



## Heroisation and victimisation: populism, commemorative narratives and National Days in Hungary and Poland

Artur Lipiński & Gabriella Szabo

To cite this article: Artur Lipiński & Gabriella Szabo (2022): Heroisation and victimisation: populism, commemorative narratives and National Days in Hungary and Poland, Journal of Contemporary European Studies, DOI: [10.1080/14782804.2022.2130190](https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2022.2130190)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2022.2130190>



Published online: 05 Oct 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 125



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



# Heroisation and victimisation: populism, commemorative narratives and National Days in Hungary and Poland

Artur Lipiński<sup>a</sup> and Gabriella Szabo<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Political Science and Journalism, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland; <sup>b</sup>Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest, Hungary

## ABSTRACT

Despite the significance of historical narratives on populism, the congruence between collective memory and scholarship regarding populism is scarce in Central and Eastern European countries. We address this gap by analysing the commemorative narratives of the competing populist right-wing political parties in Hungary and Poland promoted during celebrations for the Day of National Unity and National Independence Day celebration. The paper analyses the structure, content and functions of commemorative speeches to highlight the similarities and differences between the political actors under consideration. The findings reveal that victimisation and heroisation are constant and stable components of both countries' political narratives. Moreover, the elements of populist communication are articulated alongside nationalist themes emphasising the greatness of the nation, historical revisionism or national Catholicism. The references to the people using ethno-cultural and exclusionary terms are of particular significance. Although praised and credited with positive qualities, the Polish and Hungarian peoples are more frequently presented as victims of international enemies, European elites or internal, cultural and political elites. This victimhood status allows political actors to both represent themselves as advocates of the people and legitimises their claims.

## KEYWORDS

Populism; right wing; collective memory; national days; narrative

Memory politics constitutes an important aspect of public debates in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries in which temporal references combined with moralisation provide a stronger basis for political competition than economic cleavages (Benazzo 2017; Korycki 2017). Driven by collective narcissism, right-wing radicalism and populism exhibit a particular interest in the positively portraying of the nation and antagonistically othering various groups through manipulating historical narratives (Wodak 2015, 37). An important and still insufficiently explored trend also exists among national populist actors in CEE countries of resorting to victimhood, representing the people as a vulnerable, innocent and morally superior 'we' and engaging in competition with other groups for the status of victim (Golec de Zavala, Dyduch-Hazar, and Lantos 2019; Vermeersch 2019, 119).

Despite the significance for populism of historical narratives, research on the congruence between collective memory and radical right discourse is scarce in CEE countries. Moreover, despite its importance for the identity construction the people, scholarship on populism frequently neglects the narrative structures of victimisation. We address this gap by presenting an analysis of the structure, content and functions of commemorative narratives of four competing populist right-wing political actors: two in Hungary and two in Poland promoted during celebrations for the Day of

National Unity and National Independence Day, respectively. Accordingly, the paper analyses how these narratives are used to establish continuity between past, present and future conditions and construct collective identities by referencing to the negative experiences embedded in the past. We also investigate how such narratives attempt to legitimise radical right wing actors and establish connections with the electorate (see Wertsch and Roediger 2008). Additionally, the selection of the radical right actors allows for assessing the populist communication strategies and their contribution to the construction of specific memory narratives (Mudde 2007). Finally, the selection of incumbent and oppositional radical right wing actors in each country allows us to scrutinise how differences in their political status affects the instrumentalisation use of collective memory.

## Theoretical and methodological background

The paper combines an ideational and discursive approach to populism studies. Consequently, we perceive populism as a communicative phenomenon conveying a specific worldview based on a set of ideological building blocks: people-centrism, anti-elitism, and the exclusion of the other (De Vreese et al. 2018, 425; Hawkins, Rovira Kaltwasser 2017; Wodak 2015). The construction of an in-group identity is based on an antagonistic boundary between the people and both vertical and horizontal others. From this perspective, the people are 'never a primary datum' (Laclau 2005, 48), but a mediated identity construction (Moffitt 2016) that manifests through stories concerning who the people are, what the connections are between them, what happened to them in the past and the boundaries distinguishing them from others (Tilly 2003, 608).

The construction of peoplehood and antagonistic boundary-making practices are intimately linked to nativism, which together with authoritarianism, constitutes another core element of the radical right populist parties. It is understood here as an exclusivist ideology which holds that 'states should be should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ("the nation") and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state' (Mudde 2007, 19). Finally, what differentiates the mainstream right from the radical right populist parties analyzed here is their criticism and rejection of basic institutions and values of liberal democracy, e. g. minority rights, rule of law or separation of powers.

The paper adopts narrative approach that conceives collective memory as narrative 'recollections of the shared past that are passed on through the ongoing processes of commemoration' (Eyerman 219, 25). This approach has been used to study the construction, distribution, transformation and contestation of memory narratives at the level of international organisations (Lähdesmäki 2017; Rosoux 2017), state institutions or specific political and social actors promoting specific storylines related to the past events (MacMillan 2018). Not always, however, usage of the concept of narrative affects the research design, methodology and the argumentation of the academic texts.

This paper employs the category of narrative not only to study the content but also the differences in the forms of memory narratives. Narratives are understood here as interpretive story constructions articulated through repeated discourses causally linking various events with an identifiable temporal starting point and conclusion (Polletta et al. 2011, 111). Narratives are not always fully developed chronicles but might take the forms of small or short stories in which certain structural elements are omitted (Shenhav 2005). Similar to populist communication, the structural feature of narratives as a genre is their moral dimension. The selection of specific events, values, people and so forth always has an evaluative component that emphasises the significance and offers moralised life lessons (Beckwith 2015; Polletta et al. 2011).

Politicians employ narratives to construct affirmative historical portraits of the community or to appear superior to others. These narratives constitute the community's collective memory serving to unify the nation, construct in-group loyalty and provide a cognitive and temporal map (Eyerman 2004, 161). Accordingly, narratives regarding the past create roles, attribute traits, confer legitimacy and play important cognitive functions that explain contemporary situation (Ghilani et al. 2017, 280).

Moreover, historical narratives serve as essential identity markers that mobilise support and provoke emotional commitment to the in-group.

Right-wing parties are particularly interested in politicising of the past not only due to the retrospective orientation of traditionalism inherent to their ideological stances. More importantly, the antagonistic politics of memory characteristic of right-wing populists allows them to construct the myth of a pure and homogenous nation belonging to a clearly defined nation-state (Bull, Hansen, 2016, 393; Wodak 2015, 40). The essentialisation of the national 'we' is deployed not only to protect the unity but also to construct the sense of continuity in time and to mobilise against 'the dangerous others' (Smeeke, Wildschut, Sedikides, 2021, 92).

Importantly, the populist constructions of history are not only based on references to past victorious events. The victimhood narratives, promoted in particular by right-wing actors, also strive to represent the homogenous nation as a sufferer of past and current conditions (Noor et al. 2017). Collective victimhood or narratives of defeat contribute in a notably effective manner to identity constructions. Past losses serve as proof that the nation can withstand even the worst experiences and deserves greatness and supreme loyalty (Mock 2012, 184). Moreover, victimhood narratives trigger a cognitive procedure that rationalises the current crisis as a consequence of trouble in previous times. Consequently, victimhood allows populists in power to legitimise their policies as being aimed at restoring a privileged position and renewing a deserved greatness lost in the past and still threatened by the internal and external enemies. Additionally, an emphasis on victimhood may evoke revenge-seeking or recognition-seeking schemes that are potentially mobilising forces in politics (Beckwith 2015, 2). Finally, the populists in opposition frequently exploit the resentment related to the past defeats and sufferings as a symbolic resource used not only to structure collective identity but also to mobilise negative feelings against the incumbent elites or the others allegedly responsible for the past and current decline (Golec de Zavala, Keenan, 2021, 56).

Memory politics selects specific events and endows them with symbolic meaning according to the specific identity project. Those events acquire their significance and meaning as parts of the larger narrative and are transformed into symbolic markers of national identity which provide a sense of continuity and coherence to the nation (Papadakis 2003, 254). The selected events constitute 'benchmark episodes' that demarcate distinct historical phases and involving identity transformations of the community (Zerubavel 2012, 84). National commemorative days are critical elements of collective narratives which are constantly (re)produced by political actors. The questions concerning whose narratives are to become hegemonic and how they are told are crucial aspects of the mnemonic struggles evoked in the public sphere during national days. The stakes in these struggles include constructions of peoplehood, its past and its constitutive others on the vertical and horizontal dimension that would legitimise the political claims and identity of populist actors (Kubik and Bernhard 2014, 8).

In this sense, the commemorative speeches are narrative occasions providing insight into the mechanisms and functions of memory and the identity constructions of specific actors. The aim of the paper is to answer the question regarding what commemorative narratives are produced by right wing populists in Poland and Hungary? This general question can be subdivided into two more detailed questions. First, what are the structures, contents and functions of the commemorative speeches? Secondly, how are the examined narratives articulated through populist communication strategies?

National Independence Day in Poland and the Day of National Unity in Hungary constitute crucial elements of the collective memories and are recognised in Poland and Hungary at the political and social levels as critical events in the calendars in these countries. Moreover, both countries represent the cases of fractured memory regimes characterised by the significance of mnemonic cleavages (Kubik, Bernhard, 2014, 13). Both states have similar post-communist legacies, and their paradigmatically populist governments support each other and borrow each other's ideas and strategies for gaining power and executing authority (Sata and Karolewski 2020). Right-wing populists governing in both countries ground their political philosophy on the rejection of liberalism, practice illiberal

constitutionalism and (despite several superficial differences), pursue a highly comparable foreign policy (Drinóczy and Bień-Kacała 2019; Varga and Buzogány 2021). Another common feature is that neither Law and Justice nor Fidesz initially represented the radical right wing populist cases in their origins. On the contrary, they were moderate conservative parties that, in fighting to keep their majoritarian status threatened by a competition from the far right groupings, evolved toward more radical positions with the lapse of time. Importantly, both countries exhibit symptoms of collective victimhood – in Hungary, this centres on the Peace Treaty of Trianon, and in Poland the main theme is loss of statehood and independence (Golec de Zavalá, Dyduch-Hazar, and Lantos 2019). These traumas serve as particularly convenient cases to search for and analyse the memory narratives with a distinct focus on the constructions of victimhood – issues too frequently neglected in the studies on populism.

To trace the mnemonic differences and detailed meaning of the narratives, their stability or transformation over time, and the possible competition between them, we selected the commemorative speeches of two types of political actors from each country, populist incumbent parties and their radical, nationalist competitors from the right flank. Accordingly, we selected the speeches delivered by the leading politicians of Law and Justice and the radical right groupings in Poland in addition to the Fidesz-led government and the Jobbik party in Hungary. Regarding PiS, Jarosław Kaczyński as a party leader and president Andrzej Duda who played important official roles during the centenary celebrations on 2018. As the March of Independence is organised by a loose coalition of nationalist movements and groupings, no single actor could be selected. Therefore, the analysis is based on a number of speeches held by the representatives of the various groupings organising the march. Regarding Hungary, the leading figures of incumbent Fidesz and Jobbik were selected, including Victor Orbán and Gábor Vona, the president of Jobbik. The sample consists of 24 speeches from political leaders of parties and nationalist groupings (for the list of speeches see: [Table 1](#)). The speeches were found online in text format or as YouTube videos. In the latter cases, the speeches were transcribed.

The timeframe of the analysis, 2014–2019, includes electoral and routine periods, which allows us to determine the degree of stability and coherence in the narratives over time. The earliest examples are from the 2014 parliamentary and European Parliament (EP) elections in Hungary and the EP and

**Table 1.** List of the analysed speeches.

Year	Poland		Hungary	
	<i>Law and Justice</i>	<i>Oppositional radical populist right groupings</i>	<i>Fidesz</i>	<i>Jobbik</i>
2014	Kaczyński, Jarosław (president of Law and Justice) <sup>1</sup>	Dzierżawski, Mariusz (the candidate for Warsaw's president supported by the National Movement)	Semjén, Zsolt (deputy prime minister)	Kovács, Béla (Member of European Parliament)
2015	Kaczyński, Jarosław (president of Law and Justice)	Andruszkiewicz, Adam (president of the All-Polish Youth)	Semjén, Zsolt (deputy prime minister)	Vona, Gábor (president of Jobbik) Zagyva, Görgy Gyula (Member of Hungarian Parliament)
2016	Kaczyński, Jarosław (president of Law and Justice)	Dorosz, Tomasz (National-Radical Camp)	Kövér, László (speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary)	Vona, Gábor (president of Jobbik)
2017	Kaczyński, Jarosław (president of Law and Justice)	Dorosz, Tomasz (National-Radical Camp)	Lázár, János (Minister of Prime Minister's Office)	Vona, Gábor (president of Jobbik) Toroczkai, László (Vice President of Jobbik)
2018	Duda, Andrzej (president of Poland)	Winnicki, Robert, (the president of the National Movement)	Semjén, Zsolt (deputy prime minister)	Szávay, István (Member of Hungarian Parliament)
2019	Kaczyński, Jarosław (president of Law and Justice)	Bąkiewicz, Robert (the president of the March of Independence Association)	Orbán, Viktor (prime minister)	Vona, Gábor (president of Jobbik)

municipal elections in Poland. Significantly, the commemoration of Poland's Independence Day in 2014 was transformed into an electoral platform to announce A. Duda as a candidate in the 2015 presidential elections. The subsequent year brought a PiS double victory in parliamentary and presidential elections. Further, the parliamentary elections in 2019 constituted an important moment. These elections not only confirmed the political dominance of PiS, but also delivered success for radical right nationalists from the National Movement, who entered the parliament as a part of larger coalition called Confederation. Alongside the mainstreaming of nationalist ideas by the incumbent PiS, the organisation of Independence Day was crucial to contributing to the growing popularity and legitimisation of the previously fringe radical-right actors. The timeframe and construction of the sample ensured that the data included maximum variation in right-wing actors and their discourses during electoral and routine periods. Such a selection allowed us to include the most important right wing actors in the period under consideration who could frame the shape of commemorative discourses and whose narratives were widely disseminated throughout the public sphere.

Methodologically, the paper employs selected tools of narrative analysis, studying the components of the political discourse to gain nuanced and systematic insights into the communication of populist leaders (Freistein and Gadinger 2020; Mládková, 2013). We also examine whether and how their discursive repertoire was articulated through populist communication strategies.

In analysing the sample, we developed a system to identify the structural elements of narratives and their content. Inspired by the coding categories used in previous studies (Bischoping, Gazso 2016, Freistein and Gadinger 2020; Khoury 2018), we focused on the employment of events and characters as basic structural elements of the narratives. Plot refers to the way speakers arrange elements of a story to develop a basic idea. There are five essential aspects of a plot: the introduction, in which a conflict takes the form of the struggle between the principal characters; the conflict, the climax, understood as a turning point of the story; the falling action, when events and complications begin to fall into place and lead to the close of the story; and the resolution, understood as the point at which the conflict is resolved or ended. Character refers to the actors represented in a story or their attributes.

In the next step, the analytical scheme was used to code the data, namely, the narrative analytical categories were assigned to specific segments of data (Bazeley 2013, 125). Furthermore, we examined whether and how these selected narrative building blocks were articulated through populist communication strategies, for example how the populist anti-elitism was used to construct the narrative figure of antagonist. The analysis adopted a qualitative approach, based on systematic re-reading of transcripts and comparing the coded excerpts to identify recurring ideas or patterns generated from the data.

## Historical and political context of two commemorative events

National Independence Day in Poland is celebrated on 11 November to commemorate the restoration of Poland's sovereignty in 1918 after 123 years of partition by Prussia, Austria and Russia. The commemoration originated in the interwar period and is widely perceived as one of the most important national holidays in Polish memory culture (Kwiatkowski 2018). In contrast to many tragic and dramatic historical moments constituting the official calendar of commemorations, National Independence Day is unique as it celebrates a positive, victorious event. However, since its beginning the event has possessed dichotomous character based on conflicting views concerning Polish historiography and national identity – a multi-ethnic and multicultural vision embedded in the Romantic tradition and an ethno-nationalist vision of a homogenous, exclusionary Catholic nation.

These conflicts were reinvigorated after the right-wing shift of the 2005 parliamentary elections, when Law and Justice formed a coalition government with the Catholic-nationalist League of Polish Families, lending prominence to a radical right agenda. Henceforth, Independence Day celebrations have been used by radical right as an occasion to disseminate and normalise its agenda and

institutionalise its activities. The initially spontaneous grassroots celebrations gradually evolved into the 'March of Independence', which was first organised by the National-Radical Camp (Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny [ONR]) and All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska [MW]) in 2010. Coveting the support of nationalist voters, PiS politicians, initially participated in the celebrations alongside the radical right groupings. However, in 2012 ONR and MW, among other small organisations, formed the National Movement. PiS distanced itself from the new organisation and, to avoid inconvenient competition on the right, moved its celebrations from Warsaw to Kraków.

Importantly, on tenth day of every month subsequent to the Smolensk catastrophe of the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2010, PiS started to organise so called monthlies to commemorate the event. The 10<sup>th</sup> of November processions were always imbued with Independence Day symbolism. The March of Independence experienced a significant multidimensional shift, discursively shifting towards a nationalistic Polish-Catholic model and, at the organisational level, transforming local celebrations into a national, but still grassroots, event. In line with the PiS's policy of 'nothing to the right of us except the wall' (Kaczyński 2008), PiS adopted a two-pronged strategy towards the fringe radical right groupings. On the one hand, the party gradually accommodated the radical right populist and nationalist communication strategies which unavoidably radicalised its agenda, on the other it carefully avoided any references to its competitors from the right to avoid promoting their label. Despite several attempts, PiS was unable to institutionalise and organisationally own the March of Independence in the period under consideration. Instead the party was condemned to join the event or negotiate with the radical nationalist groupings its organisation (Kotwas and Kubik 2019).

In Hungary, the Day of National Unity retains an ambiguous character. It has been an official mourning and remembrance day since 2010, commemorating the signing of the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920. This pact caused two-thirds of Hungary's territory to be ceded to neighbouring countries, transforming approximately three million Hungarians into ethnic minorities living outside the territory of the country. Before 2010, the remembrance of 1920 was sporadic but remained vivid in right-wing circles in Hungary, serving as a rallying point among nationalist voters. Acting as the protector of all ethnic Hungarians beyond the borders of the Hungarian state and promoting national pride across the globe are equally important to both Fidesz (incl. Christian Democrats) and Jobbik (Hyttinen and Näre 2017). However, Fidesz and its political allies always distanced themselves from Jobbik's border revisionism. There was a certain period of the time, largely between 2009 and 2014, when Jobbik's politicians and representatives of other radical-right groups claimed that Fidesz and the Christian Democrats had been 'stealing the ideas, programs, and issues' from Jobbik and presented all of them as its inventions. The harsh law and order initiatives and nationalistic turn in cultural and educational policy were all later implemented by the Fidesz-led government after 2010. Moreover, the state level Trianon commemoration had also been originally demanded by the Jobbik party (Bozoki, 2016; Feischmidt, 2020). In 2010, the newly elected Fidesz-led government introduced the Day of National Unity, reframing the meaning of the past and propagating the spiritual cohesion of all Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. This official commemoration therefore provides greater visibility and legitimacy to the narrative of Fidesz. In contrast, Jobbik has significantly fewer resources with which to promote its narrative, relying on mass rallies, social media, and other online platforms to disseminate its discourse on Trianon. The Day of National Unity ultimately seems to be a product of the political rivalry between Fidesz/KDNP and Jobbik over the dominant Trianon narrative on the right of the political spectrum.

## Poland

### Plot

#### Introduction

The narratives of PiS and the more radical nationalist groupings differ regarding the history preceding Poland's independence and the selection of specific historical events. The leader of PiS,

J. Kaczyński, refers in his speeches to the tradition of failed uprisings against the partitioning powers of the Russian Empire, Germany, and Austria-Hungary (i.e. the November uprising of 1831 and the January uprising of 1863). In addition to the Piłsudskiite and Dmowskiite's military, intellectual, and diplomatic efforts, these insurrections are represented as part of a long political and social process of learning how to combat the enemies of Polish independence in the 19th century (see, for example, Kaczyński 2017). Interestingly, R. Dmowski, a founding father of the radical nationalist right, was only mentioned explicitly in J. Kaczyński speech in 2019, being referred to as 'a father of Polish independence' (Kaczyński 2019). Given this occurred when Confederation, the radical-right populist coalition, entered the parliament just after the October 2019 parliamentary elections, this speech might indicate the willingness of PiS to position itself as the only true representative of the entire right-wing spectrum that covers all its ideological currents.

The set of historical events in the speeches of J. Kaczyński was invoked not only as historical context but also as part of a moral tale in which protagonists 'are rewarded for engaging in legitimate social practices or restoring the legitimate order' (Van Leeuwen 2008, 117). This moral frame was projected onto the present situation, allowing the now-incumbent PiS to legitimise itself by ascribing its policies to a long history of Polish struggles for a strong and sovereign state. Accordingly, PiS represented itself as a party with 'an imperative' to 'fix the state', which was still considered weak after a long period of non-sovereignty (Kaczyński 2016; Duda 2018).

The speeches of radical-right groupings provide a much broader historical context of Independence Day through the selection of events, historical figures, and themes that support an essentialist vision of a mono-ethnic, Catholic Poland. Such speeches also legitimise these groups' self-positioning as the only representatives of the Catholic nation. Accordingly, one can find references in the speeches to sacred events from national mythology (Zubrzycki 2013): the baptism of Poland in 966; the kings of the Piast and Jagiellonian dynasties; the Battle of Grunwald against the Teutonic knights in 1410, before which Polish knights sang Bogurodzica ('She who gave birth to God'); the defence of the Jasna Góra sanctuary against Swedish invaders in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; and the liberation of Vienna from the Turks in 1683 by King Jan III Sobieski, which confirmed Poland's self-image as the bulwark of Christendom (Bąkiewicz 2019). It is characteristic that the national movement's leader reached as far back as the 11th century to link the genealogy of the March of Independence participants to soldiers, which made it possible to extol the military virtues of the nation: 'We are, the descendants of the warriors of Chrobry [first king of Poland – AL], we are the descendants of the knights of Jagiello, we are the descendants of Sobieski's Hussars, we are the descendants of the victors and that is why we have come today to celebrate victory' (Winnicki 2018). Instead of offering a morality tale concerning the restoration of independence, the aim here is to reaffirm and praise an exclusive, Catholic, militant, and nationalistic vision of the people's identity and juxtapose it with the hostile national and international elites. The references to the past therefore serve to evoke a national pride rooted in past acts of heroism and self-sacrifice and to mobilise involvement in nationalist movements.

### **Conflict**

Conflict is the most significant element permeating both Polish narratives. In PiS's narrative, the conflict dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Poland lost its independence. In 1918 Poland regained its sovereignty against the will of its neighbours, but only until 1939. Additionally, all the speeches refer to the atrocities inflicted on the Polish nation by Nazi Germany and communist totalitarianism during the Second World War and its aftermath (Kaczyński 2014). These regimes are not differentiated, being portrayed as equally genocidal totalitarianisms. Importantly, the conflict continues after the collapse of communism in 1989, with Polish national identity and independence threatened internally by post-communist elites and externally by the EU or specific European states (principally Germany). As J. Kaczyński explained in 2014 and consistently repeated in the following years: 'For what is happening today is nothing less than a struggle for the freedom and sovereignty of our



nation, for the freedom of Poles in their own country and for the freedom of Poland in Europe' (Kaczyński 2014). In the case of PiS's narrative the conflict's omnipresent permanence was used to build the image of the only party concerned with Polish sovereignty and independence. Additionally, this historical framework allowed to present the national and international reactions to the breaches of the rule of law after 2015 as being motivated by the hostility of the elites towards the idea of fully independent Poland.

On the other hand, the oppositional radical right *millieus* promotes a fundamentalist vision of an eternal, moral conflict between the Catholic nation and the multifarious enemies that threaten it at the domestic and international levels. In this narrative, the Polish nation has forever been surrounded by enemies and has struggled for independence (Bąkiewicz 2019). However, the predominant majority of the speeches refers to the actual situation emphasising the moral division between the elites and the ordinary people. The style is aggressive and vigorous, articulated through military metaphors (Bąkiewicz 2019; Dorosz 2016). Accordingly, the situation after the 2015 elections when nationalists from Confederation entered the parliament was depicted in a highly aggressive, hyperbolised register: 'We are living in watershed times. The leftists who wanted to take down the cross, who spit on Poland, are not in the new parliament. [...] Our mission is to reclaim the Polish Republic from the hands of the people who brought it down. [...] We have no obligation to serve Germany and accept immigrants because Mrs Merkel tells us to. We want Poles to return to our country. I give you my word of honour that we will fight for this' (Andruszkiewicz 2015).

### *Climax*

The complexity of PiS's narrative is effectively reflected in this dimension as one can discern two climaxes here. The first was the restoration of Polish independence in 1918 (Kaczyński 2017), which wins praise for the achievements of the people and their leaders, including J. Piłsudski and R. Dmowski. The second climax was in 1989 – a majority of the speeches portray the end of communism as the beginning of free, sovereign and independent Poland (Kaczyński 2016). It should be noted, however, that the speeches retain an ambiguity in their assessment of post-transitional Poland. It allowed PiS to postpone the moment of climax until the 2015 parliamentary elections and portray its own electoral victory as the real and ultimate systemic breakthrough and the end of 'the political practice [...] which we call post-communism' (Kaczyński 2014). In a 2017 speech, J. Kaczyński elaborated on his adverse conceptualisation of the post-1989 system through references to negative metaphors: 'We are now throwing away the heavy bag of stones that we carried on our backs as a nation after 1989, a bag of corruption, fraud, thievery, dishonesty, immorality and the destruction of Polish patriotism. Destruction of the Polish sense of community' (Kaczyński 2017).

The oppositional radical-right speeches only fleetingly resorted to 1918, switching immediately to the current situation and the need for mobilisation to gain freedom and reclaim cultural identity. In the radical right-wing narrative, there is no climax, and the past victimhood resulting from a permanently threatened sovereignty is directly projected onto the present situation. Such a definition was enhanced by emotional tones, a 'call to arms' speech style, and appeals to national unification and mobilisation: 'Poles, wake up! Poland needs change, Poland needs radical change, Poland needs national change and we will bring it about in hundreds of thousands of hands and hearts that want to work, that want to fight' (Winnicki 2018).

### *Falling action*

In the narrative of PiS, the falling action begins with the gradual rebuilding of the state after 1918. The speeches praise the efforts of the former Polish politicians, particularly J. Piłsudski, in rebuilding the Polish state. They also underline the scope of the destruction committed by the invaders to emphasise the difficulties posed by the post-war challenges and praise the activities undertaken by Poles to reconstruct the state. Notably, the PiS's narrative resorts to nationalist language when foregrounding militant virtues and emphasising the ability of the new republic to inculcate 'patriotic attitudes' that make the nation ready for 'supreme sacrifice' (Kaczyński 2014).

The second bout of falling action falls occurs in relation to the post-communist transformation after 1989. However, to delegitimise transitional elites and justify the necessity of the radical changes introduced by PiS after 2015, the narrative provides a highly ambiguous assessment of this period: 'Today we have the state but it's still in a terrible condition' (Kaczyński 2015).

In contrast to PiS's narrative structure, the oppositional radical right's narrative does not contain a falling action and subsequent resolution. The antagonism does not diminish with the arrival of independence in 1918 or the fall of communism in 1989. On the contrary, Polish cultural identity and sovereignty are represented as ceaselessly and permanently threatened by domestic elites and a diverse set of international enemies (Dzierżawski 2014; Bąkiewicz 2019).

### **Resolution**

In Poland, the resolution of PiS's narrative emerges with the party's electoral victory in 2015, repeated in 2019. PiS legitimises itself morally by claiming that its policy decisions are based on the values that led to Poland's independence in 1918, the attachment to Polish sovereignty, and the ability to draw lessons from history (Kaczyński 2019).

On the other hand, there is no resolution in the nationalist groupings' discourse. As oppositional actors, they were more interested in constructing and maintaining a sense of permanent crisis and boundary-making between the nation and the elites in order to unite and mobilise people through strong emotional appeals. Consequently, an important element of this discourse is the construction of an antagonism between the people and the elites. In line with the populists' communication strategy, the nationalist narrative suspends divisions between politicians of various beliefs. The entire political class was termed as 'the system caring only about its own position' while adopting a patronising attitude towards the nation (Dorosz 2016). The lack of any internal differences within the political class is also implied in the following excerpt: 'We have to be a mobilised nation which puts pressure on politicians, which forces them to defend Polish interests' (Bąkiewicz 2019). (Bąkiewicz 2019).

### **Characters**

**Protagonists.** The central image in both narratives in Poland is the nation unified by its troubled history and Catholicism. In line with populist political communication, the nation is praised and represented as deserving a superior position (Kaczyński 2015). The oppositional radical right's narrative adopts even more militant tones, praising heroism, past acts of self-sacrifice and attachment to Catholic values (Bąkiewicz 2019).

In both narratives, either PiS or oppositional radical right, the categories of Poland and the Polish nation are used interchangeably due to the shared assumption that the state is the emanation of the homogeneously understood nation and should reflect its historical values and traditions. 'The state must be deeply rooted in the history, tradition and values of the nation. This is [...] an issue that we must strive for in schools and in the media. We must do this – there is no other way to sustain Poland, to keep Poland lasting, than to rebuild our spiritual strength'. (Kaczyński 2016). Similar ideas can be recognised in the oppositional radical right speeches: 'Independence today also and above all means [...] culture, freedom from cultural Marxism, freedom from those who want to destroy schools, family traditions and our healthy Polish, Christian customs. Today, in the name of independence, we must decisively declare war on all of them' (Winnicki 2018).

Notably, political nativism appears in combination with a symbolic nativism focused on the defence of traditional values and national identity in both political camps (Betz 2019, 13). The nativist tones are strikingly clear in the following example of PiS's discourse: 'We must be at home, Poland must be our nation state!' (Kaczyński 2016).

The populist structure of argumentation features prominently particularly in oppositional radical right speeches that separate the ordinary people from the domestic and international elites inimical to national interests (Dorosz 2016). The difference between the narratives of PiS and the oppositional radical right is the conflict's moral dimension, which is elevated to the highest level in the latter's

discourse. As one of the speeches asserts: 'What is most important for a nation is morality. It is the distinction between good and evil' (Dzierżawski 2014).

Both narratives are also similar in that a homogenous nation is conceived as a normative ideal and the perception of internal divisions is considered as a source of weakness rather than valuable pluralism. The protagonist has a special mission to defend Christianity, which is in alleged to be in decay in other European countries (Dzierżawski 2014; Bąkiewicz 2019). This manner of argumentation resorts to a messianic myth inherent to Polish political culture, according to which Poland has a historical mission in Europe to sustain 'the foundation of our Christian civilisation' that is constantly being eroded in Western European countries (Kaczyński 2019). Expressions related to national greatness, self-worth, and traditional values were present in PiS's narrative before 2019. Nevertheless, such crystal-clear references to national mythology might be interpreted as evidence of the strategic targeting of radical-right nationalist supporters by PiS, which was threatened by Confederation's electoral results.

Consistently recurring features of the oppositional radical right's narrative are its emphasis on humiliation as the identity marker of victimhood and its deliberate targeting of feelings of exclusion and resentment. The ordinary person who 'has to work hard to make ends meet' is represented as an undeservedly and unjustifiably demeaned victim of the elites (Dorosz 2016). The lack of recognition and the cultural victimisation of the in-group by persecuting elites was used in almost every speech under scrutiny. According to one of the oppositional radical-right actors referring to the previous government: 'The truth is that for eight years they scorned Polishness and ridiculed us. [They insulted us] as yokels [in Polish original: cebulaków], backward Podlasie or Podkarpacie [eastern and south-eastern regions of Poland, mostly rural – AL], or Poland B [slightly derogatory term denoting less developed eastern parts of Poland – AL]. All the venom was directed towards the majority of ordinary people' (Dorosz 2016).

The victimisation of the people suffering humiliation, defeat or unjustifiable treatment is also a discernible feature of collective identity building in PiS's narrative as well. For example, one of the speeches by J. Kaczyński refers to the issue of compensation for WWII losses. As he asserts: 'The French were paid, the Jews were paid, and many other people were paid for the losses they suffered during the Second World War. Poles were not' (Kaczyński 2017). Nevertheless, more frequent were the references to the anti-elitist themes which foregrounded victimisers rather than victims.

**Antagonists.** References to the internal and external antagonists feature prominently in both narratives, enhancing their strongly populist overtones. Importantly, in the oppositional radical right-wing discourse it adopts a much more militant character. One can easily notice the abundance of military expressions and war metaphors ('fight', 'struggle', 'war', 'enemies') accompanying the frequent references to the most dramatic moments of contemporary Polish history. As one of the oppositional radical right speakers promises: 'We will fight for decent wages for you [...] and we will rebuild great Poland. The kind of Poland for which the soldiers who fought in the [Warsaw] uprising, the cursed soldiers [anti-communist partisans after WWII – AL] and the people who fought against communism died' (Andruszkiewicz 2015).

The key difference between the two narratives pertains to the level of abstraction regarding the identity of the antagonists. As an incumbent party, PiS avoids direct personal attacks that would pose diplomatic challenges and retains a high level of ambiguity while blaming contemporary external or internal antagonists. These references frequently stay at the level of presupposition or are very general, never naming specific political actors (Kaczyński 2016). For example, J. Kaczyński resorts to sovereigntist claims insinuating that: 'I cannot say that our freedom, sovereignty is not challenged by anyone. There are also those who question our right to continue what is called our Polish culture. Even this is sometimes questioned today' (Kaczyński 2016).

Regarding internal enemies, PiS primarily refers to the elites of transition, those 'captured by leftist ideology' and other elites, deemed 'profiteers of this sick system' (Kaczyński 2017). Importantly, internal elites are also denied the legitimacy required to represent the people and are considered

inimical to grassroots patriotism, 'national ideas', culture and the self-esteem of the community (Kaczyński 2014). Patriotism was 'not directly destroyed but falsified in the period of the People's Republic of Poland, and later completely directly destroyed, and this was the paradox of that time after 1989' (Kaczyński 2017).

Concerning the nomination of the enemies is concerned, the oppositional radical right-wing narrative is more specific. Abstract targets such as 'the politicians', 'the system', 'the elites' or, more specifically, 'cultural Marxism', 'liberals', 'Jews' and 'rainbow people' are supplemented by the names of specific antagonists who pose a danger to the Polish nation and its identity or status (Andruszkiewicz 2015; Bąkiewicz 2019; Dorosz 2017). In line with the populist strategy, the elites are pitted against the nation and represented as 'the occupational power' that wants 'to destroy' the nation (Dzierżawski 2014), being motivated by 'the interests of the banks, European Union and their own interests' (Dorosz 2017). There are also less explicit statements, which nevertheless accuse the elites of betraying the people: 'How can you call yourself patriotic if you serve foreigners all year round?' (Dorosz 2016). Overall, in the narratives of the nationalist groupings one can discern a strong resentment against the elites embedded in the tension between the assumed moral greatness of the nation and the elites' alleged omnipotent, privileged position and their conviction of their own cultural superiority. In accordance with the populist template, the elites are perceived as 'a disturbance to the glorious collective self' (Homolar, Löffmann, 2021, 6).

## Hungary

### Plot

#### Introduction

In contrast to the Polish examples, both Hungarian parties' narratives focus on the last 100 years, seldom discussing the situation before the Trianon Treaty. The parties seem disinterested in portraying the status of Hungary, its people, neighbouring countries, and the great powers before 1920. These omissions suggest that the narrators do not intend to contextualise the Trianon Treaty in the same manner as how storytellers usually emphasise the suddenness and severity of what happened with Hungary and the Hungarian people. This missing introduction implies an incompleteness to the story that is a frequent characteristic of trauma narratives. Absent sections help the audience forget a component of the story, which might preserve the speakers and recipients from unpleasant feelings and thoughts (Wigren, 1994). In this case, the political responsibility of the Hungarian authorities, the role the country played during World War I, and the policies regarding minorities before 1920 might be considered disturbing and therefore unwelcome recollections.

#### Conflict

In Hungary, Fidesz/KDNP and Jobbik begin the story by telling how, in 1920, the country and the Hungarian people experienced the greatest loss in their history. The storytellers emphasise that this loss was caused by an unexpected, unjust and brutal attack. In the narratives, this attack is the Trianon Treaty itself: 'The 4th of June in 1920, it is the darkest day in our national history' (Semjén 2014).

The perpetrators (the neighbouring countries, the great powers and the members of the Hungarian elite who weakened the country) committed a terrible crime against the victim (Hungary and its people). In both parties' rhetoric, the intent of the perpetrators was evil: they wanted to destroy the victim physically ('kill', 'chop up') (Kovács 2014; Semjén 2014), mentally ('break down') and emotionally ('embarrass') (Semjén 2015; Zagya 2015). Regarding the motivation of the perpetrators, the storytellers emphasise that neighbouring countries took advantage of the naivety and weakness of the Hungarian people, and the great powers sacrificed Hungarians when it served their best interests (Lázár 2017; Toroczka 2017). This narrative element also serves to position Hungary and the Hungarian people as an 'ideal victim' (Christie, 1986): an innocent, weak and

respectable agent that experiences a brutal assault and is left physically, mentally and emotionally injured.

### *Climax*

The Hungarian case reveals another type of narrative climax. The storytellers portray Hungarians after the conflict as an economically, physically, mentally and emotionally weak group of people who experienced loneliness. It is claimed that the Trianon trauma was suppressed for many years and that those who wanted social recognition of the event were silenced. Fidesz/KDNP connects this climax to the Orbán-led party coalition's electoral success in 2010. Since 2010, the government has encouraged Hungarians to present give their perspectives on the story. The stable, right-leaning governance of Hungary is framed as a necessary condition for acknowledging the trauma and starting the healing process (Orbán 2019). In addition, an imagined and future climax is proposed. Apologies from the neighbouring countries were demanded which would help the Hungarian people's healing process: 'No one has ever apologised for Trianon in the last nearly 100 years. I'm not even talking about reparations. I am just talking about symbolic gestures, an apology, for example. (...) Our wounds can heal if they are not reopened. If they do not sprinkle salt every day. It is what we all need'. (Lázár 2017).

Specifically, in Jobbik's narrative, the Trianon trauma is a continuing phenomenon: 'Trianon is not in the past but it is present It is happening right now' (Toroczkaï 2017). They also mention that the Hungarian people are still waiting for external compensation for their loss: international politics are still hostile towards Hungarians—the call for Szekler autonomy in Romania is constantly rejected, and the EU does not help promote ethnic minority rights. Hungarian people are still weak, and the fall of Hungary continues due to its population decline and the diminished influence of Hungary in CEE. The government constantly fails to represent Hungarian interests because the politicians are not strong enough to demand fair treatment for the Hungarian people (Kovács 2014; Vona 2016).

### *Falling action*

Hungary's Jobbik party does not include the falling action in its narrative. On the other hand, according to Fidesz/KDNP, the Hungarian people are currently thriving economically. The victim learned lessons from the assault. As a result, Hungary will not be weak again if its its people can mobilise the internal resources necessary to remain strong: 'We did what Széchenyi advised: we built a staircase from the stones thrown at us' (Orbán 2019). A similar tone appeared in the speech of another Fidesz 's politician: 'We want to live despite the brutality of the new reality for Hungarians' (Semjén 2018).

### *Resolution*

The populist right-wing parties in Hungary reiterate that Hungarian people should trust their abilities, because the nation survived the brutal attack without external help. The Hungarian people are strong enough to offer partnership with neighbouring nations, and the future will be bright if they all work together. Based on such strength and cooperation, the CEE region will be prosperous (Orbán 2019). (Orbán 2019). The plots are somewhat similar in both narratives. Victimhood and a deep sense of resentment are the common elements. The function of the plot is to soothe the event-related distress. Although both narratives offer emotional comfort to Hungarians, they do so in different manners. The Fidesz/KDNP's plot foreshadows a happy ending: 'Today we have once again become the most populous country in the Carpathian Basin. (...) The return of Hungarians has begun. Compared to Western Europe, we are an island of peace and security. And to keep it that way, the new Hungarian army is also being built apace'. (Orbán 2019). In contrast, the Jobbik's plot is rather a perpetual loop of suffering in being fixated on the continuous injustice.

## Characters

**Protagonists.** A collective protagonist is presented in the Hungarian discourse that consists of three elements: Hungary (the state), the Hungarian people, and the storyteller. Fidesz and Jobbik refer to Hungary and the Hungarian people interchangeably as the protagonist of the story. The country and the people are inseparable in their rhetoric, and if one languishes, the other suffers also. Conversely, if the country performs well, the Hungarian people benefit. The storytellers who give the speeches adopt different approaches. In the Fidesz narrative, the storyteller motivates the audience to change their views of Trianon and contributes to the collective endeavour of holding the nation together regardless of their citizenship. 'By combining the efforts of successive generations and people beyond the borders, Hungarians succeed but only if we act together' (Kövér, 2016). In the Jobbik narrative, the storytellers want to convince the audience to recognise the Trianon trauma and grieve collectively: 'Again, we are here to remember together' (Zagyva 2015).

The nature of the protagonists also differs significantly. Fidesz/KDNP asserts that the protagonist is a complex and round character who can learn, grow, and deteriorate throughout the course of the story. In contrast, Jobbik describes a static figure whose character does not change over the time. The story begins and ends with a grieving and resentful protagonist.

**Antagonists.** In Hungary, Fidesz and Jobbik agree on defining three types of antagonist in the narratives. First, a collective inferior character that consists of neighbouring countries, particularly Slovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, who are jealous of the Hungarians and secretly join forces to defeat them. Second, a collective god-like omniscient superior, the European power holders, who consciously manipulate characters and events. Third, members of the Hungarian elite who weaken the country internally, acting against the interests of the protagonists. The antagonists are flat characters and there are no details provided which would introduce a degree of nuance to their motivations, intentions or interests. Moreover, they do not change throughout the story (Szávay 2018). 'It is not acceptable that the European leaders and the heads of the neighbouring countries still say nothing about the historical injustice that happened. It happened and the Hungarians should get over it.' (Lázár 2017). Similar ideas were repeated next year: 'One third of the Hungarian population become the subject of their enemies who are still hostile towards Hungarians'. (Szávay 2018)

The speeches also hint that all characters collaborate to harm the protagonist. Hungary's misfortunes occurred because of an international conspiracy against the victims. The conspiracy continues, with internal and external forces working together to weaken and suppress Hungary and its people (Orbán 2019). Hungary and Hungarians accordingly have no 'true friends' or 'reliable allies' in international politics. If the protagonist, Hungary, displays weakness, the 'seemingly friendly actors will turn against' (Szávay 2018) them. The strong focus on depicting the antagonists resonates effectively with the permanent construction of the enemies on the political right in Hungary. The narratives in relation to the Day of National Unity reveal that the topoi of internal and external forces collaborating to ruin Hungary, which had previously flourished only on the far right have also appeared in the rhetoric of Fidesz/KDNP as well. This is one example of the considerable impact Jobbik had on Fidesz during that time (see also Bíró-Nagy, 2022).

## Discussion and conclusions

Collective memory is not based on the mechanical retrieval of information but is the process of constructing activities in service of the specific needs of the present (Schwartz 1982, 374). The analysed narratives regarding the past in Poland and Hungary fulfilled two preeminent functions. First, the narratives were used to legitimise incumbent political parties. In Poland, PiS used Independence Days to construct a historical analogy between dramatic episodes in Polish history and contemporary Poland. The image of a weak state with its sovereignty threatened by the UE and several individual European states was used to justify the radical changes introduced in Poland after

2015. The narrative was also employed to reject the internal and international criticism of these policies as violating principles of liberal democracy and the rule of law. Consequently, the late L. Kaczyński, former PiS politician and president of Poland, was juxtaposed with J. Piłsudski to symbolise equivalence between the normative ideas of PiS and the political aims of independent Poland's founding fathers. In Hungary, Fidesz used the Day of National Unity as an occasion to reappraise the past, provide comfort, boost national pride and strengthen the people's loyalty to the Hungarian state. The narrative emphasises that the Hungarian state is an administrative body or service-provider for the Hungarian people, safeguarding the nation's historical heritage and well-being.

Second, the radical right in both countries transformed the national days into occasions for mobilising supporters through references to status anxieties, fear and the constructions of various national enemies. In Poland, all the radical right leaders spoke of the necessity to fight for independence from national and international elites. In Hungary, Trianon was used as a metaphor for the ruination of Hungary, fostering the discourse of self-victimisation in politics. The list of enemies in Hungary is longer limited to the EU alone but also encompasses internal foes and neighbouring countries.

Third, all the radical-right actors in both countries offered narratives referring to most dramatic events in the past that led to an unjustified loss of status and projected the consequences of such disasters onto current situations. Their functions are determined by the institutional status of the political actors. In case of the oppositional actors, the emphasis placed on past suffering allows them to hyperbolise and dramatise the negative aspects of the *status quo*, blame governing elites and mobilise supporters. In the case of PiS and Fidesz, the emphasis allows them not only to create a feeling of unity between unjustly treated people, but also to enhance incumbents credibility as the only ones concerned with and able to restore the status of great nation.

The construction of commemorative narratives involves the selection of specific events and characters. In Poland, the catalogue of events and characters is much broader than in Hungarian speeches, which focus mainly on Trianon and its consequences. However, there are significant differences between the narratives studied. PiS's discourse focuses on the restoration of independence, culminating in the electoral victory of Kaczyński's party. Contrary to expectations, the oppositional radical right's narrative only fleetingly refers to independence, focusing instead on events and historical actors that emphasise the intimate relationship between Polishness and Catholicism, militant heroism and Polish victimhood. Notably, the speeches reflect a narrative competition between radical right-wing actors over the same narrative themes, rather than a mnemonic struggle. In other words, the dynamics of the relationship between the narratives of incumbent and oppositional radical right actors strengthens national populist and exclusionary discourses in both countries. In their struggle to secure support from the same electoral segments, the actors from both Poland and Hungary are contributing to the hegemony of the self-victimising, religious, exclusionary and populist discourses. For example, PiS attempts to capture crucial elements of the radical right, including references to both J. Piłsudski and R. Dmowski, by emphasising the significance of religion to national identity, the victimhood status of Poland and its messianic mission in Europe. Accommodating the oppositional radical right wing agenda's characters and issues then allows PiS to present itself as covering virtually the entire political spectrum from the moderate to the radical right.

Moreover, the structure of the commemorative narratives differs between the two political actors in the countries under consideration. In Poland, the PiS narrative includes all the typical structural elements. However, the conflict, climax and resolution are introduced twice to emphasise the dramatic turns in Polish history, stress the unstable character of sovereignty and maintain the ambiguous assessment of the post-1989 reality. Furthermore, the narrative presents history in a teleological manner, leading to the truly independent state being one governed by PiS. In Hungary, the Fidesz/KDNP narrative commemorates the historical losses of Hungary, reframes the meaning of the past trauma from sadness to pride and propagates the spiritual cohesion between

Hungarians in and beyond the modern Hungarian state. Contrary to the elaborated narratives of the incumbents, the oppositional radical right's stories are more concise, omitting several structural elements, alluding to militant aspects of national myths, offering a sense of community and promulgating victimhood. This ambiguous and general narrative style serves to engage and mobilise the listeners and broaden the target audience, a function particularly crucial for the oppositional actors (Polletta and Gardner 2015, 537). Characteristically, in the period under consideration one can notice a clear stability in the content and structure of the speeches. The passage of time does not significantly prompt important changes in the speeches' basic narrative building blocks, which confirms the highly ritualistic character of this genre.

The elements of populist communication articulated in conjunction with nationalism constitute a significant aspect of all the narratives under scrutiny. Of particular significance are references to the people using ethno-cultural and exclusionary terms. Although the people are praised and credited with positive traits or represented as deserving a distinguished position, they are more frequently presented as victims of international enemies, including European elites or domestic, cultural and political elites. The victimhood status allows political actors to represent themselves as advocates of the people and legitimises their claims (Cranmer 2011). Moreover, victimhood is used to boost national pride and define the current situation in dramatic terms through analogical reasoning. Despite the abundance of references to elites, the narratives do not divulge their specific characteristics and motivations. They are flat characters, represented as driven by self-interest and negative attitudes or contempt towards the ordinary people. Although the division between the people and the treacherous elites is present in all the narratives, the oppositional radical right, particularly in Poland, elevates it to an ultimate moral struggle between good and evil. The radical right's nativism in both countries also entails excluding horizontal others (i.e. other states, Muslims, cultural Marxists), who are presented as eternal enemies. This strengthens the mobilisational tones of the narratives.

Finally, this study has limitations that future research might address. First, it focuses on political discourse alone. It would be insightful to learn how, in the polarised media systems of Poland and Hungary, the politicians' narratives are recontextualised by other channels of communication. Second, this study focuses on right-wing actors. Future research could broaden the scope by including the entire political spectrum which would assist in determining the extent to which other agents employ populist communication strategies and whether and how they are articulated alongside other elements of national political cultures.

## Note

1. On 2014 PiS was still in the opposition. Its status changed after October 2015 parliamentary elections when the party won majority of seats in Sejm (the lower chamber of Polish parliament) and subsequently created the United Right coalition government.

## Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 822590 (Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe).

The data collection and analysis on Hungary was also supported by National Research Development and Innovation Office under agreement No. 131990 (Political Communication in the Age of Expressivity).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).



## Funding

This article has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822590. Any dissemination of results here presented reflects only the authors' view. The Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

## References

- Andruszkiewicz, A. 2015. Przemówienie Na Marszu Niepodległości 2015 [Speech at the 2015 Independence March] accessed 11 December 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bOJLnMwGNU>
- Bąkiewicz, R. 2019. "Przemówienie na Marszu Niepodległości 2019", accessed 20 December 2020. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fa4rmJ\\_ccsY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fa4rmJ_ccsY)
- Bazeley, P. 2013. *Qualitative Data Analysis. Practical Strategies*. London: Sage.
- Beckwith, K. 2015. "Narratives of Defeat: Explaining the Effects of Loss in Social Movements." *The Journal of Politics* 77 (1): 2–13. doi:10.1086/678531.
- Benazzo, S. 2017. "Not All the past Needs to Be Used: Features of Fidesz's Politics of Memory." *Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics* 11 (2): 198–221. doi:10.1515/jnmlp-2017-0009.
- Bernhard, M., and J. Kubik. 2014. "A Theory of the Politics of Memory." In *In Twenty Years after Communism. The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*, edited by M. Bernhard and J. Kubik, 7–34. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Betz, H.-G. 2019. "Facets of Nativism: A Heuristic Exploration." *Patterns of Prejudice* 53 (2): 111–135. doi:10.1080/0031322X.2019.1572276.
- Bíró-Nagy, A. 2022. "Orbán's Political Jackpot: Migration and the Hungarian Electorate." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48 (2): 405–424. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2020.1853905.
- Bischoping, K., and A. Gazso. 2016. *Analyzing Talk in the Social Sciences: Narrative, Conversation & Discourse Strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bozóki, A. 2016 "Nationalism and Hegemony: Symbolic Politics and Colonization of Culture in Hungary." In *Twenty-Four Sides of a Post-Communist Mafia State* edited by Magyar, B. and Vásárhelyi, J. Budapest - New York: Central European University Press.
- Bull A Cento and Hansen H Lauge. (2016). On agonistic memory. *Memory Studies*, 9(4), 390–404. doi:10.1177/1750698015615935
- Christie, N., and 1986 "The Ideal Victim" In *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy* edited by E. A. Fattah, 17–30. London: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1007/978-1-349-08305-3\_2
- Cranmer, M. 2011. "Populist Communication and Publicity: An Empirical Study of Contextual Differences in Switzerland Populist Communication and Publicity." *Swiss Political Science Review* 17 (3): 286–307. doi:10.1111/j.1662-6370.2011.02019.x.
- De Vreese, C., F. Esser, T. Aalberg, C. Reinemann, and J. Stanyer. 2018. "Populism as an Expression of Political Communication Content and Style: A New Perspective." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 23 (4): 423–438. doi:10.1177/1940161218790035.
- Dorosz, T. 2016. "Każdego dnia musimy walczyć o Wielką Polskę" [Every day we must fight for the Greatness of Poland] Accessed 15 October 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWslJh7yIn0>
- Dorosz, T. 2017. "Nie Ma Miejsca W Polskiej Przestrzeni Publicznej Dla Zdrajców Ojczyzny" [There Is No Place in the Public Sphere for the Traitors of the Fatherland] Accessed 15 October 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1585069128195149>
- Drinóczi, T., and A. Bień-Kacała. 2019. "Illiberal Constitutionalism: The Case of Hungary and Poland." *German Law Journal* 20 (8): 1140–1166. doi:10.1017/glj.2019.83.
- Duda, A. 2018. "Jestem Przekonany, Że Pod białą-czerwoną Sztandarem Jest Miejsce Dla Każdego z Nas" [I Am Convinced that under the red-and-white Banner There Is Room for Each and Every One of Us]. accessed 20 December 2020. <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/wystapienia/art,571,jestem-przekonany-ze-pod-bialo-czerwonym-sztandarem-jest-miejsce-dla-kazdego-z-nas.html>
- Dzierżawski, M. 2014. "Przemówienia po Marszu Niepodległości [Speeches after the Independence March]" Accessed 20 October 2020. <https://www.deepl.com/translator#pl/en/Przemówienia%20po%20Marszu%20Niepodległości%202014>
- Eyerman, R. 2004. "The past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory." *Acta Sociologica* 47 (2): 159–169. doi:10.1177/0001699304043853.
- Feischmidt, M. 2020. "Memory-Politics and Neonationalism: Trianon as Mythomoteur." *Nationalities Papers* 48 (1): 130–143. doi:10.1017/nps.2018.72..
- Freistein, K., and F. Gädinger. 2020. "Populist Stories of Honest Men and Proud Mothers: A Visual Narrative Analysis." *Review of International Studies* 46 (2): 217–236. doi:10.1017/S0260210519000421.

- Ghilani, D., O. Luminet, H.-P. Erb, C. Flassbeck, V. Rosoux, I. Tames, and O. Klein. 2017. "Looking Forward to the Past: An Interdisciplinary Discussion on the Use of Historical Analogies and Their Effects." *Memory Studies* 10 (3): 274–285. doi:10.1177/1750698017701609.
- Golec de Zavala, A., K. Dyduch-Hazar, and D. Lantos. 2019. "Collective Narcissism: Political Consequences of Investing Self-Worth in the Ingroup's Image." *Political Psychology* 40 (1): 37–74. doi:10.1111/pops.12569.
- Golec de Zavala, A., and O. Keenan. 2021. "Collective Narcissism as a Framework for Understanding Populism." *Journal of Theoretical Social Psychology* 5 (2): 56–64. doi:10.1002/jts5.69.
- Hawkins, K. A., and C. Rovira Kaltwasser. 2017. "The Ideational Approach to Populism." *Latin American Research Review* 52 (4): 513–528. doi:10.25222/larr.85.
- Homolar, A., and G. Löflmann. 2021. "Populism and the Affective Politics of Humiliation Narratives." *Global Studies Quarterly* 1 (1). doi:10.1093/isagsq/ksab002.
- Hyttinen, A., and L. Näre. 2017. "'Symbolic and Ritual Enactments of Nationalism – A Visual Study of Jobbik's Gatherings during Hungarian National Day Commemorations.'" *Visual Studies* 32 (3): 236–250. doi:10.1080/1472586X.2017.1358104.
- Kaczyński, J. 2014. "Przemówienie Jarosława Kaczyńskiego w Narodowe Święto Niepodległości 2015 [Jarosław Kaczyński's speech on National Independence Day 2015]" accessed 10 October 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjIURr0VnYc>
- Kaczyński, J. 2015. "Przemówienie Jarosława Kaczyńskiego w Narodowe Święto Niepodległości 2015 [Jarosław Kaczyński's speech on National Independence Day 2015]" accessed 10 October 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjIURr0VnY>
- Kaczyński, J. 2016. "Przemówienie Jarosława Kaczyńskiego w Krakowie w dniu Święta Niepodległości [Jarosław Kaczyński's speech in Kraków on Independence Day]" Accessed 20 October 2020. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knbjL4\\_8msE&t=43s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knbjL4_8msE&t=43s)
- Kaczyński, J. 2017. "Wystąpienie Prezesa PiS W Krakowie Z Okazji Narodowego Święta Niepodległości [Address by the President of the Law and Justice Party in Cracow on the Occasion of National Independence Day]" Accessed 20 October 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flZvNDIP4HQ>
- Kaczyński, J. 2019. "Przemówienie Jarosława Kaczyńskiego 10 listopada 2019 [Jarosław Kaczyński's speech - 10 November 2019]" Accessed 10 October 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCxwkXxKKll>
- Kaczyński, J. 2008. "Na Prawo Od Nas Tylko Ściana [Just a Wall to the Right of Us]." *Rzeczpospolita* 20 November. Accessed 15 December 2020. <https://www.rp.pl/wydarzenia/art15931211-na-prawo-od-nas-tylko-sciana>
- Khoury, N. 2018. "Plotting Stories after War: Toward a Methodology for Negotiating Identity." *European Journal of International Relations* 24 (2): 367–390. doi:10.1177/1354066117711743.
- Korycki, K. 2017. "Memory, Party Politics, and Post-Transition Space: The Case of Poland." *East European Politics and Societies* 31 (3): 518–544. doi:10.1177/0888325417700263.
- Kotwas, M., and J. Kubik. 2019. "Symbolic Thickening of Public Culture and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Poland." *East European Politics and Societies* 33 (2): 435–471. doi:10.1177/0888325419826691.
- Kovács, B. 2014. "Trianon Nem Csak a Múlt, Hanem a Jelen Nehézsége Is' [Trianon Is Not Only Our Past, but a Burden of Today as Well]" Accessed 20 October 2020. <https://nemzeti.net/kovacs-bela-trianon-trianonnemcsakaamultmult-hanemaajelenjelenneheszegeis2125145.html2125145.html>
- Kövé, L. 2016. "A legmostohabb trianoni sors a kárpátaljai magyarságnak jutott" [The Hungarians in Carpathia had the worst fate.] Accessed on 10 October 2020 <https://ma7.sk/kozelet/kover-laszlo-a-legmostohabb-trianoni-sors-a-karpataljai-magyarsagnak-jutott>
- Kwiatkowski, P. T. 2018. *Odzyskiwanie niepodległości w polskiej pamięci zbiorowej [Restoration of independence in the Polish collective memory]*. Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury.
- Laclau, E. 2005. "Populism: What's in a Name?" In *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, edited by F. Panizza, 32–49. London: Verso.
- Lähdesmäki, T. 2017. "Narrativity and Intertextuality in the Making of a Shared European Memory." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 25 (1): 57–72. doi:10.1080/14782804.2016.1159544.
- Lázár, J. 2017. "'Miniszterelnökséget vezető miniszter beszéde – Szarvas [The speech of the Minister of Prime Minister's Office in Szarvas]" Accessed 8 October 2020. <https://www.lazarjanos.hu/>
- MacMillan, C. 2018. "Reversing the Myth? Dystopian Narratives of the EU in UKIP and Front National Discourse." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 26 (1): 117–132. doi:10.1080/14782804.2017.1304900.
- Mládková L. 2013. "Leadership and Storytelling." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 75: 83–90. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.04.010
- Mock, S. 2012. *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139004022.
- Moffitt, B. 2016. *The Global Rise of Populism. Performance, Political Style and Representation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Mudde, C. 2007. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Noor, M., J. R. Vollhardt, S. Mari, A. Nadler, A. McNeill, S. Pehrson, and C. Stevenson. 2017. "The Rhetorical Complexity of Competitive and Common Victimhood in Conversational Discourse: The Rhetorical Complexity of Victimhood." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 47 (2): 167–179. doi:10.1002/ejsp.2255.
- Orbán, V. 2019. "A miniszterelnök beszéde a nemzeti összetartozás napján [The speech of the Prime Minister]". Accessed 20 November 2020. <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-beszede-a-nemzeti-osszetartozas-napjan/>
- Papadakis, Y. 2003. "Nation, Narrative and Commemoration: Political Ritual in Divided Cyprus." *History and Anthropology* 14 (3): 253–270. doi:10.1080/0275720032000136642.
- Polletta, F., P. Ching, B. Chen, B. Gardner, and A. Motes. 2011. "The Sociology of Storytelling." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37 (1): 109–130. doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-081309-150106.
- Polletta, F., and B. G. Gardiner. 2015. "Narrative and Social Movements." In *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, edited by D. Della Porta and M. Diani, 534–548. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199678402.001.0001.
- Rosoux, V. 2017. "Reconciliation Narrative: Scope and Limits of the Pax Europeana." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 25 (3): 325–339. doi:10.1080/14782804.2017.1351929.
- Sata, R., and I. P. Karolewski. 2020. "Caesarean Politics in Hungary and Poland." *East European Politics* 36 (2): 206–225. doi:10.1080/21599165.2019.1703694.
- Schwartz, B. 1982. "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory." *Social Forces* 61 (2): 374–402. doi:10.2307/2578232.
- Semjén, Z. 2014. "A Magyar Nemzet Büszke Lehet Arra, Hogy Túlélte Trianont [The Hungarian Nation Should Feel Pride after Surviving Trianon]" Accessed 15 November 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R31aRRsMXDw>
- Semjén, Z. 2015. "Egyetlen nemzetrészt sem adunk fel' [We shall not give up any of our fellow Hungarians]". Accessed 15 November 2020. <https://hirado.hu/2015/06/04/semjen-egyetlen-nemzetreszt-sem-adunk-fel/>
- Semjén, Z. 2018. "Túlélünk, Itt Vagyunk! [We Survived, We are Still Here]". Accessed 15 November 2020. <https://www.semjenzolt.hu/2018/06/tuleltuk-itt-vagyunk/>
- Shenhav, S. R. 2005. "Thin and Thick Narrative Analysis: On the Question of Defining and Analyzing Political Narratives." *Narrative Inquiry* 15 (1): 75–99. doi:10.1075/ni.15.1.05she.
- Smeekes, A., T. Wildschut, and C. Sedikides. 2021. "Longing for the "Good Old Days" of Our Country: National Nostalgia as a New master-frame of Populist Radical Right Parties." *Journal of Theoretical Social Psychology* 5 (2): 90–102. doi:10.1002/jts5.78.
- Szávay, I. 2018. "A Külhoni Magyar Közösségek Autonómiáját Nekünk Kell Kiharcolni' [It Is Our Task to Fight for the Autonomy of the Hungarian Communities]". Accessed 15 October 2020. [https://alfahir.hu/2018/06/04/trianon\\_bekediktatum\\_budapest\\_szavay\\_istvan\\_baucsek\\_rajmund\\_sneider\\_tamas\\_onrendelkezes](https://alfahir.hu/2018/06/04/trianon_bekediktatum_budapest_szavay_istvan_baucsek_rajmund_sneider_tamas_onrendelkezes)
- Tilly, C. 2003. "Political Identities in Changing Politics." *Social Research* 70 (2): 605–620. doi:10.1353/sor.2003.0021.
- Toroczkai, L. 2017. "Mi vagyunk Európa utolsó ellenállói! [We are the last resistants in Europe]". Accessed 15 November 2020. [https://alfahir.hu/2017/06/04/hvim\\_trianon\\_toroczkai\\_laszlo\\_incze\\_bela\\_zagyva\\_gyorgy\\_gyula](https://alfahir.hu/2017/06/04/hvim_trianon_toroczkai_laszlo_incze_bela_zagyva_gyorgy_gyula)
- Van Leeuwen, T. 2008. *Discourse and Practice. New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Varga M and Buzogány A. 2021. "The Foreign Policy of Populists in Power: Contesting Liberalism in Poland and Hungary." *Geopolitics* 26 (5): 1442–1463. doi:10.1080/14650045.2020.1734564
- Vermeers, P. 2019. "Victimhood as Victory: The Role of Memory Politics in the Process of De-Europeanisation in East-Central Europe." *Global Discourse* 9 (1): 113–130. doi:10.1332/204378918X15453934506003.
- Vona, G. 2016. "Trianon Egy Próbatétel' [Trianon Is a Major Test for Hungarians]". Accessed 15 November 2020. <https://hirado.hu/2016/06/04/vona-gabor-trianon-egy-probatetel/>
- Wertsch, J. V., and H. L. I. I. Roediger. 2008. "Conceptual Foundations and Theoretical Approaches." *Memory.* 'Collective Memory' 16 (3): 318–326. doi:10.1080/09658210701801434.
- Wigren, J. 1994. "Narrative Completion in the Treatment of Trauma." *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 31 (3): 415–423. doi:10.1037/0033-3204.31.3.415.
- Winnicki, R. 2018. "Przemówienie podczas Marszu Niepodległości 2018 [Speech during the Independence March 2018]" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTNXn\\_n8pqq&t=18s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTNXn_n8pqq&t=18s) Accessed 7 November 2020.
- Wodak, R. 2015. *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London: Sage.
- Zagyva, G. 2015. "Közeleg Az Idő, Hogy Romániát Is Fel Lehet Darabolni' [The Time Is Coming that It Will Be Possible to Chop up Romania]" Accessed 1 November 2020. [https://alfahir.hu/kozeleg\\_az\\_ido\\_hogy\\_romaniat\\_is\\_fel\\_lehet\\_darabolni](https://alfahir.hu/kozeleg_az_ido_hogy_romaniat_is_fel_lehet_darabolni)
- Zerubavel, E. 2012. *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zubrzycki, G. 2013. "Polish Mythology and the Traps of Messianic Martyrology." In *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents*, edited by G. Bouchard, 110–132. New York: Routledge.