic nationalist rhetoric aimed at a consolidation of his own power, Orbán's actions in relation to EU accession make a good deal more sense given later developments than does the presumed liberalization in Vachudova's more recent schema. We can thereby conclude that, contrary to Vachudova's expectations, Orbán's use of ethnic nationalist rhetoric during his first term in office helped him to consolidate his power over Hungary's right to an unprecedented degree. That this was the case was further demonstrated by the results of the 2002 parliamentary elections.

The results of Hungary's 2002 parliamentary elections above all demonstrated the degree to which, in his first term, Orbán was able to take ownership over ethnic nationalist rhetoric and

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[147] Vachudova, "Democratization in Postcommunist Europe: Illiberal Regimes and the Leverage of the European Union," in *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the   Postcommunist World*, eds. Valerie Bunce, Michael McFaul, and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 82-83.

[148] Vachudova, "Democratization in Postcommunist Europe," 82-83.

as a result was able to fully consolidate power on the right. As discussed, in 1998 Fidesz had relied on the far-right FKgP in order to cement its constitutional majority. In so doing Fidesz had compounded their 148 parliamentary seats with FKgP's 48 and MDF's 17 in order to successfully outweigh the incumbent MSZP's total of 158 seats.[149] And as discussed an additional, though unaffiliated, 14 seats from ultra-nationalist MIÉP had cemented the ethno-nationalist mandate at the beginning of the Orbán's first term.[150] By contrast, by the first round of elections in 2002 both the FKgP and the MIÉP had all but been neutralized (from 13.2% to 0.8%, and from 5.5% to 4.4% of the popular vote, respectively).[151] By the second round, neither party was successful in garnering a single parliamentary seat or more than several hundred votes.[152] As such Fidesz emerged the singular conservative party (the MDF had integrated), which in turn signaled an unprecedented accretion of power by Orbán over Hungary's conserative politics. Pluralism on the right, then, had for all intents and purposes vanished from the picture.

Given this consolidation on the right by Orbán and the continued primacy of the MSZP on the left, the 2002 election amounted to a two-party standoff. Fidesz campaigned largely on its record from the previous four years and, expecting a victory, was surprised at its rather narrow and unfavorable results in the first round.[153] B. Fowler explains that the MSZP's unexpected – though narrow – victory over Fidesz (42.1% of the regional list vote to Fidesz' 41.1%) was due in large part to a collection of radical statements made by Fidesz politicians in the months leading up to the voting.[154] The results of the second round were also remarkably close, with

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[149] Lomax, "The 1998 elections in Hungary," 119.
[150] Lomax, "The 1998 elections in Hungary," 119.
[151] B. Fowler, "The parliamentary elections in Hungary, April 2002," *Electoral Studies* 22 (2003): 803.
[152] Fowler, "The parliamentary elections in Hungary, April 2002," 803.
[153] Fowler, "The parliamentary elections in Hungary, April 2002," 802.
[154] Fowler, "The parliamentary elections in Hungary, April 2002," 802.

Fidesz falling 6 seats short of an absolute majority,[155] and gaining a total of 188 seats as compared to MSZP's 197 (178 of its own in addition to 19 from the SZDSZ).[156] It is ironic that, given Fidesz' inability to form a coalition following the results of the second round, it was Orbán's successful consolidation of the right that prevented him from winning re-election in 2002.

As suggested by Fowler, the 2002 election was noteworthy not only for the consolidation by Fidesz of the right, but also, in a manner characteristic of populist politics, a vitriol and divisiveness that had never before been seen in Hungary's political culture. Ludolfo Paramio points to Orbán's unrelenting criticism in the lead-up to the ballot of the liberal mayor of Budapest as a possible explanation for his poor electoral performance in that city in 2002.[157] Paramio goes on to tie Orbán's openly vitriolic rhetoric in with his successful consolidation of the right, arguing that Orbán's shift left few votes for him to win except from the center (i.e., from MSZP), or from a hypothetical coalition with MIÉP (hypothetical because MIÉP had failed to surpass the 5% threshold).[158] Paramio goes on to argue against the possibility of the former situation because, as he explains, "Orbán's campaign during the second round [took] a very different course and [adopted] more demagogic, nationalistic and anti-western tones, more fitting for the Party of Truth and Life (MIÉP) of István Csurka," than, say, for a centrist aimed at stealing votes from the MSZP.[159] Orbán, then, had by all means become the voice of right-wing nationalism to an unprecedented degree.

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[155] Fowler, "The parliamentary elections in Hungary, April 2002," 804.
[156] Hungary National Elections Office, *Parliamentary Elections 2002* (Budapest, 2010), http://www.valasztas.hu/hu/ovi/49/49_0.html (accessed February 28, 2017).
[157] Ludolfo Paramio, "Transition and consolidation of democracy in Hungary" (Madrid: FRIDE, May 23, 2002): 10.
[158] Paramio, "Transition and consolidation of democracy in Hungary," 11.
[159] Paramio, "Transition and consolidation of democracy in Hungary," 11.

In sum Hungary's 2002 election represented a litmus test of enormous importance for the young democracy. For one, the election featured a turnout that was unprecedented in Hungary's existence as a post-communist state, with a full 73.5% of the electorate voting in the second round (according to figures from the Inter-Parliamentary Union),[160] as compared to 57% in the 1998 election.[161] Further, following conciliatory remarks from the newly elected prime minister Péter Medgyessy, Orbán delivered one of his most infamous speeches, reproduced from Stewart:

> We have supported Hungarian culture to a degree not yet seen and we have begun the process of national reunification, so it is not, as you heard just now from the seat of another party, it is not that the future of Hungary lies in the 10 million Hungarians but in the 15 million Hungarian nation. Let me repeat, so that it can be heard everywhere where it should be heard: the future of Hungary lies not in the Hungary of 10 million but in the Hungarian nation of 15 million.[162]

This excerpt of Orbán's speech is noteworthy not least for his irredentist invocation of "the Hungarian nation of 15 million," again pointing to the impressive degree of Orbán's consolidation of ethnic nationalist rhetoric in his first term as prime minister. This, in addition to Orbán's remarkably dogged commitment to "national reunification" despite having just lost formal power. And in addition to these bold-faced examples of irredentism, it was also during this speech that Orbán delivered his most infamous claim that, regardless of the results of the election, "the nation [could not] be in opposition."[163] Mueller rightly explains that this moment characterized the crystallization of Orbán as the sole representative of the Hungarian nation and its general will.[164] And as we will see, this idea, along with Orbán's continued consolidation of

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[160] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Hungary Parliamentary Chamber: *Országgyülés.* Elections Held in 2002" (Grand-Saconnex: Switzerland, 1998), http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2141_02.htm (accessed February 28, 2017).

[161] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Hungary Parliamentary Chamber: *Országgyülés.* Elections Held in 1998" (Grand-Saconnex: Switzerland, 1998), http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2141_98.htm (accessed February 28, 2017).

[162] Stewart, "The Hungarian Status Law," 67.

[163] Jan-Werner Mueller, "Eastern Europe Goes South: Disappearing Democracy in the EU's Newest Members." *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 2 (March/April 2014): 16.

[164] Mueller, "Eastern Europe Goes South," 16.

power while in opposition, all served to both help Orbán's influence and at once facilitate the continued erosion of Hungarian democracy.

Finally, before moving to a discussion of Orbán's continued consolidation of power during his years in opposition, it will be instructive to examine the actual erosion of Hungary's democracy during Orbán's first term in office. To begin, figures from V-Dem suggest that on the surface, Orbán's first term in office did not have detrimental effects on the health of Hungary's democracy during the period of 1998-2002, though neither did it improve it (its score hovered around 0.82 during Orbán's term).[165]

However qualitative accounts of Orbán's first term go further to confirm that an anti-democratic consolidation of power was indeed at play during this period, and further that, though it may not have influenced Hungary's democracy at the time, this consolidation by Orbán in his first term did in fact lay the groundwork for subsequent authoritarian developments. Miklós Haraszti argues that despite his anti-communist posturing, Orbán undertook an "utterly nepotistic" governing style during his first term in office.[166] Moreover, a 2006 report from the German non-profit Bertelsmann Foundation frames Orbán's first term along lines that readily anticipate later authoritarian developments. It argues that in his first term, Orbán:

> [...] divided Hungary's political elite and its citizens with his inability to compromise and cooperate and his unbridled ambition for power. He sidelined the parliament and, as part of this strategy to concentrate power, neutralized the institutional checks and balances that countered the executive branch. He served nationalist resentments and returned, at least in part, to a statist economic policy.[167]

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[165] "Data Version 6.2," Gothenburg, Sweden: Varieties of Democracy, 2016, https://www.v-dem.net/en/data/data-version-6-2/, accessed February 27, 2017.

[166] Miklós Haraszti, "The 'real' Viktor Orbán," *openDemocracy* (May 2, 2002), https://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-newright/article_358.jsp (accessed March 24, 2017).

[167] "Transformation: Hungary," Bertelsmann Foundation (Gütersloh, Germany: 2004), http://bti2003.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/171.0.html?&L=1 (accessed February 27, 2017).

The report from the Bertelsmann Foundation goes on to point to a regression in freedoms of expression, press, and the fight against corruption, and charges Fidesz with having "[poisoned] the public debate" by politicizing the Hungarian electorate and altogether creating rifts in a relatively unified society.[168] The report's claim regarding the unity of Hungarian society prior to Orbán's accession calls to mind Vachudova and Snyder's initial appraisals of democratic prospects in Hungary. Orbán in turn serves as an apt case study for how these conditions become undone.

Further, it is clear from our examination of Orbán's first term that during this period, his political ambitions and his ownership of ethnic nationalist rhetoric became inextricably linked. Fox and Vermeersch confirm that throughout his first term Orbán consistently framed political rhetoric along the lines of ethnic nationalism (as demonstrated in the prior discussion of EU accession), which in turn worked to position Orbán and his party as the spokespeople of the imagined Hungarian nation.[169] This would rather obviously prove to be a problematic situation for democratic pluralism in Hungary. That is, in so doing Orbán cast politics as a struggle between himself as the defender of the Hungarian nation and those parties that, in his view, were not. Orbán continued to use this strategy, while at once maintaining his hold over the right, during his eight years in opposition.

4.1c. 2002-2010: The nation in opposition and the rise of Jobbik

As demonstrated in the previous section, Orbán's first term in office set off anti-democratic trends in Hungarian political life, and these trends were only further compounded during Fidesz' eight years in opposition. As such the argument in this section will proceed in

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[168] "Transformation: Hungary," Bertelsmann Foundation, 2004.
[169] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 330.

four parts. First I will affirm the aforementioned claim by outlining the development of ethnic nationalist sentiments, as well as their beneficial implications for Orbán, during this period. I will then explain why, despite this, Orbán was unable to recapture incumbency in 2006 and how this related to a lack of pluralism on the right. Then I will outline the failures of incumbents that aided Orbán's reelection in 2010. In this section I will also outline the contemporaneous rise of Jobbik, and the corollary move to the right by Hungarian politics on the whole.

For many scholars Fidesz' loss in the 2002 parliamentary election offered a comforting sign for Hungary's democratic prospects. In their 2006 analysis Bozóki and Simon assert with full confidence that since initial democratization, Hungary had seen a full consolidation of democracy (Orbán's term and all), and that if anything the rejection of Fidesz in 2002 signaled a healthy caution among the Hungarian electorate toward the dangers of authoritarianism.[170] Moreover, the aforementioned report from the Bertelsmann Foundation credits the MSZP government under Medgyessy with reversing many of the anti-democratic steps taken by Fidesz within months.[171] Such appraisals call to mind Vachudova and Snyder's optimism in assuming an inevitability to post-communist democratization.

Of course not all accounts held that the damage of Orbán's first term would be so easily undone. Adrian Basora, for one, wrote in 2008 about the disappointing reversal in the democratization trends of all of the Visegrád states (Hungary, Poland, Czechia and Slovakia).[172] Noting that these trends were running counter to predictions from the 1990s, Basora concludes that "after [an] initial sprint, the full consolidation of democracy is a much longer-term endeavor

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[170] Bozóki and Simon, "Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Hungary," 185-186.
[171] "Transformation: Hungary," Bertelsmann Foundation, 2004.
[172] Adrian Basora, "Must Democracy Continue to Retreat in Postcommunist Europe and Eurasia?" (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2008): 16.

and [...] the road can be quite bumpy."[173] Basora's conclusions at once suggest that the effects of Orbán's first term were felt in Hungary long after his leaving office in 2002, and further demonstrate that underlying factors, which earlier accounts like Vachudova and Snyder failed to anticipate, were contributing to democratic reversals across all of post-communist CEE.

The continued deterioration of Hungarian democracy was reflected in certain aggregative reports. While as discussed the V-Dem account of Hungary failed to anticipate any changes in the health of its democracy during this period (with the exception of the year 2006, which will be discussed), figures from Freedom House seem to have captured the trend more clearly. For one, between the years 2003 and 2010 (i.e., Orbán's time in opposition), Hungary's democracy score rose steadily from 1.96 to 2.39 (see figure 4.1.1) (n.b.: Freedom House rankings follow a 1=best, 7=worst scaling system).[174] This trend was conceivably set in motion, at least in part, by the measures undertaken by Fidesz in their first term.

In contrast to the aforementioned optimism of scholars like Bozóki and Simon, then, the gradual degeneration of democracy during Fidesz' years in opposition was further compounded by a rise in ethnic nationalist sentiment among the Hungarian population. Indeed Wilkin points to the research of Zsuzsanna Vidra and the aforementioned Jon Fox, who demonstrate that between 2002 and 2009 far-right factions in Hungary (including neo-fascists) doubled in popularity.[175] Wilkin explains further that during this period of time Hungary saw a rise in anti-Roma propaganda as fueled by alleged "gypsy crimes," and in turn because of the popularity of this messaging, more liberal-minded parties felt cautious in taking a stance against such rhetoric

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[173] Basora, "Must Democracy Continue to Retreat in Postcommunist Europe and Eurasia?" 16.

[174] "Nations in Transit." Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, 2017. https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/nations-transit, accessed February 24, 2017.

[175] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 71.

for fear of losing votes.[176] To be sure, given the closeness of the 2002 election, this appears to have been a rather unfortunate though necessary political strategy. Moreover Wilkin points to surveys from 2005, 2014, and 2015, all of which report over 50% of the Hungarian population as admitting to viewing Roma as especially predisposed to committing crimes.[177] It is worth considering whether this alone controverts Vachudova and Snyder's research design, given that Hungary's relative ethnic homogeneity ultimately failed to immunize it from ethnic nationalist sentiment, both generally and specifically toward its meager Roma population.

Further, Fidesz' years in opposition saw the privileging by Hungarians of issues which typically lend themselves to authoritarian rhetoric rather than to liberal democracy. For one, despite their optimism Bozóki and Simon point to a poll from 2002 that demonstrated 72% of Hungarians as stating a preference for the state's expending resources in order to fight crime rather than its defending human rights.[178] In the same study respondents indicated a prioritization of issues of economics and nationalism over free speech and engagement in political life on the whole, signaling a salience of authoritarian-minded, ethnic nationalist ideas, as initiated by Orbán, over liberal democratic ones.[179] This in turn was reflected in public opinion data, as demonstrated by Eurobarometer statistics. For instance between 2004-2009, sentiment about Hungary's membership in the EU being a "good thing" fell from 49% to 32%, while in the same period sentiment about it being a "bad thing" rose from 10% to 22% (see figure 4.1.2).[180]

As with the period of time between 1994-1998, political developments with incumbents during Orbán's time in opposition only benefited and energized his commitment to reelection. First, after an unremarkable two years as prime minister, Medgyessy's MSZP party met

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[176] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 71.
[177] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 71.
[178] Bozóki and Simon, "Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Hungary," 178.
[179] Bozóki and Simon, "Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Hungary," 178.
[180] Eurobarometer.

substantial defeat to Fidesz in the 2004 European Parliamentary election, Hungary's first (36.3% to Fidesz' 47.2%).[181] Several months later Medgyessy resigned after extensive in-party fighting and was unceremoniously replaced by his one-time associate Ferenc Gyurcsány.[182] Such haphazard electoral transitions and party infighting perhaps hint at an early explanation of the sagging Freedom House numbers in the years 2006-on.

However despite the turbulence within the MSZP, particularly given the closeness to the upcoming parliamentary elections, Fidesz was unhappily unable to secure a victory in 2006. An openly pro-Orbán editorial from *The Economist* predicted this, explaining that despite his "impeccable credentials," Orbán would fail to win the allegiance of the SZDSZ and in turn would fail to obtain a constitutional majority.[183] Umut Korkut adds that Fidesz' failure was due in part to the party's inability to produce a coherent program until shortly before the election.[184] This in turn was at least partly due to poorly-timed infighting between Fidesz and the MDF. Korkut explains that the collapsing MDF, which in previous elections had allied with Fidesz, chose to run on the slogan "We are adults" in an effort to delegitimize Orbán's populist posturing.[185] This development in turn affirms the controverting possibility of pluralism on the right for aspirant authoritarians like Orbán.

Though despite the loss, the 2006 election brought a silver lining for Orbán and his party. First, Fidesz' accumulation of 164 parliamentary seats (42.5% of the total) rendered the party still highly relevant and at once still the standard bearer of Hungary's right (the collapsing MDF,

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[181] Jolá Róka, "Turnout and Its Strategic Political Marketing Implications in Hungary During the 2004 European Parliamentary Elections," *Journal of Political Marketing* 4, nos. 2/3 (2005): 170.

[182] "Revolving doors: a new prime minister steps up," *The Economist* (London, UK), August 24, 2004.

[183] "Europe: Sense and nonsense; Hungary's election," *The Economist* (London, UK), April 8, 2006.

[184] Umut Korkut, "The 2006 Hungarian Election: Economic Competitiveness versus Social Solidarity," *Parliamentary Affairs* 60, no. 4 (2007): 684.

[185] Korkut, "The 2006 Hungarian Election," 685.

by contrast, obtained a meager 11 parliamentary seats, 2.9% of the total).[186] Further, a report from the BBC on the 2006 election confirms describes that "[both] Fidesz and the Socialists have fought a campaign that has been very much personality-driven."[187] This can be read as an affirmation of the continued importance of personality politics to Hungary, by all means a strong suit for Orbán, as previously discussed.

And despite setting a precedent by winning the first re-election in Hungary's history as a post-communist state,[188] the MSZP soon became embroiled in a scandal that damaged its political prospects irreversibly. Several months after Gyurcsány's victory, a recording of the incumbent prime minister, in which he admitted to having lied to the Hungarian public in order to win that year's election, leaked to the public and stirred a national controversy that culminated in demands for his resignation.[189] Mueller explains that, while Gyurcsány managed to hold on to power until 2009, he and his party became severely morally discredited as a result.[190] Mueller adds that, as previously discussed, the already suspicious alliance between the MSZP (the inheritors of the communist party) and the SZDSZ (their onetime liberal opposition) was brought under sharper scrutiny as a result of the leaks.[191] To be sure, this thorough discrediting of the left would only serve Orbán in the coming elections.

At once Fidesz' years in opposition saw the formation of a younger and more aggressive ethnic nationalism, which dragged the tone of Hungary's politics rather sharply to the right. Fox and Vermeersch explain that, starting in the mid-2000s, a far-right nationalist party by the name of The Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*, Jobbik) emerged

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[186] Hungary National Elections Office, *Parliamentary Elections 2006* (Budapest, 2010), http://www.valasztas.hu/hu/ovi/44/44_0.html (accessed March 24, 2017).

[187] "Q&A: Hungary election," *BBC News* (London, UK), April 7, 2006.

[188] Korkut, "The 2006 Hungarian Election," 675.

[189] "We lied to win, says Hungary PM," *The Economist* (London, UK), September 18, 2006.

[190] Mueller, "The Hungarian Tragedy," 5.

[191] Mueller, "The Hungarian Tragedy," 7.

on the heels of the discredited MIÉP and in alliance with a paramilitary wing known as the Hungarian Guard (*Magyar Garda*).[192] The younger, more extreme version of nationalism as embodied by Jobbik openly targeted 'cosmopolitanism' (Judaism) and endorsed acts of violence against Hungary's Romani population, in addition to rejecting internationalist values and espousing an overall disinterest toward the decorum of mainstream politics.[193] The rise in prominence of Jobbik, like the other aforementioned nationalist developments during Fidesz' years in opposition, would figure prominently into Orbán's landslide victory in Hungary's 2010 elections.

In a sense, then, Hungary's 2010 elections were the perfect storm. The election saw an unprecedented mobilization of ethnic nationalist rhetoric. Mueller, for instance, contends that Orbán and his party won on the basis of a deeply nationalistic campaign.[194] Specifically Orbán achieved this by invoking, among other ideas, the nationalist legacy of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon (as discussed in section 3).[195] At once the aforementioned controversy involving Prime Minister Gyurcsány, along with his resignation in March 2009, left the incumbent Socialists in a particularly weak position ahead of the election.[196] And Eurobarometer statistics confirm the aforementioned salience of populist sentiment, a boon for Orbán. For one, in May 2010 17% of respondents reported 'crime' as one of the two most important issues facing the country, a marked spike from the 11.5% average of the previous two years (see figure 4.1.3).[197] Altogether, then, the election resulted in an astonishing 99-seat pickup for Fidesz, along with a 131-seat drop

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[192] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 345-346.
[193] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 345-346.
[194] Mueller, "The Hungarian Tragedy," 7.
[195] Mueller, "The Hungarian Tragedy," 7.
[196] "Gyurcsany goes," *The Economist* (London, UK), March 26, 2009.
[197] Eurobarometer.

for MSZP and a 47-seat pickup for the nascent Jobbik.[198] This in turn set the stage for an altogether unprecedented anti-democratic shift.

4.1d. 2010-present: The crystallization of Orbán's consolidation and conclusions

Orbán's reelection in 2010 marked an unprecedented crystallization of his power and control over ethnic nationalist sentiments. As we will see in this final section, since 2010 Hungary has for all intents and purposes turned in an increasingly authoritarian direction. This situation controverts Vachudova and Snyder's expectations about Hungary's democratic prospects, and in turn suggests that they misunderstood the relationship between ethnic nationalism and anti-democratic developments.

One of the most openly anti-democratic and controversial steps taken by Fidesz after its re-election in 2010 was its revision of the constitution. Orbán claimed that his party's reformulation of the constitution was a legitimate act, given that the prior document had been based on a Stalinist constitution from 1949.[199] Fidesz argued that in so doing, it was in fact breaking Hungary from its communist past, and that this move at once represented a mitigation against the consequences of its corrupt predecessor.[200] As such this move amounted to a renewed mobilization by Fidesz against the communist bogeyman in an effort to legitimize its own anti-democratic posturing.

At once Fidesz took up its favored strategy of manipulating EU rhetoric in order to advance its own political gains. Mueller explains that, almost immediately after assuming office in 2010, Orbán instituted a Trianon memorial day and redefined Hungarian citizenship to include

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[198] Hungary National Elections Office, *Parliamentary Elections 2010* (Budapest, 2010), http://www.valasztas.hu/hu/parval2010/455/455_0.html (accessed March 24, 2017).

[199] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, xi-xii.

[200] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, xi-xii.

co-ethnics in the Hungarian near abroad, all of which Mueller describes as having amounted to "nothing less than a comprehensive Kulturkampf."[201] Wilkinson argues that this was facilitated by an apparent disinterest in political matters by the EU. He points to the prioritization by the EU of economic measures such as the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) – a financial assistance program for eurozone members started in 2012 – and Outright Monetary Transactions (OMT) – a financial mechanism launched by the European Central Bank in 2012 – which he argues signaled a tacit approval of Orbán's nationalist posturing.[202] Like Mueller, Wilkinson goes so far as to draw an analogy between Hungary's actions and Weimar Germany,[203] which if anything affirms that Hungary's continued march toward authoritarianism was facilitated by an apparent apathy on the part of the EU.

Further, Orbán's return to power coincided with the continued salience of ethnic nationalist sentiment in Hungarian political life. Recent Freedom House reports suggest that Hungary is the fourth most prejudiced population in Europe, which seems to be in stark contrast to the expectations of Vachudova and Snyder.[204] At once Fidesz and Jobbik have worked to revitalize the memory of the aforementioned Miklós Horthy, who oversaw some of the Jewish genocide of WWII.[205] This development is further substantiated by Eurobarometer statistics. For one, in the two-year period between November 2014 and November 2016, negative sentiment toward immigration from outside of the EU jumped from 67% to 81%, while positive sentiment

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[201] Mueller, "The Hungarian Tragedy," 7.

[202] Michael A. Wilkinson, "Authoritarian Liberalism in the European Constitutional Imagination: Second Time as Farce?" *European Law Journal* 21, no. 3 (May 2015): 326.

[203] Wilkinson, "Authoritarian Liberalism in the European Constitutional Imagination," 326.

[204] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 84.

[205] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 84.

fell from 28% to 15% (see figure 4.1.4).[206] Additionally, the feeling that EU represented "not enough control at external borders" almost doubled from 12% to 23% (see figure 4.1.5).[207]

Contemporaneous with the increased salience of ethnic nationalist after Orbán's reelection in 2010 was the continued deterioration of Hungary's democracy. Freedom House's ranking of Hungary's democracy score, for one, jumped from 2.39 to 3.29 in the period of time between 2010 and 2016, nearly matching Romania's and even exceeding Bulgaria's (see figure 4.1.1).[208] In another example, Hungary's press freedom score rose from 23 to 40 in the period of time between 2010 and 2016, once again bringing it down to Romania- and Bulgaria-levels of democratic health (see figure 4.1.6).[209] Finally, in an example from V-Dem, Hungary's political liberties rating fell from 0.91 in 2009 to 0.85 in 2012, again surpassing both Romania and Bulgaria (see figure 4.1.7).[210]

All of the developments following Orbán's 2010 re-election signal a seemingly irreversible trend of authoritarianism. Even the emergence of Jobbik, an ideological competitor, seems by all means to be within Orbán's control. The findings from this section suggest, then, that the total reversal in Hungary's democracy was first initiated by a lack of competition on the right and was compounded by Orbán's mobilization of ethnic nationalist rhetoric in order to further consolidate his power. That this controverts Vachudova and Snyder's formulations seems obvious given their expectations that Hungary would not see the development of any ethnic nationalism, and that this in turn would ensure its status as a healthy democracy. Finally, as we

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[206] Eurobarometer.

[207] Eurobarometer.

[208]"Nations in Transit." Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, 2017. https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/nations-transit, accessed February 24, 2017.

[209] "Freedom of the Press." Washington, D.C.: Freedom House https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2016. Accessed February 25, 2017.

[210] "Data Version 6.2," Gothenburg, Sweden: Varieties of Democracy, 2016, https://www.v-dem.net/en/data/data-version-6-2/, accessed February 27, 2017.

turn to the case of Poland, we can keep these conclusions in mind as we attempt to explain the

course and status of anti-democratic developments in that state.

4.2. A more pluralistic right: the case of post-communist Poland

Given the central role played by the lack of pluralism on the right in facilitating Orbán's consolidation of power, it is worth considering how Poland's right differed in the immediate post-communist period, and continues to differ in the present day, from Hungary's. As we will see, ethnic nationalism has also played an important role in Poland's history as a post-communist state (as anticipated by section 3), but Poland has remained a qualitatively stronger democracy. In the view of this paper, then, the relative resilience of Poland's democracy can be attributed to a greater degree of pluralism in its right. This situation in turn has presented a more difficult scenario for any one aspirant authoritarian to, in the manner of Orbán, personalize or consolidate power on that side of the ideological spectrum.

Upon review, it appears that Poland's right is indeed characterized by several controverting factors that are not present in Hungary. I will begin by first reviewing some of these factors, including the prevalence of the Catholic Church and the relative universality of Poland's nationalist myths. From here I will turn to a chronological overview of Poland's political developments in order to provide further context for authoritarian developments in that state. As we will see, in the present day the condition of Poland's democracy remains far stronger than Hungary's. However an examination of the status of Poland's right will help to better understand the actual danger posed by its recently elected populists.

As mentioned, a significant difference between Poland and Hungary is the degree to which Poland's Catholic Church, and the Polish population's commitment to religion in general, is both stronger and more distinct from politics than in Hungary. This is plainly due to higher levels of atheism among Hungarians than Poles. Indeed according to the 2011 Hungarian census, 39.0% of its population identified as Roman Catholic, with another 11.6% of its population

identifying as Reform.[211] At once an additional 18.2% of Hungarians identified as not belonging to a religious community or congregation, with another 27.2% giving no answer.[212] By contrast, Clare McManus-Czubińska and William Miller explain that Poland is widely considered to be the most religious country in Europe.[213] Brian Porter adds that, as of 2007, "almost all Polish children (99%) are baptized into the Roman Catholic Church," and further that "93% of all marriages are accompanied by a church wedding."[214]

Further, it is clear that religion remains a far more significant cultural practice for Poles than for Hungarians. Figures from the aforementioned Hungarian census indicate that the experience of communism seems to have secularized Hungary greatly: in contrast to the low indication of religious affiliation in 2011, the Hungarian census from 1949 (i.e., at the onset of communist rule) reported a full 70.5% of Hungarians identifying as Catholic, with another 21.9% as Reform and 5.2% as Evangelical.[215] By contrast, in pointing to figures from the 2005 Polish National Election Study, McManus-Czubińska and Miller explain that in 2005 88% of Poles identified as considering themselves "believers" on some level.[216] Of this group, 11% reported themselves to be devout; and the vast majority of this group in turn indicated attending religious services at least once a week.[217] From here we can already conclude that, despite their similar experiences of communism, Poland emerged with a continued commitment to its religious tradition while Hungary's religiosity appears to have waned over the same period.

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[211] Hungarian Central Statistical Office, *Census 2011* (Budapest, 2011), http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_teruleti_00 (accessed February 25, 2017).

[212] Hungarian Central Statistical Office, *Census 2011* (accessed February 25, 2017).

[213] Clare McManus-Czubińska and William Miller, "European civilisation or European civilisations: the EU as a 'Christian club'? Public opinion in Poland 2005," in *Reinventing Poland*, eds. Martin Myant and Terry Cox (New York: Routledge, 2008): 130.

[214] Brian Porter, "Catholic Church in Poland: Introduction" (Fairfax: George Mason University, 2007), https://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/exhibits/roman-catholic-church/introduction (accessed March 22, 2017).

[215] Hungarian Central Statistical Office, *Census 1949* (Budapest, 1949), http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/docs/tablak/teruleti/00/00_1_1_7_1.xls (accessed February 25, 2017).

[216] McManus-Czubińska and Miller, "European civilisation or European civilisations," 130.

[217] McManus-Czubińska and Miller, "European civilisation or European civilisations," 130.

Given the continued importance of the Catholic Church in Poland, it follows that religion and ethnic nationalism ought to be seen, at least in part, as distinct rhetorical forces in Poland's right-wing politics. This in turn suggests that the politics of the right are more pluralistic in Poland than in Hungary. To that end, in her study on ethnic and religious tolerance in Poland in the mid-2000s, Ewa Gołębiowska affirms that ethnic and religious tolerance among Poles ought to be viewed as distinct.[218] Of her many findings, Gołębiowska concludes that "overall levels of ethnic tolerance are higher than those of religious tolerance," giving the example that while 34.0% and 35.5% of those surveyed expressed some form of opposition to their children marrying someone with a Chinese or Jewish nationality, respectively, a full 55.2% and 47.9% expressed the same opinion about marriage to people of the Muslim and Jewish faith, respectively.[219] McManus-Czubińska and Miller's findings inform this point as well, demonstrating that religiosity among Poles correlates strongly with feelings of nationalism. They point to survey data showing 41% of agnostics and nonbelievers as claiming to be 'proud' of their Polish citizenship, as compared to 73% of those who are devout.[220] All of these points suggest that aspirant authoritarians in Poland aiming to consolidate the right through ethnically-motivated politics would be faced at once with co-opting the rhetoric of the Church, an additional barrier and in turn a pluralizing factor for Poland's right-wing politics.

Relatedly, Poland's experience of communist resistance was a national struggle that universalized right-wing ideas, both through the Catholic Church as well as the Solidarity movement – something that did not occur in Hungary. Indeed, in contrasting the Polish experience of resistance to communism to that of Hungary, Wilkin writes that "[the] process in

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[218] Ewa Gołębiowska, "Ethnic and Religious Tolerance in Poland," *East European Politics and Societies* 23, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 383.

[219] Gołębiowska, "Ethnic and Religious Tolerance in Poland," 375-376.

[220] McManus-Czubińska and Miller, "European civilisation or European civilisations," 132.

Hungary was less a triumph of pressure from civil society, as was the case in Poland under the direction of Solidarity, than it was the outcome of intra-elite negotiations."[221] Sidorenko adds that during late communism Polish myths, traditions, and the private sphere on the whole became fronts of political struggle against the regime.[222] This trend was also true of the Catholic Church. Brian Porter affirms the central role played by the Church during the 1980s in Poland's resistance to communism, pointing specifically to the influence of Pope John Paul II (formerly Cardinal Karol Wojtyła of Kraków), whom he describes as being seen to have "[played] *the* key role in toppling Communism."[223]

While the legacy of communist resistance in Poland's post-communist politics will be discussed at greater length, through these examples it is already clear how the universality of resistance mechanisms to all Poles would present a challenge for aspirant authoritarians in a manner not seen in Hungary. This owed particularly to the fact that the experience of resistance to communism played an outsize role in unifying Polish society across the aisle. Sidorenko explains that while Polish nationalism was multifaceted and fragmentary during the late communist period, the resistance movement was able to consolidate this mood into one overarching notion of Poles as a homogenous community of people over any distinct group or individual identities.[224] Further, that this movement belonged to the public rather than representing any elite interests (as Wilkin indicates) gives an insight into the more pluralistic nature of Poland's political landscape in the immediate post-communist period as compared to that of Hungary. To be sure, none of these factors controverted or stifled ethnic nationalism

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[221] Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy*, 35-36.
[222] Sidorenko, "Which way to Poland?", 115.
[223] Porter, "Catholic Church in Poland: Introduction" https://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/exhibits/roman-catholic-church/introduction (accessed March 22, 2017).
[224] Sidorenko, "Which way to Poland?", 118.

entirely (as we will see), but they did at once present additional roadblocks that would later stall the development of right-wing authoritarianism.

As we move to an analysis of the course of Polish politics in the post-communist period, we already have a sense for the ways in which Poland's right-wing politics were more pluralistic than that of Hungary during its initial democratization. With this variable in mind, we can move on to an assessment of aspirant right-wing authoritarianism in Polish politics over the last quarter-century and draw conclusions about its relative successes and failures accordingly.

4.2a. 1989-1997: Right-wing pluralism during Poland's early democratization

As discussed, Poland's political landscape was characterized by a greater degree of pluralism on the right than was Hungary's. However this alone did not immunize it from ethnic nationalist sentiments, nor from politicians aimed at using such rhetoric for their own ends. In this section I will first discuss the reemergence of ethnic nationalist sentiment following Poland's democratization. Then I will describe the co-opting of this rhetoric by Lech Wałęsa during his presidency, as well as his implications for pluralism on the right. Then I will turn to Poland's experience of lustration and examine implications accordingly. Finally I will turn to the election of 1997 to examine the status of the right at that time.

As the findings from section 3 suggested, Poland's initial period of democratization saw the resurgence of its nationalist tradition almost instantly. Carl Tighe details the development and nature of extremist nationalism during this period:

> In an atmosphere where everything that had been suppressed for years was now possible, it was not unusual to see gangs of skinheads, sometimes carrying Nazi flags, roaming the streets of Warsaw and Kraków chanting '*Polska dla polaków*' (Poland for Poles), to see anti-Semitic graffiti, and for people to wear 'Chrobry' sword-pins in their lapel, the symbol of the pre-war right-wing *Endejca* (National

Democracy) Party. This reactive and very substantial move to the right affected the conduct of the whole political spectrum.[225]

If anything, Tighe's account undermines the formulations of Vachudova and Snyder regarding the absence of an ethnic nationalism in Poland, though it seems this point has been sufficiently argued. Further, Tighe goes on to explain that Polish democratization was quickly hindered by the failure of the Solidarity movement leadership to produce a program past its original opposition to communist rule.[226] Taken together, all of this suggests that despite the higher degree of pluralism in Polish political life at the onset, ethnic nationalist rhetoric would nevertheless go on to play a salient role in Polish political life, both due to its historical precedent as well as a result of subsequent political complications.

The salience of ethnic nationalist rhetoric in Polish political life, in turn, points us back to the similarities in the Polish and Hungarian cases. To that end, Wyrozumska and Meyer explain that part of the resilient tension in Polish politics at the onset of democratization was due to a competition between two overarching groups, which they term "Catholic-conservative-nationalists" and "secular-socialist-internationalists."[227] This feature of Polish politics affirms, as we have seen several times, Vachudova and Snyder's initial categorization of Hungary and Poland as politically similar. It further suggests that as with Hungary, aspirant authoritarians in Poland would proceed by attempting to consolidate their support within the former category of "Catholic-conservative-nationalists" through the use of ethnic nationalist rhetoric. This, then, points us back to the variable of pluralism on the right.

One important example for pluralism on the right from this early period is the presidency of Lech Wałęsa, the legendary labor activist and co-founder of the Solidarity movement.

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[225] Carl Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," *Journal of European Studies* 46, nos. 3/4 (2016): 343.
[226] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 343.
[227] Wyrozumska and Meyer, "Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Poland," 218.

Wałęsa, at one time a beloved national figure who served as the second president of Poland from 1990 to 1995, became widely known during his time in office for an embrace of openly hostile rhetoric toward intellectuals, communists, and Jews.[228] Tighe explains that Wałęsa's political style involved an ultimately unpopular, populist "war at the top," which he used to criticize former Solidarity colleagues Bronisław Geremek and Adam Michnik for their Judaism and by contrast to distinguish himself as a blue-blooded Pole.[229] It follows that Wałęsa's hostile instigations against his former colleagues (the aforementioned, along with Jacek Kuroń), motivated by charges of communist conspiracy in addition to Judaism, would serve to fragment the very legacy of the movement that had united Poland to begin with. While this at once Fragmentation of this nature could spur polarization and heightened tensions in turn.

While at once such an escalation could have heightened tensions and spurred polarization, Wałęsa's fragmentary style was put to rest by his loss in the 1995 presidential election. Donald Pienkos attributes the rejection of Wałęsa in 1995 to his aforementioned brash and unpleasant political style, which by this point had become "a source of unbridgeable division in the anti-Kwasniewski camp."[230] At once, however, Wałęsa's loss seems to have been a positive force for pluralism on the right in Poland. That is, while as discussed the corollary incumbent party in Hungary, the MDF, allied with Fidesz after its loss in 1994 only to become politically irrelevant in later years, Wałęsa's personalistic use of populist, ethnic nationalist rhetoric would only present a challenge to later aspirants such as the Kaczyński brothers. Indeed, while Wałęsa's standing in Polish political life has diminished greatly over the past two decades, he has in more recent years drawn significant attention for his prolific criticism of the

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[228] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 343.
[229] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 343.
[230] Donald E. Pienkos, "The 1995 Polish Presidential Election: A Step Toward Normalcy," *The Polish Review* 42, no. 4 (1997): 403.

Kaczyńskis and their party, PiS. For instance, as recently as in December 2016, Wałęsa excoriated PiS' political ambitions in a Politico article titled "Throw Poland out of the EU."[231] Wałęsa, then, appears an apt example of a stifling pluralism among Poland's right that failed to emerge in Hungary.

Another important example for this discussion of pluralism, and in turn for the differing experiences of Hungary and Poland, is the legacy of lustration in Poland. Poland's initial lustration campaigns, which were the most thorough in post-communist CEE and which coincided with the presidency of Wałęsa, were by all means a net negative for its democracy. David explains that of the three post-communist states who undertook lustration, "Poland was seen as a leader in public confessions, which was the method of its lustration system. But even in Poland, the results were still in negative values."[232] Tighe adds that, if anything, lustration undermined the public's overall faith in politics, and with it their faith in all parties, rather than any one faction such as the unsavory MSZP-SZDSZ coalition in Hungary.[233] In turn, Tighe explains, the process of lustration reinforced only the notion that any semblance of justice regarding communist rule was a nonstarter.[234] We will see how its later mobilization proved unsuccessful in the Kaczyńskis' attempts to mobilize nationalist rhetoric once in office.

In the meantime, one final component of the lustration campaigns worth noting for its detrimental effects on Polish democracy is the infamous Macierewicz List. From the beginning of the post-communist period Antoni Macierewicz, who served as Poland's Minister of Internal Affairs from 1991-1992, was seen as one of the most incendiary far-right populists in Polish political life. Macierewicz stirred controversy in June 1992 when he published the

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[231] Jan Cienski, "Lech Wałęsa: Throw Poland out of the EU," *Politico*, December 19, 2016.
[232] David, *Lustration and Transitional Justice*, 133.
[233] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 339.
[234] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 339.

aforementioned list, which entailed 64 names of politicians in the Polish *Sejm* whom he alleged as having served as communist informants.[235] The list culminated in a vote of no confidence for the incumbent government, then led by the aforementioned Wałęsa, and Macierewicz' ultimate dismissal from office.[236] One final point worth mentioning is that the controversial and then discredited Macierewicz was appointed as Poland's Minister of Defense following PiS' 2015 electoral victory. If anything, then, we can conclude that the experience of lustration had the effect of making dubious the favored populist tradition of communist witch-hunts, which in turn delegitimized later such efforts. Taken together, all of this suggests a greater difficulty for aspirant authoritarians in Poland than in Hungary to co-opt sentiment regarding communist rule.

Finally, the circumstances of Poland's 1997 parliamentary elections, as well as the constitutional referendum that preceded them, will provide another example of the condition of pluralism on the right during Poland's early democratization. Aleks Szczerbiak explains that the most salient outcome of this election was what he terms "the spectacular and victorious 'return' of the Polish right."[237] Szczerbiak clarifies that this was not so much a return but rather a consolidation among right-wing parties into a functional, ruling parliamentary coalition in the name of Solidarity Electoral Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność,*, AWS).[238] Szczerbiak's analysis, which was published in 1998, details with optimism the pragmatic, de-personalized nature of AWS' 1997 campaign, and characterizes its use of traditionalism and nostalgia as an appropriate, forward-looking vision for Polish politics.[239] Fox and Vermeersch's 2010 account, by contrast, describes AWS' rhetoric as openly nationalistic and aimed at casting their main

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[235] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 344.
[236] George Sanford, *Poland: The Conquest of History* (London: Routledge, 1999): 38-39.
[237] Aleks Szczerbiak, "Electoral politics in Poland: The parliamentary elections of 1997," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 14, no. 3 (1998): 61-62.
[238] Szczerbiak, "Electoral politics in Poland," 61-62.
[239] Szczerbiak, "Electoral politics in Poland," 67-68.

opponents, the incumbent Democratic Left Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*, SLD) as "un-Polish" (a strategy reminiscent of Orbán, particularly after his 2002 loss).[240]

As suggested, the nationalist mood surrounding the 1997 parliamentary elections was compounded by a referendum on the Polish constitution held several months prior, which would be the first such formal document in Poland's history. This new, mature document was intended the replace Poland's transitional 'Small Constitution,' which had been in place since 1992.[241] Jacek Kurczewski explains that one of the dominant sentiments among Polish politicians regarding this document at the time was an interest in diminishing the powers of the presidency, largely in response to the perceived populist excesses of Wałęsa.[242] Kurczewski highlights a paradox within this document, namely that while it was seen as a mature and perceptive text that would respond to Poland's political realities, at once this document came well after political norms, both for politicians and for the public, had become entrenched.[243] This calls to mind Wasilewski's description of Polish politicians as "institutional nomads," who viewed the institutions of Polish democracy as means for their own political goals rather than as ends in themselves.[244]

As such, Poland's initial post-communist period was characterized by a healthy degree of competition on the right. That this competition was at once highly personalistic and later discredited (e.g., as with the cases of Wałęsa and Macierewicz) indicated that the excesses of

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[240] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 333.

[241] Fish, "Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies," 7/9.

[242] Jacek Kurczewski, "Parliament and the Political Class in the Constitutional Reconstruction of Poland: Two Constitutions in One," *International Sociology* 18, no. 1 (2003): 170.

[243] Kurczewski, "Parliament and the Political Class in the Constitutional Reconstruction of Poland," 178-179.

[244] Jacek Wasilewski, "Elite Circulation and Consolidation of Democracy in Poland," in *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe*, eds. John Higley, Jan Pakulski and Włodzimierz Wesołowski (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998): 165.

Poland's conservative element were being kept sufficiently in check. However the subsequent collapse of the AWS and in turn the rise of PiS tells a different story, as we will see.

4.2b. 1997-2005: The death of AWS and the birth of PiS

The AWS' term in office resulted in its collapse. While the mechanics of this development are not exactly relevant to the scope of this paper, I will begin by briefly explaining the context for this event. I will then explain how, more relevantly, the collapse of the AWS and the subsequent polarization of Polish political life therein led to the creation and eventual success of PiS. Following this I will detail PiS' mobilization of nationalist rhetoric in the lead-up to Poland's 2005 parliamentary elections. Finally I will discuss the results of this election, as well as its implications for the status of the right in Poland.

As suggested, PiS' rise to power on the right was aided by the collapse of the incumbent AWS after its first term in office. Fox and Vermeersch explain that the AWS' collapse was due in part to a series of corruption scandals that unfolded while the party held office.[245] Indeed, in the lead-up to the election, the *Economist* reported the resignation of three ministers following corruption scandals in July of that year.[246] Szczerbiak adds that "[at] the heart of the government's problems was the AWS's disparate internal structure, which meant that it could not always rely on its own parliamentary deputies to support government-sponsored legislation."[247] This is to say that the conservative coalition was ultimately unsuccessful in consolidating the various factions of Poland's right, which in turn led to its failure as a party.

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[245] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 334-335.
[246] "Poland's coming election: The end of Solidarity," *The Economist* (London, UK), August 16, 2001.
[247] Aleks Szczerbiak, "Poland's Unexpected Political Earthquake: The September 2001 Parliamentary Election," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 18, no. 3 (2002): 43.

As such this collapse of the AWS coalition, along with the ensuing reorganization of political factions among Poland's right, gave birth to PiS. Fox and Vermeersch explain that, following the collapse of the AWS, Poland's right-wing factions essentially split into two branches: the more moderate Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO) and the nationalist PiS.[248] Szczerbiak explains that while PiS on its own had performed rather poorly in the 2001 election (obtaining only 44 parliamentary seats and 9.5% of the popular vote), the political context nevertheless ensured that "the PiS [had] emerged as the largest right-wing grouping in the new parliament."[249] As such the Kaczyńskis were poised to begin their consolidation of the right.

The story of PiS is an interesting one. The twin brothers and former child stars Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński founded their party in 2001 after careers spent working for the aforementioned Lech Wałęsa (and later splitting over numerous disagreements) as well as for another conservative, Jan Olszewski.[250] Throughout their political careers, the Kaczyńskis had developed reputations for being openly and unapologetically nationalist. In one example this characteristic dates as far back as 1989, when Lech attempted to reintroduce discussions of the Katyń massacre into the Polish education system.[251] As such the Kaczyńskis can perhaps be seen as comparable to Orbán in their (albeit more) gradual accretion of influence and control of Poland's right-wing.

Almost instantly PiS came to represent an indignant and nativist populism within Poland's broader conservative landscape. To this end James Traub characterizes the Kaczyński

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[248] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 334.

[249] Szczerbiak, "Poland's Unexpected Political Earthquake," 58.

[250] James Traub, "The Party That Wants to Make Poland Great Again," *The New York Times Magazine* (New York, NY), November 2, 2016.

[251] Edward Cody, "Poland mourns Lech Kaczynski, father of a new nationalism," *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), April 12, 2010.

brothers as reflecting Poland's underlying conservative nature, writing of their rise that "Poland, in short, was less liberal than it looked from the outside."[252] And from the beginning, PiS' rhetoric was characterized by populist allusions to Nazi ties among incumbent politicians such as Donald Tusk, along with claims that support for abortion or same-sex marriage were "un-Polish" viewpoints.[253] Moreover, given its opposition during Poland's accession into the EU, PiS was able to espouse a 'eurosceptic' view without having to take responsibility for any unfavorable aspects of the negotiations.[254] Altogether, then, PiS' early years in opposition gave the Kaczyńskis an early opportunity to consolidate their party's power on the right.

In addition to mobilizing conservative rhetoric of a political type, the Kaczyńskis quickly worked to take ownership over socially conservative rhetoric as well. Indeed one of the main currents that runs through Polish traditionalism is homophobia, perhaps as tied to the country's religiosity, and the Kaczyńskis in turn have a prolific record of homophobia. For Lech specifically this included attempting to pass laws barring homosexual teachers from working, along with actual bans on the Warsaw Gay Pride parade in 2004 and 2005, during his term as mayor of the city.[255] Notably Lech's latter move culminated in a pugnacious five-day standoff between the city government and its gay population at a 'queer' club called Le Madame.[256] However given that Lech's next immediate political move was to become the president of Poland in 2005, such traditionalist posturing should certainly be read as motivated to broader ends.

Moreover, PiS' relationship with the ultra-nationalist Catholic radio station *Radio Maryja* demonstrates their attempts at consolidating the religious aspect of Poland's right. *Radio Maryja* was founded ten years prior to PiS in 1991 and swelled dramatically in its listenership

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[252] Traub, "The Party That Wants to Make Poland Great Again," November 2, 2016.
[253] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 334.
[254] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 334.
[255] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 353.
[256] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 353.

throughout the 1990s. Fox and Vermeersch point to a figure from 1998 in which *Radio Maryja* reported a consistent listenership of over four million Poles.[257] As mentioned, the station is known for its far-right views on social and political affairs, and at once it has developed a reputation for its advocacy of the most right-wing candidates.[258] Kate Connolly explains that this in turn translated into a tacit support of PiS, and at once instigated a rebuke of PiS by Poland's chief rabbi for its endorsement of anti-Semitic views in turn.[259] While during this period *Radio Maryja* remained far from a wholesale advocate of PiS, its embrace of the party does reflect the degree to which the Kaczyńskis attempted to, and successfully did, co-opt religious rhetoric.

PiS' consolidation of conservative rhetoric, whether social, religious, or political, paid off in Poland's 2005 parliamentary elections. PiS, having secured 49 seats in the senate (out of 100 total)[260] came in first place and in turn secured the presidency for Lech Kaczyński.[261] PiS moved to consolidate power on the right by partnering with the far-right League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*, LPR), headed by extremist Roman Giertych, along with Self Defence (*Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej*, SRP), headed by Andrzej Lepper, in order to form a constitutional majority.[262] At once PiS' victory came at the expense of their predecessors, the SLD, against whom PiS had mobilized a deeply controversial and scandalous campaign.[263] Following this consolidation of power on the right, PiS and the Kaczyńskis were situated to begin a formal consolidation of power in office.

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[257] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 349-350.
[258] Fox and Vermeersch, "Backdoor Nationalism," 349-350.
[259] Kate Connolly, "Divide and conquer," *The Guardian* (London, UK), October 17, 2007.
[260] Polish National Electoral Commission, *Election to the Senate* (Warsaw, 2005), http://www.wybory2005.pkw.gov.pl/SNT/EN/WYN/M/index.htm (accessed March 24, 2017).
[261] Carl Ek, *Poland: Background and Policy Trends of the Kaczynski Government* (CRS-RS22509) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2006), 1-2.
[262] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 346-347.
[263] Ek, *Poland: Background and Policy Trends of the Kaczynski Government*, 1-2.

PiS' first experience in office resulted in an at best ambivalent consolidation of power on the right. While the Kaczyńskis were successful in taking ownership of nationalist rhetoric as pertained to the EU, on different points they encountered resistance from Poland's other conservative stakeholders. This was evidenced both through their attempts to renew lustration as well as to co-opt rhetoric around the release of a film with nationalist undercurrents. After examining these points, I will move on to an assessment of PiS' standing in relation to Poland's right following the 2007 parliamentary elections and draw conclusions accordingly.

Similarly to Orbán, after assuming power in 2005 PiS began to express an openly anti-EU sentiment. In one example from an EU summit in June 2007, the Kaczyński brothers drew headlines after they demanded increased voting rights for Poland in the EU Parliament in the amount of 6 million people, to make up for the number of Polish lives lost in the Second World War.[264] Connolly explains that such posturing thoroughly undermined the EU decorum of not speaking about the Second World War, and adds that while the comments may have lost the Kaczyńskis a number of friends abroad, they likely cemented their support among their base.[265] Indeed, a contemporaneous article from *Der Spiegel* quoted the historian Peter Oliver Loew, who explained that the Kaczyńskis' actions on the European stage were aimed at exploiting divisions within Polish society against a "shapeless" enemy, which in turn was aimed toward a "rhetorical reordering of the nation."[266] And indeed, such nationalist posturing on the EU stage calls to mind a similarity, albeit a far less tacit one, to Orbán's irredentist posturing during his first term in office.

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[264] Connolly, "Divide and conquer," October 17, 2007.
[265] Connolly, "Divide and conquer," October 17, 2007.
[266] "The Unloved Neighbors: A History of Hostility between Poland and Germany," *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg, Germany), June 20, 2007.

Nonetheless, PiS' outlandish posturing, which included an attempt to launch a renewed and more aggressive lustration campaign, resulted in a rejection of the party by other conservative stakeholders. Tighe recounts an episode involving Stanislaw Wielgus, who had been nominated for the post of Archbishop of Warsaw, resigning at his inauguration ceremony in order to publicly display opposition to PiS' politics.[267] Tighe explains further that this sentiment quickly spread across the entirety of the Polish Catholic Church in what amounted to a crisis on the Polish right.[268] The dissent from the Church, and PiS' subsequent performance in the 2007 elections, together demonstrate the power of pluralism on the right in stifling aspirant nationalist politicians like the Kaczyńskis.

Moreover, the difficulty experienced by the Kaczyńskis in attempting to co-opt rhetoric regarding the release of a 2007 film further illustrates the salience of pluralism on the right. The debate surrounding Andrzej Wajda's highly anticipated film *Katyń*, about the national tragedy of tremendous importance to Polish nationalism (discussed in section 3), illustrates the way in which nationalist myths are collectively held by Poles. Indeed, in a 2007 interview with the *BBC*, Wajda expressed his hopes that the film would not be used for political ends and went on to detail his own refraining from engagement with politicians.[269] At once Carl Tighe recounts the rebuke of president Lech Kaczyński for his attempt to manipulate the film's release in order to suit his re-election ambitions.[270] As such the resistance to and difficulty experienced by Kaczyński's attempts at co-opt the nationalist undercurrents of the film seem to affirm the difference between the political cultures of Poland and Hungary, insofar as their national mythologies are concerned.

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[267] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 352.
[268] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 352.
[269] Brian Hanrahan, "Film reopens Poland's Katyn wound," *BBC News* (London, UK), October 5, 2007.
[270] Tighe, "Lustration – the Polish experience," 360.

It follows that the Kaczyński brothers were far from successful in their attempts to consolidate the right during their time in office. This is because their divisive political style alienated too many of the competing factors on the right. For instance, one of the least popular tactics undertaken by PiS involved the introduction of greater surveillance legislation toward other members of parliament.[271] Connolly adds that after Lech Kaczyński's accession to the presidency (and his brother's subsequent accession to the prime ministership) the PiS government undertook a nationalist campaign aimed at "their own version of social cleansing, after years of what they [saw] as moral decline."[272] All of this was tied up with, as mentioned, heightened tensions with Germany (as discussed) and Russia, along with an onslaught of paranoid rhetoric regarding the legacy of communism.[273] In particular it seems that PiS' nationalist posturing was ineffective at consolidating other important conservative stakeholders, whether political or cultural, and as such it hurt their chances of winning reelection.

While the 2007 elections resulted in the defeat of PiS by the PO, the former party nonetheless emerged as the clear representative of Poland's right. To begin, the elections were announced after the aforementioned SRP leader Andrzej Lepper alleged corruption within the government.[274] Anna Gwiazda explains that the race soon took a turn in the favor of Donald Tusk and his PO party following a televised debate between Tusk and Jaroslaw Kaczyński, which 67% of respondents to an opinion poll indicated Tusk had won.[275] The final results were

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[271] R. Daniel Kelemen and Mitchell Orenstein, "Europe's Autocracy Problem: Polish Democracy's Final Days?" *Foreign Affairs* Snapshot, January 7, 2016.
[272] Connolly, "Divide and conquer," October 17, 2007.
[273] Connolly, "Divide and conquer," October 17, 2007.
[274] "Polish MPs choose early election," *BBC News* (London, UK), September 7, 2007.
[275] Anna Gwiazda, "The parliamentary election in Poland, October 2007," *Electoral Studies* 27 (2008): 762.

indeed favorable to PO, which won 41.5% of the votes and 209 seats in the Sejm.[276] PiS, in turn, was handily defeated and finished in second place, with 32.1% of the votes and 166 parliamentary seats.[277] However at suggested, the party was presented with an optimistic situation as regarded its status on the right. Namely, the far-right SRP and LPR parties had both failed to obtain a single parliamentary seat.[278] Gwiazda explains that this in turn translated into an additional two million votes and a five-point increase in vote share over PiS' 2005 performance.[279] As such, while PiS' overly divisive posturing lost them the parliamentary control they had only recently obtained, the party's relevance in Polish political life was far from over.

In sum, while PiS encountered difficulty in its attempts to mobilize nationalist rhetoric in the realms of lustration or the Katyń massacre, the party nevertheless managed to crowd out competing nationalist factions after just two years in office. Further, the Kaczyńskis posturing on the European stage amounted to an early example of their successful mobilization of ethnic nationalist rhetoric. With this in mind, we may jump ahead to PiS' subsequent re-election in 2015.

4.2d. 2015: The re-election of PiS

In this section I will examine the political circumstances that contributed to PiS' successful re-election in 2015. Altogether this was facilitated by a pragmatic electoral strategy coupled with a continued dedication to the consolidation of the politics of the right. As we will see, the results of the 2015 parliamentary elections delivered an unprecedented victory to PiS,

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[276] Manuel Alvarez-Rivera, "Elections to the Polish Sejm: October 21, 2007 General Election Results," *ElectionResources.org,* http://www.electionresources.org/pl/sejm.php?election=2007 (accessed March 24, 2017).

[277] Alvarez-Rivera, "Elections to the Polish Sejm: October 21, 2007."

[278] Alvarez-Rivera, "Elections to the Polish Sejm: October 21, 2007."

[279] Gwiazda, "The parliamentary election in Poland, October 2007," 763.

which in turn facilitated an even greater consolidation of power by the party, both on the right and in politics generally.

During its time in opposition PiS continued its strategy of attempting to claim nationalist myths as their own. In one example, Agnieszka Pasieka recounts the controversy surrounding a historical reenactment performed in summer 2013 titled "Volhynia 1943: The victims do not call for revenge but for remembrance." Pasieka explains that the national debate around this reenactment had to do with its subject matter; that is, while historical reenactments in Poland are a popular pastime, they are typically limited to medieval, or otherwise distant historical themes.[280] This event, by contrast, was intended to reenact the contested massacre perpetrated by Ukrainian partisans against Polish villagers during the Second World War.[281] Pasieka explains that while the then-incumbent PO advocated for a bilateral investigation of the event given its uncertain history, representatives from PiS, along with the SLD, took a reactionary stance, calling for the events of the 'Volhynian Massacre' to be termed a genocide.[282] Once again, however, Pasieka's description of the SLD's involvement points us back to the relatively high degree of competition for control over nationalist myths in Poland as compared to in Hungary. However despite this, the results of the 2015 elections reshaped Poland's political landscape in favor of PiS.

PiS' 2015 electoral victory resulted from, among other factors, clever repositioning. For one, perhaps in an acknowledgment of his personal unelectability, Jaroslaw Kaczyński opted to remain the chairman of PiS and in turn not to run for office (Macierewicz was also sidelined).[283]

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[280] Agnieszka Pasieka, "Reenacting ethnic cleansing: people's history and elitist nationalism in contemporary Poland," *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no. 1 (2016): 64.
[281] Pasieka, "Reenacting ethnic cleansing," 71.
[282] Pasieka, "Reenacting ethnic cleansing," 71.
[283] Kamil Marcinkiewicz and Mary Stegmaier, "The parliamentary election in Poland, October 2015," *Electoral Studies* 41 (2016): 222.

Further, PiS' candidates deliberately ran on economic issues and at once avoided social issues in an effort to win over more moderate voters.[284] PiS benefited from being the opposition party running against a two-term incumbent, and at once this economic message appealed to many, especially poorer rural voters.[285] Altogether PiS' strategy of pragmatism paid off: the party garnered a resounding 37.6% of the vote in comparison to PO's 24.1%.[286] This amounted to a 78-seat gain for PiS and a 69-seat loss for PO.[287] Altogether, then, we can conclude that the 2015 elections were an unprecedented victory for Kaczyński and his party.

At once it is clear that through this election PiS managed to shift Poland's political dialogue to the right. This was evidenced, for one, by the fact that the left-liberal coalition United Left (*Zjednoczona Lewica*, ZL), which included the once-incumbent SLD, failed to obtain any parliamentary seats.[288] This was the first time that the left had altogether failed to obtain any parliamentary seats in Poland's history as a post-communist state – surely a victory for conservatism and for PiS in turn.[289] It follows that the 2015 election amounted in a consolidation of power on the right by PiS. For one this was accommodated by the Catholic Church. Rafal Lesniczak' findings confirm that Catholic media displayed a preference for PiS at the expense of PO.[290] While the Catholic Church did not involve itself in the election outright, Lesniczak details a July 2015 Ariadna poll in which 63% of respondents indicated that the influence of the Catholic Church in politics was for whatever reason too strong.[291] Moreover, the collaboration of the populist Kukiz'15 party with far-right nationalists, which in turn netted them 8.8% of the

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[284] Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier, "The parliamentary election in Poland, October 2015," 222.

[285] "Poland elections: Conservatives secure decisive win," *BBC News* (London, UK), October 26, 2015.

[286] "Poland elections: Conservatives secure decisive win," *BBC News* (London, UK), October 26, 2015.

[287] Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier, "The parliamentary election in Poland, October 2015," 223.

[288] Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier, "The parliamentary election in Poland, October 2015," 221.

[289] Rick Lyman, "Right-Wing Party Roars Back in Polish Elections," *The New York Times* (New York), October 25, 2015.

[290] Rafal Lesniczak, "The communicative role of the Catholic Church in Poland in the 2015 presidential election and its perception by the public," *Church, Communication, and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2016): 281.

[291] Lesniczak, "The communicative role of the Catholic Church in Poland," 282.

vote, further affirmed the salience of ethnic nationalist rhetoric and perhaps even mirrored the situation of Fidesz and Jobbik in Hungary (with PiS as the most powerful voice on the right).[292]

Finally we can conclude that despite its centrist posturing, PiS was as ever interested in mobilizing populist, ethnic nationalist rhetoric. For one the party's strongest support was taken from Poland's poorer regions in the East and South. In an interview with Wojciech Kudelski, the mayor of the Polish town of Siedlec, Traub reports that Kudelski was taken with PiS' representation of Poland's "true values."[293] Traub also describes that PiS' victory was in part won as a result of a speech given by Kaczyński about the diseases carried by refugees.[294] Indeed a report from Reuters details the speech, describing Kaczyński as "[warning] that refugees from the Middle East could bring diseases and parasites to Poland."[295] This openly ethnic nationalist posturing, and its conversion into an electoral victory just ten days later, indeed demonstrated a successful mobilization of nationalist rhetoric by Kaczyński and his party in turn.

As demonstrated, the 2015 election presented PiS with an unprecedented mandate. The party successfully expanded its reach to secure more centrist voters along with a renewed commitment from its reliable base of poorer, rural Poles. This in turn amounted to a vigorous consolidation by PiS on the right. The degree to which this has undermined the health of Poland's democracy, then, will be explored in the following section.

4.2e. The conditions of Polish democracy under PiS

Since returning to office in 2015, PiS has openly taken steps to reverse the course of Polish democratization and to consolidate its own power in turn. Here I will discuss some of the

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[292] Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier, "The parliamentary election in Poland, October 2015," 223.
[293] Traub, "The Party That Wants to Make Poland Great Again," November 2, 2016.
[294] Traub, "The Party That Wants to Make Poland Great Again," November 2, 2016.
[295] "Polish opposition warns refugees could spread infectious diseases," *Reuters World News* (London, UK), October 15, 2015.

ways in which PiS has attempted to, and been successful, in doing so. I will then move on to a discussion of the conditions of Polish democracy as based on aggregative reports. The results show that while the situation in Poland is far from that of Hungary, it is nonetheless angling in that direction.

After re-assuming power in 2015, PiS renewed its open hostility toward the EU. According to one account, Kaczyński's unwillingness to "play the game" with Brussels makes him a more serious threat to liberal democracy and stability in Europe than even Orbán.[296] (The same account points to the highly personalistic manner in which Kaczyński leads PiS, suggesting that if the party continues its hold on power, Polish politics could increasingly center around Kaczyński's political ambitions.[297]) At once PiS has demonstrated itself as disinterested in any threats from the EU under the guise of Polish sovereignty.[298] The relationship between the Polish government and the EU is an important one, Foy and Robinson explain, seeing as Poland has the sixth-largest economy in the EU.[299] All together, PiS' anti-EU posturing, not unlike Orbán's, seems to signal its commitment to the strategy of embracing illiberalism for its own anti-democratic ends.

That PiS at once ramped up populist sentiment in order to erode Poland's checks and balances is clear. Traub explains that one of the first moves taken by this new government was to conduct a largely baseless audit of its predecessor in an effort to stir up paranoia.[300] Moreover, Buckley gives the example of PiS' rapid attempts to take control of Poland's public media

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[296] Henry Foy, "Jaroslaw Kaczynski: Poland's kingmaker," *Financial Times* (London, UK), February 26, 2016.
[297] Foy, "Jaroslaw Kaczynski: Poland's kingmaker," February 26, 2016.
[298] Henry Foy and Duncan Robinson, "Poland-EU: Stand-off in the East," *Financial Times* (London, UK), January 15, 2016.
[299] Foy and Robinson, "Poland-EU: Stand-off in the East," January 15, 2016.
[300] Traub, "The Party That Wants to Make Poland Great Again," November 2, 2016.

channels in a manner reminiscent of Fidesz five years prior.[301] Buckley goes further, arguing that

PiS was distinct even from Fidesz in the speed with which they launched this process.[302] Finally,

there is the case of Poland's constitutional tribunal, which Kelemen explains resulted in PiS'

contestation of its predecessor's appointments to Poland's highest court.[303] In their study of

authoritarian regimes, Levitsky and Way argue that the judiciary is often targeted early on as an

institution to be weakened in order to facilitate the authoritarian's consolidation of power.[304] In

sum, all of these moves signal attempts by PiS to consolidate power through anti-democratic

means.

At once ethnic nationalist and nativist sentiment has risen in Poland in recent years. One

Eurobarometer poll of Polish citizens indicates a rise in sentiment regarding globalization as

representing a "threat to employment" from 26% to 32% between June 2009 and May 2012,

along with a corollary drop from 47% to 41% in sentiments that it represented a "good

opportunity" (see figure 4.2.1).[305] Additionally, and more relevantly to PiS' most recent term in

office, in the two-year period between November 2014 and November 2016, negative sentiment

toward immigration from outside of the EU jumped from 44% to 64%, while positive sentiment

fell from 39% to 28% in the same period (see figure 4.2.2).[306] While sentiment on this point has

remained virtually stagnant for the EU in the aggregate (rose from 35% to 37% positive and

[301] Neil Buckley, "Poland's new government finds a model in Orban's Hungary," *Financial Times* (London, UK), January 6, 2016.

[302] Buckley, "Poland's new government finds a model in Orban's Hungary," January 6, 2016.

[303] R. Daniel Kelemen, "Poland's Constitutional Crisis: How the Law and Justice Party is Threatening Democracy," *Foreign Affairs Snapshot*, August 25, 2016.

[304] Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (April 2002): 56-57.

[305] "Public Opinion," Brussels, Belgium: Eurobarometer, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm, accessed February 26, 2017.

[306] Eurobarometer.

remained at 57% negative, over the same period), it is noteworthy that in all four of the post-communist CEE states in question, by contrast sentiment polarized drastically.[307]

Finally, PiS' detrimental effects on Poland's democracy has already been anticipated by aggregative measures of democracy. For one, Freedom House's democracy score for Poland rose from 2.18 to 2.32 in the period from 2014 to 2016.[308] Further, Poland's 'freedom in the world' score rose between 2016 and 2017 from 1 to 1.5 as a result of a perceived deterioration in its civil liberties.[309] V-Dem figures only report statistics through 2015.

This in turn points to the contemporary, and as such uncertain, nature of political developments in Poland. As such a comparison of Hungary and Poland will provide some qualitative insights into Poland's democratic prospects.

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[307] Eurobarometer.

[308] "Nations in Transit." Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, 2017, https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/nations-transit, accessed February 24, 2017.

[309] "Freedom in the World," Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2017, accessed February 24, 2017.

4.3. Comparing the cases, assessing the future of Polish democracy

As discussed, in Hungary the lack of pluralism on the right facilitated Viktor Orbán's initial accession to power. Following his first term in office, Orbán continued to consolidate power on the right by mobilizing and taking ownership over Hungary's ethnic nationalist tradition. His electoral victory in 2010 cemented his hold on power, and the condition of Hungarian democracy has steadily regressed in each year since. By contrast, Poland from the start was characterized by a greater degree of pluralism among its conservative element. This was, among other things, due to the strong presence of the Catholic Church in politics, as well as to a greater degree of distance between its national myths and politics than in Hungary. At once this political landscape saw the emergence and eventual success of PiS, most recently in 2015, following which the party has already begun to make strides in altering the course of Poland's democratization.

PiS' 2015 victory signaled a greater degree of consolidation on the right than ever before. As discussed, the left coalition ZL failed to get any seats, and the political spectrum on the whole shifted to the right. At once PiS was central to this development. Moreover, as discussed some agents of the Catholic Church seem to have endorsed, however tacitly, Poland's political right (i.e., PiS) over the candidates of the center. Finally, since taking office PiS has made significant strides in undoing the checks and balances of Poland's democracy, arguably at a rate even faster than what was seen in Hungary following Orbán's return to power in 2010.

However there are a number of signs that point to PiS' continued inability to fully consolidate political control, and as such cement its power to the extent that Fidesz has. For one, PiS has encountered a greater degree of institutional resistance than Orbán. There is also the matter of PiS' being a far younger party: after all, it came onto the scene a full seven years after

Fidesz and has only ever held power for a fraction of the time. This in turn suggests that Poland's democratic norms have had more time to develop and mature apart from the Kaczyńskis. Finally, as we saw, Orbán was aided throughout his career by a number of devastating failures of his competitors (most notably the revelations from Gyurcsány). While the 2015 election in Poland did see an unprecedented neutralization, this faction was nonetheless nowhere near as discredited as the MSZP in 2006. By contrast, as discussed, PiS is faced with having to compete against the centrist PO, yet another pluralizing factor in the way of PiS' consolidation. Finally it is worth considering in this context whether the mobilization of nationalism by PiS is qualitatively different, and thereby less concerted, than that of Fidesz, namely given the more multifaceted nature of Polish conservatism.

The question thus remains of whether Kaczyński and PiS will succeed in taking Poland in the direction that Orbán has in Hungary. For one, Ireneusz Karolewski and Roland Benedikter state their position clearly in the article "Poland is not Hungary," pointing to attacks by the Orban regime on freedom of speech laws, the power of the media, and revisions of the Constitution, all of which they say has failed to take place in Poland.[310] While indeed the Polish media may be more independent and a Jobbik analogue may not exist as clearly there, it is nevertheless important to consider that one of Orbán's earliest steps following his return to power in 2010 was to lower the mandatory retirement age for judges, much like PiS in the aforementioned constitutional standoff.

Karolewski and Benedikter argue further that Hungary's authoritarianism is compounded by its sympathy toward Russia, while no such thing could ever be possible in Poland. Here I am reminded of Professor Peter Steiner's comment of "duty over pleasure" as pertaining to Polish

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[310] Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski and Roland Benedikter, "Poland is Not Hungary," *Foreign Affairs* Response, September 21, 2016.

foreign policy, namely that Poland is far more inclined to do ideological battle with Germany rather than Russia.[311] And of course there is the actual demonstrated relationship between Kaczyński and Orbán, most recently as evidenced by their private, 6-hour meeting held on January 6, 2016.[312] Foy relates that Orbán described his friendship with Kaczyński at one point as an "old boy's club."[313] Indeed this mutual sympathy is troubling, not least in its implications for EU procedure. That is, an abstention from either party could prevent censure of the other.[314]

From here we can conclude that, barring any radical changes, PiS' continued hold on power will bode poorly for the future of Poland's democracy. In particular, if PiS manages to continue its consolidation of Poland's conservative element, particularly by discrediting its main competitor the PO, we can readily expect to see analogous developments in Poland to what has taken place in Hungary. By contrast, if the integrity of Poland's conservative pluralism holds, PiS will be as unsuccessful as before in mobilizing nationalist rhetoric for its own political gains.

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[311] Peter Steiner, "Cultures, Histories, and Societies of Central and Eastern Europe," Seminar, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, February 22, 2017.
[312] Foy, "Jaroslaw Kaczynski: Poland's kingmaker," February 26, 2016.
[313] Foy, "Jaroslaw Kaczynski: Poland's kingmaker," February 26, 2016.
[314] Foy, "Jaroslaw Kaczynski: Poland's kingmaker," February 26, 2016.

5. Conclusions

A review of the literature in section 2 suggested several important conclusions. Namely, that nationalism in CEE is generally ethnic in nature, but that this in turn can be used for both pro- and anti-democratic ends. These findings at once revealed that the differentiating factors pointed to by Vachudova and Snyder would not be as important to nationalist developments in Hungary and Poland as would broader, underlying historical factors. Furthermore, the review of the literature at once pointed to the need for an additional variable in explaining the relationship between nationalism and anti-democratic trends in Hungary and Poland (given, as mentioned, its complicated nature).

In turn the discussion from section 3.1 confirmed the rather ubiquitous nature of CEE's experience of communism, along with its implications for nationalism in the region. This finding controverted the expectation by Vachudova and Snyder that ethnic nationalism would only play a role in the politics of certain states based on, as demonstrated, rather transient factors. The overview of Hungary and Poland's nationalist traditions in sections 3.2 and 3.3 affirmed Vachudova and Snyder's categorization of the two states as politically similar, but it at once drew attention to their prolific histories of ethnic nationalism. Section 3 on the whole, then, affirmed the salience of ethnic nationalism in both states and prepared us for an investigation of these developments in the post-communist period.

The discussion from section 4.1 focused on the key role played by pluralism on the right, whether in facilitating or stalling authoritarian developments in Hungary and Poland, respectively. An analysis of Orbán's initial rise to power in the 1990s revealed that his election resulted from a unique combination of factors, including his timely shift to Hungary's enervated right as well as a partnership with the far-right Smallholders. Orbán's first term in office saw his

mobilization and increased ownership over ethnic nationalist rhetoric, particularly as relating to the EU. In turn, as demonstrated by the results of the 2002 election, despite his loss Orbán managed to consolidate Hungary's right to an unprecedented degree and in so doing polarized Hungarian politics on the whole. The elections that led to Orbán's subsequent return to office in 2010 represented a 'perfect storm,' given that Orbán's opposition had lost credibility in the ensuing years, and further that the political mood had shifted decidedly to the right. Finally, Orbán's tenure since returning to office in 2010 has amounted to a wholesale deterioration of democracy that, as of 2017, appears unwavering.

Relatedly, the findings from section 4.2 revealed that in contrast to Hungary, Poland was characterized by a far more pluralistic right. This was evidenced first by the greater autonomy and importance of the Catholic Church, as well as the relative universality of national experiences such as Poland's resistance to communism (i.e., the Solidarity movement). Then, a review of Poland's political history over the past twenty-five years revealed a greater degree of competition over its right-wing politics. In section 4.2a, the examples of Lech Wałęsa and the failed lustration campaigns, among others, demonstrated the competition for and subsequent failure of highly personalistic elements among Poland's political right. The findings from section 4.2b in turn discussed the legitimating role played by the collapse of the AWS coalition in giving birth to PiS, along with PiS' subsequent attempts to consolidate the right in the years leading up to the 2005 election. Examples of PiS' mobilization of rhetoric in conjunction with other conservative elements, namely *Radio Maryja*, explained its subsequent victory in 2005. In turn PiS' divisive and overly ambitious political style while in office both alienated a number of conservative political stakeholders and at once helped them consolidate Poland's political right to an extent, though they nevertheless were unable to convert into a parliamentary victory at this

time. PiS' more recent electoral victory in 2015 represented an unprecedented consolidation of Poland's conservative elements, and their subsequent time in office has already instigated anti-democratic shifts in Poland's political life.

Finally, in turning to the future, the discussion from section 4.3 affirmed that, while Poland's democratic prospects are far from favorable with PiS in office, the party nevertheless has its work cut out in crowding out the centrist competitor PO before it can fully consolidate power over the right and in Polish politics in general. As such this paper predicts that Polish politics will witness ongoing ideological conflict, as well as increased competition for control, between these two parties.

And indeed, while this study was fairly restricted to the two states in consideration, I believe these findings regarding the relationship between ethnic nationalism and pluralism on the right are generalizable to the broader trend of right-wing populism sweeping across the West. This is evidenced by two very recent examples. First, in the recent Dutch elections, the conservative Prime Minister Mark Rutte managed to secure his hold on power by playing to some of Geert Wilders' main talking points, thereby undermining Wilders' ownership of the rhetoric of the right.[315] An account from Wilders' brother, Paul, affirms this. In a recent interview he stated that "The smaller [right-wing] parties, who won a lot of votes off [Geert Wilders'] PVV, express themselves in less extreme language."[316] On the other hand, the polarization within the French election seems to bode poorly for its democratic prospects at present. Namely, the involvement of the previously favored conservative candidate, Francois Fillon, in a graft scandal has greatly diminished his chances and at once energized the more polar

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[315] Elizabeth Roberts, "Dutch election: Rutte's victory is official," *CNN* (Atlanta), March 21, 2017.
[316] Stephanie Marsh, "'This Is Exactly What He Wants': How Geert Wilders Won by Losing," *The Atlantic* (Washington, D.C.), March 16, 2017.

candidates Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen.[317] While Le Pen too is involved in these allegations, the failure of the comparatively moderate Fillon will only further help her chances of claiming France's right.[318]

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[317] "France election: Fillon campaign manager quits along with allied party," *BBC News* (London, UK), March 3, 2017.

[318] Remi Piet,"The populist drift of the French election campaign," *Al Jazeera* (Doha), March 28, 2017.

6. Appendix

Figure 4.1.1.
Source: Freedom House.

Democracy Scores, 2003-2016
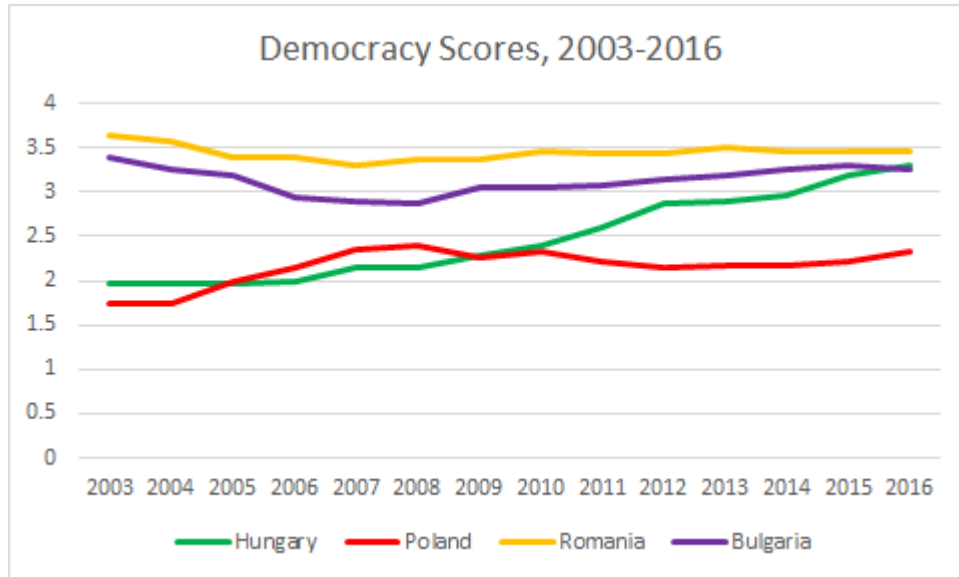
Figure 4.1.2.
Source: Eurobarometer.

Hungary favorability toward EU membership, 2004-2011
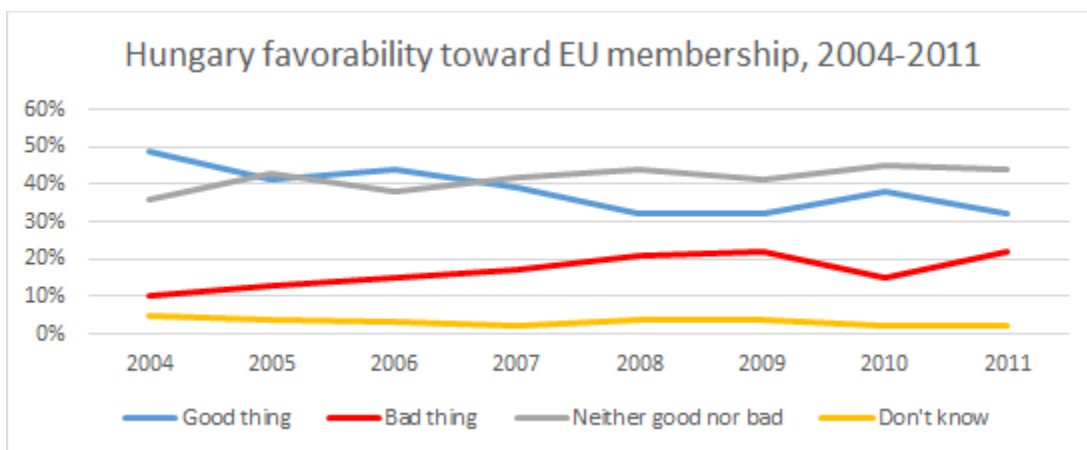
Figure 4.1.3.
Source: Eurobarometer.

Crime as Top-Two Issue Facing Country, 2008-2014

Poland — Hungary — Romania — Bulgaria
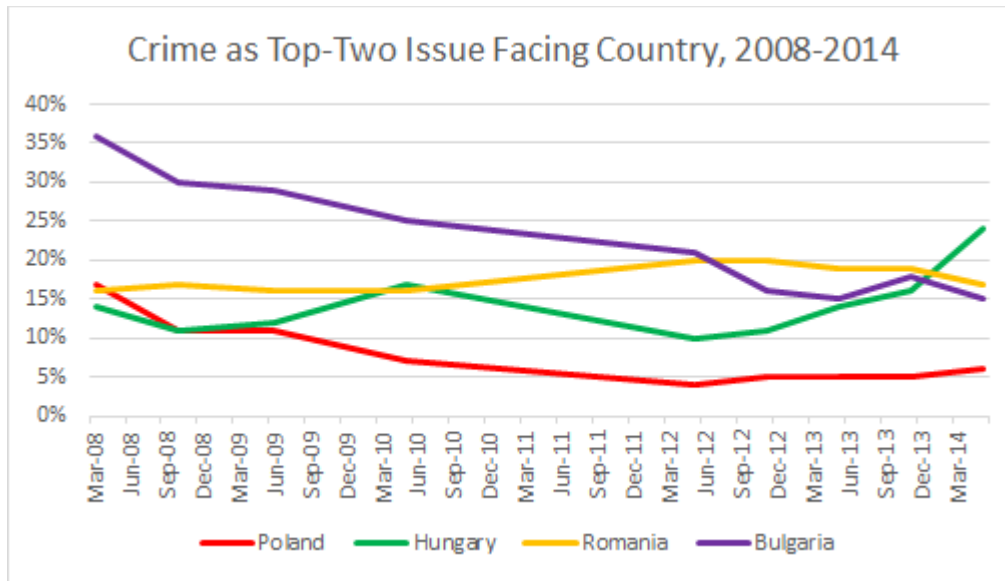
Figure 4.1.4.
Source: Eurobarometer.

Hungary sentiment toward immigration from outside the EU (aggregate), 2014-2016

Positive — Negative
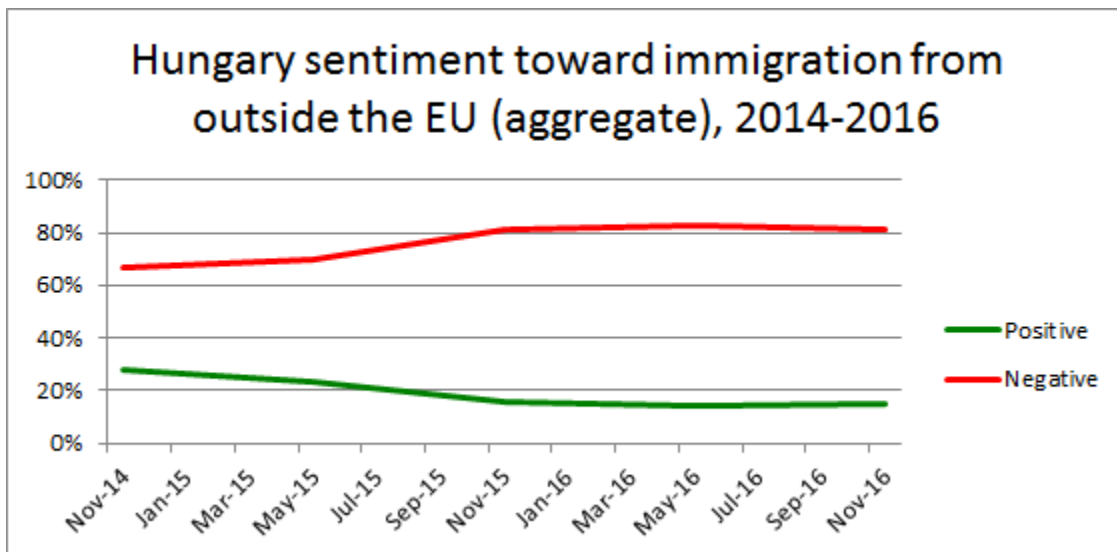
Figure 4.1.5.
Source: Eurobarometer.
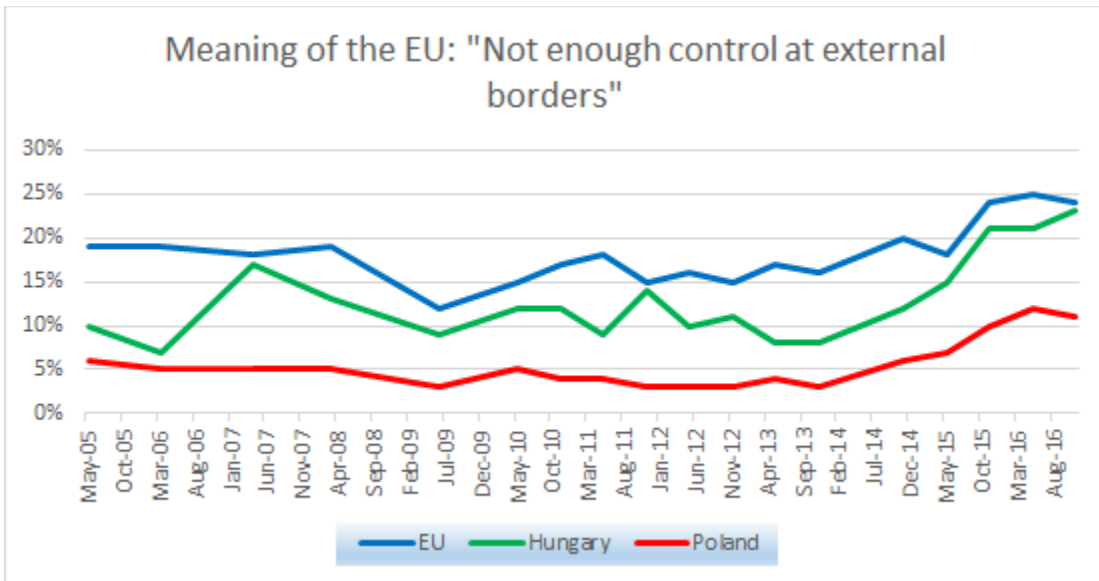
Figure 4.1.6.
Source: Freedom House.

Figure 4.1.7.
Source: V-Dem.

Political Liberties, 2007-2012
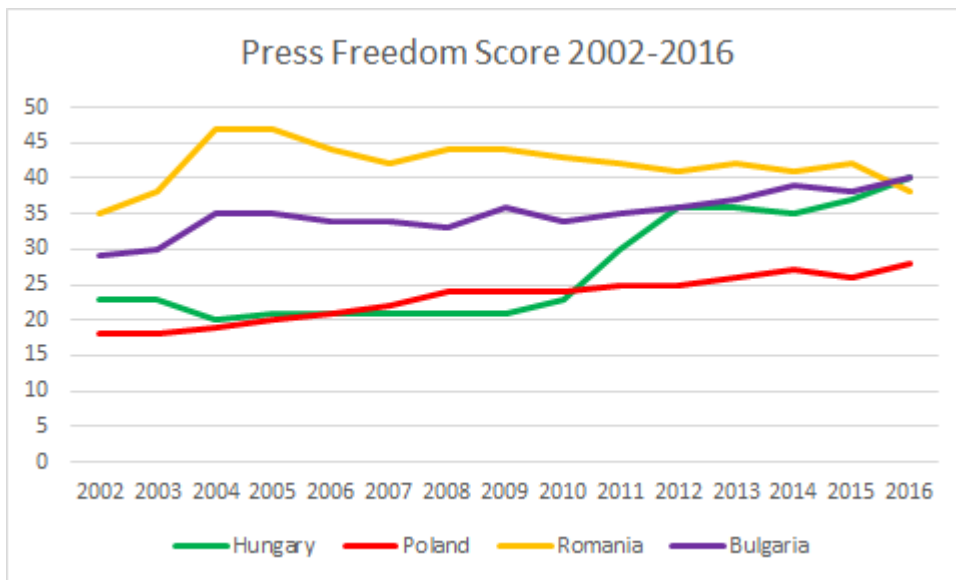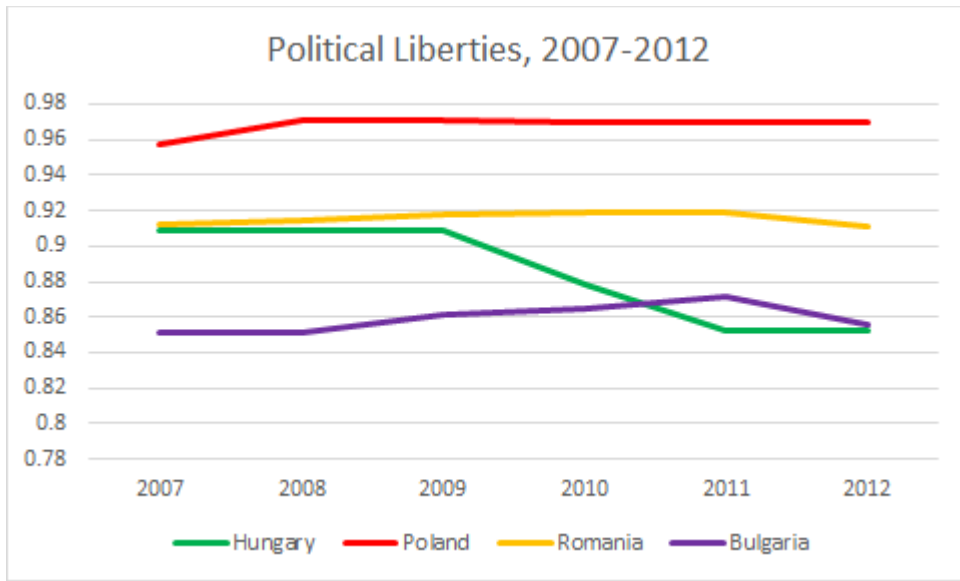
Figure 4.2.1.
Source: Eurobarometer.

Polish feelings toward globalization, 2009 and 2012

Figure 4.2.2.
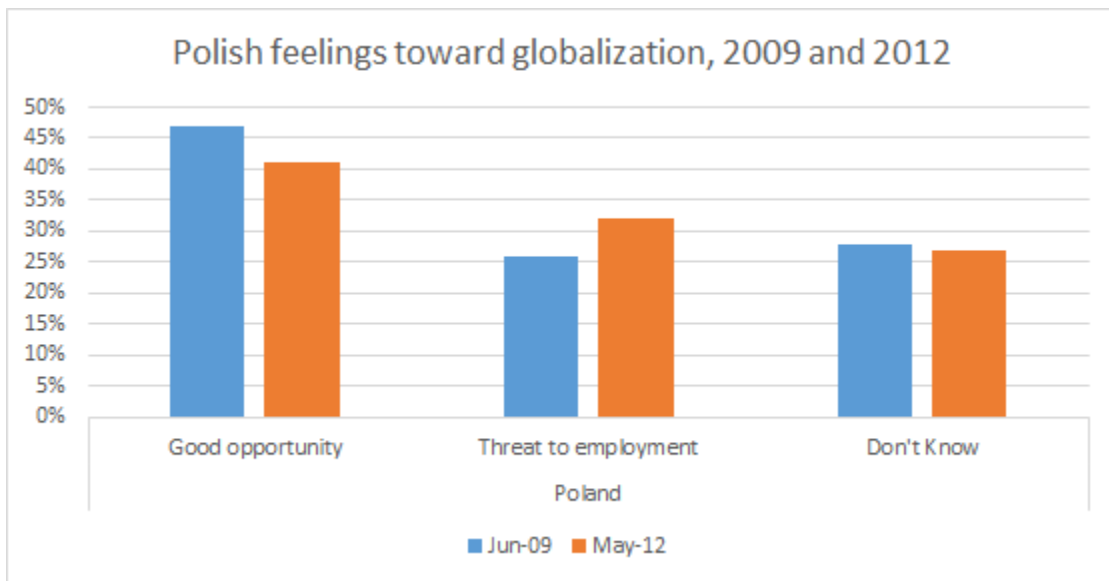Source: Eurobarometer.

Poland sentiment toward immigration from outside the EU (aggregate), 2014-2016
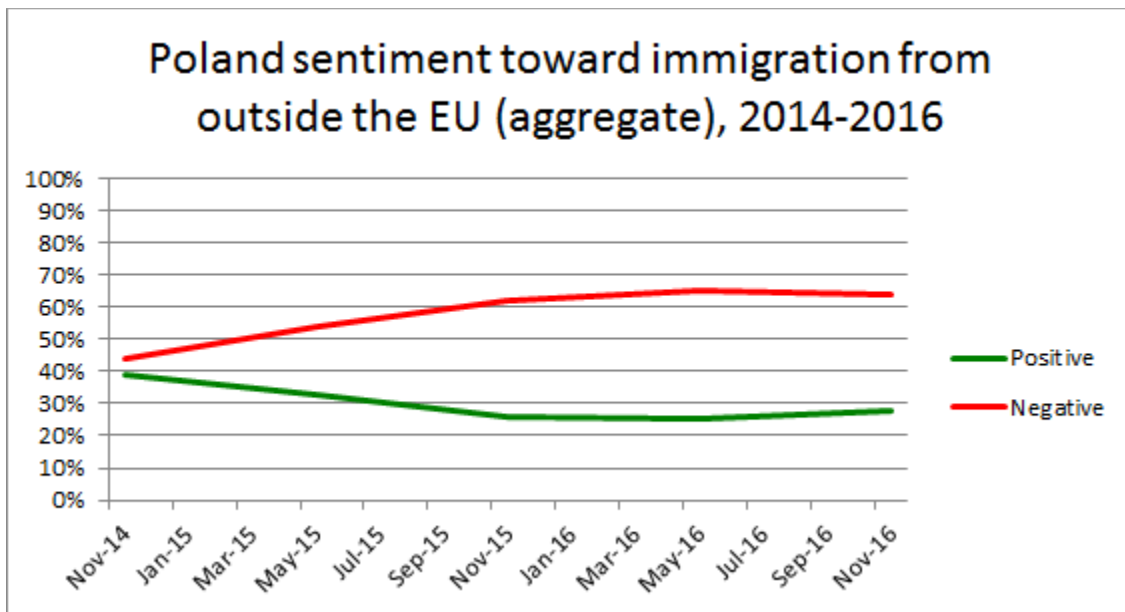
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