

**“DEMOGRAPHY MAKES HISTORY”:
DISCOURSES OF GENDER AND NATION IN
VIKTOR ORBÁN’S POLITICAL SPEECHES
BETWEEN 2015–2018**

By

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Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to contribute to the existing scholarship on contemporary Hungarian anti-genderism, which examines how and why “gender” is targeted by political actors; by analysing discourses on gender within the framework of nationalism. Therefore, it is an analysis of how, in contemporary Hungarian politics, the conception of the nation is gendered, and how reproduction is conceptualised within the nation; seeking an answer to the question, how exactly does gender figure in Orbán’s speeches? This is achieved through an analysis of Viktor Orbán’s political speeches and radio interviews made between 2015–2018, using the method of critical discourse analysis as outlined by Fairclough (2003). Additionally, since there has not been an adequate study of how contemporary anti-genderism draws on earlier discourses on reproduction, the analysis is then put into the context of the historical development of Hungarian family policies and the surrounding discourses of reproduction, demography, and the nation, from the state socialist welfare system of the 1960s to Fidesz-KDNP’s family policies in the 2010s. The findings of the research are the following: in this time period, Orbán almost exclusively talks about gender when he talks about the family; which is constructed as fundamental for the nation through its assumed role in reproduction. The nation itself is represented in a highly militarised way, as a unified actor in social processes, which are constructed as zero-sum conflicts. Demography plays a central role in winning or losing; therefore, childrearing is constructed as a tool to “make history.” These representations are found to resemble longstanding nationalist discourses which conceptualise the nation’s survival as dependent on proper reproduction, and thus on heteropatriarchal and reproductive families, and the subordination of women’s various positions in *society* (e.g. women as citizens) to their reproductive capacity in the *nation*.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 25,446 words

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Signed _____ Anna Azarova _____

(Signature appears on the hard copy submitted to the library)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In his first interview on the national radio channel Kossuth Rádió after Fidesz-KDNP's election victory on 8 April 2018, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán proclaimed that he wants to have a “comprehensive deal” with women for the next thirty years, explaining that it is important to know women's opinion – because childrearing, although a personal issue, is at the same time the most important issue for the national community (Orbán 2018). Shortly after the interview, the government announced the latest in its series of National Consultations: a consultation on demography and childrearing, to be sent out to every citizen this autumn.¹ Although the consultation questionnaires will be addressed to everyone, Orbán's interview announcement nevertheless implies that for him, it is solely women who are responsible for having and raising children; and that childbirth is primarily as a contribution to the nation. A year earlier, in spring 2017, the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest announced the launch of a Gender Studies master's program. The announcement was followed by a fierce popular outcry, culminating in then-minister for Human Capacities Zoltán Balog's announcement of the launch of a counter-program at the Budapest Corvinus University, in “family studies” (Balog 2017). Although the opposition of gender and family in popular discourse had been increasingly common in the preceding several years, Balog's announcement made the connection explicit at governmental level: that “gender” and “family” are closely connected and perceived as dichotomously opposed.

These events are part of a longer phenomenon in Hungary. Since taking office in 2010, the government has used increasingly nationalist–conservative rhetoric to introduce its policies, and “gender” has been a consistent target. Usually referred to as “gender-ideology,” it has been

¹ See more: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20180605_Nyugi_a_nagypapa_is_konzultalhat_majd_a_gyerekvallalasrol

connected it with perceived external entities, such as “liberalism,” “Brussels,” “migrants,” etc. (Semjén 2017), and blamed for a variety of social ills.

Such targeting and vilifying of “gender-ideology” has been a relatively new phenomenon throughout Europe and beyond, and scholarly attention has followed its development (see e.g. Köttig, Bitzan, and Pető 2016; Kuhar and Paternotte 2017). In the Central Eastern European context, the dominant scholarly framework to analyse this phenomenon has been organised around the concept of gender as a “symbolic glue” (e.g. Kováts and Põim 2015; Kováts and Pető 2016; Grzebalska and Pető 2018). Pinpointing and calling the phenomenon “anti-genderism,” the authors argue that “gender” is deployed to address issues in society, where progressive politics have failed (see e.g. Grzebalska and Pető 2018), thus enabling anti-democratic political actors to undermine democratic institutions.

This framework’s valuable contribution has been the pinpointing and the naming of this novel phenomenon, enabling its further scholarly analysis. At the same time, the aim of the framework is to analyse how anti-genderism develops and how it is facilitated internationally; therefore it is not easily available to apply for an analysis into the specific national contexts – and longstanding historical regularities patterns of gendered representations comparable to anti-genderism are not taken into consideration. It does not examine why gender in particular is targeted by these anti-democratic political actors; what historical socio-political discourses it mobilises or embeds into. As Farris argues, to understand better both how “historical regularities” of gendered representation develop, as well as what is new about them, theories of nationalism are particularly appropriate (2017, 58). There has been, however, no adequate study of how contemporary anti-genderism draws on earlier discourses on reproduction.

This thesis, therefore, conducts a close examination of how ideas of gender are deployed in Viktor Orbán’s political speeches between 2015 and 2018, primarily drawing on theories of

gendered nationalism. As numerous feminist scholars have argued, though nationalisms claim to be communities of unity and equality, they obscure internal inequalities – of class, ethnicity, and in this case, particularly of gender – either by simply taking them for granted (Peterson 1999, 39), or by deliberately silencing them (McClintock 1993). In my analysis, therefore, I examine closely the connections made between constructions of nation and gender, and how the two are constitutive of each other. I draw parallels between Orbán’s contemporary gendered discourse and longstanding discourses on reproduction and its position within the nation from state socialism till the 2010s – and demonstrate how the family has been central to demographic anxieties (e.g. death of the nation) in the Hungarian national context.

The main questions of my thesis are, how exactly does gender figure in Orbán’s speeches? What kind of gender constructions, relations, roles does Orbán envision as desirable? What kind of relationship between the nation and gender does Orbán construct in his speeches? How does his conception of gender and the nation form a continuity or discontinuity with previous discourses on gender and nation? Although Orbán had rarely made sharp comments on “gender-ideology,” due to his central position of immense power and influence within the government as well as the Fidesz-KDNP parliamentary party group (Körösenyi and Patkós 2015; Bozóki 2015b; Illés et al. 2017), his statements on gender cannot be considered as separate from the wider debates on “gender-ideology.” In fact, it is noteworthy that Orbán addresses “gender” so rarely, suggesting that a thorough analysis of his political communication is necessary.

I show that, in this time period, Orbán almost exclusively talks about gender when he talks about the family, and the family’s fundamental significance for reproduction and the nation. In his rhetoric, Orbán constructs politics and social processes as militarised zero-sum conflicts: the nation is represented as one unified body, being at war with immigration, but also with

“liberalism,” and the sinking birth rates are seen as endangering the survival of the nation itself. Within this depiction of the militarised nation, reproduction plays a central role: demography, as Orbán states, makes history. This image of a gendered nationalism is in many respects an echo of older discourses, established during state socialism, and in the 1990s. I argue that this contemporary wave of anti-genderism is embedded within a much more longstanding Hungarian historical discourse which nationalises reproduction, and constructs women as primarily mothers.

I first provide an overview of the government’s main anti-democratic measures since 2010 (section 2.1), before introducing the analytical frameworks used to analyse the Fidesz-KDNP regime since 2010: section 2.2 discusses populism, the most common scholarly framework of analysis. I show how theories of populism do not pay sufficient attention to the regime’s gendered dimensions – therefore, section 2.3 discusses the framework of gender as symbolic glue, the most prominent framework to analyse anti-genderism, which, it claims, is a central aspect of Hungary’s anti-democratic transformation. Chapter 4 presents my analysis of Orbán’s speeches; while Chapter 5 is an overview and synthesis of scholarly work on Hungarian family policies since the 1960s and the surrounding discourses of reproduction and the nation – together, these two chapters form the core of my argument: that the representations of gender Orbán constructs now have a long history in Hungarian nationalism. The concluding chapter summarises the findings and limitations of the thesis, as well as gives an outlook to wider considering its implications.

Chapter 2: The Fidesz-KDNP regime 2010–2018

To contextualise and situate my analysis, I start with a brief overview of key developments in the Hungarian political regime since Fidesz-KDNP took office in 2010, with an emphasis on measures affecting social policy directly – social policy, and especially family policy, however, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. This is followed by a review of two bodies of literature: first, I discuss the dominant analytic framework to analyse this regime – populism – before arguing that it is insufficient to analyse the regime; especially because it does not pay attention to its gendered dimensions. I argue theories of nationalism – largely marginalised in populism scholarship – provide a more complete understanding. In section 2.3, therefore, I discuss a particular aspect of the Fidesz-KDNP regime, what has been academically discussed as “anti-genderism.” I review previous literature on this phenomenon, arguing that it, too, is inadequate to fully explain the gendered dimension of Fidesz-KDNP’s nationalist agenda. This review will thus serve as the basis of and transition to Chapter 3, where I present my analysis of Orbán’s speeches between 2015 and 2018, arguing that his constructions of gender are subordinated to his image of the nation, which, in turn, is heavily gendered.

2.1 Overview

After assuming office in 2010, the Fidesz-KDNP government under the leadership of Viktor Orbán carried out a series of anti-democratic measures, described as the “autocratic turn” (Bozóki 2015a, 3), or a transformation to, first, a “degraded democracy,” and then to a “non-democratic regime” (Bozóki and Hegedűs 2018, 2). Declaring the election results a “revolution,” Orbán announced a “real system change”² (Szikra 2014; Bozóki 2015a) and

² “*Valódi rendszerváltás.*”

referred to Fidesz-KDNP's two-thirds parliamentary majority as a legitimation to carry out broad systemic changes very quickly and practically without parliamentary and social debate.

Procedurally, what has enabled the Fidesz-KDNP parliamentary group to pass new laws so quickly is that the vast majority of proposals are submitted as modifications to already existing laws by individual MPs (Bozóki 2015a), and not as new bill proposals by party groups, which requires lengthy plenary debates. One such proposal was the new constitution, also submitted by an individual Fidesz MP and accepted within a month (Ibid.). In effect since January 2012, renamed as the Fundamental Law, it centres around the key concepts of family, work, nation, and order; marriage is defined as between a man and a woman, life is protected from conception, but the provision on the right to social protection has been removed – for example, homelessness has become criminalised.³ It also blurred the separation of state and church by removing the “idea of a secular state based on a pluralist society” (Szikra 2014, 489), and the role of Christianity in ‘preserving nationhood’ (Ibid.; Fekete 2016) was added explicitly to the passages giving an “increased” role to “religion, traditions, and national values” (Bozóki 2015a, 17).

Second, among its first measures after assuming office, the government swiftly changed the system of media regulation. The newly established National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) was given unprecedented power to “demand data from media providers in ways that directly affect freedom of expression” (Costache and Llorens 2014, 402); while the Media Council, responsible for ensuring the “working of democratic publicity in the media” and the “healthy balance between the interests of the audience and those of the media”⁴ was to be appointed by a parliamentary two-thirds majority,

³ For an overview of the legislative process of rejecting and re-installing the criminalisation, see: <http://humanplatform.hu/wd/a-hajlektalansag-kriminalizacioja-magyarorszagon/>

⁴ <http://english.nmhh.hu/media-council>

practically meaning direct appointment by Fidesz-KDNP. These new regulations meant, among others, very strict punishments for infringements to very vaguely defined media balance values, allowing disproportionate punishments of media outlets for political reasons. On the other hand, the media landscape (both state-owned and private), governed by the Fidesz-KDNP-dominated authorities and largely owned by government-affiliated companies, has become a collection of government mouthpieces that “heavily underrepresented opposition politicians and intellectuals” (Bozóki 2015a, 20).

To ensure a repeat victory in the 2014 elections, Fidesz-KDNP also transformed the electoral system. The majority of newly nominated members of the National Election Commission, responsible for monitoring and ensuring fair and clean elections, were loyal to the government; the second election round was abolished; electoral districts were redrawn to minimise the weight of left-leaning districts; and the system of compensating losing parties with the parliament seats of parties not entering parliament was turned around to compensate the winning parties. All this contributed to a highly disproportionate compensation for the winning parties and no compensation for anyone else (Bozóki 2015a, 20-21). As a result, in the 2014 elections Fidesz-KDNP achieved 39,8% of the party list and 96 out of 106 of individual constituencies, resulting in 133 out of 199 (66,8%) parliamentary seats. In 2018, Fidesz-KDNP achieved 45,2% of the party list and 91 of the 106 individual constituencies, resulting again in 133 out of 199 seats; meaning a two-thirds majority both times.⁵

The Fidesz-KDNP government has also continuously targeted the civil society; specifically, those non-governmental organisations (NGOs) not aligned with its political agenda. In 2014, it began a campaign against progressive NGOs. Ökotárs, the organisation responsible for distributing the EEE Norway Grants was initially accused of misuse of funds

⁵ All results from here: <http://www.valasztas.hu/valasztasok-szavazasok>

for “party-political purposes,”⁶ and embezzlement;⁷ eventually Orbán declared these and similar NGOs to be “foreign-funded political activists” who pose a threat to national security in his 2014 “illiberalism-speech” in the Tusnádfürdő summer camp.⁸ Ökotárs was later occupied and searched by the governmental Control Office responsible for controlling the rightful use of public funds. Eventually, all charges were lifted. However, after several years of NGO harassment, in 2017, the government proposed bill package commonly known as “Stop Soros,” debated in parliament in the first week of June 2018, which criminalises organisations involved in aiding refugees and asylum seekers.⁹

In social policy, the government largely continued in the direction set out during their 1999–2002 term. As their social, and especially family policies will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 4, here I will only mention them briefly, and mainly those measures not discussed later. What is highly relevant for the anti-democratic nature of the Fidesz-KDNP governance is that social policies have generally benefited the well-off. Perhaps the most foundational policy has been the replacement of the progressive tax system with a flat tax rate; although a universal measure, it clearly benefited those with high enough taxable income the most. To balance the resulting budget deficit, the government, in addition to increasing taxes on a few banks and multinational companies, raised sales taxes, also disproportionately affecting the low earners. Although they announced a cut in energy costs (*rezsicsökkentés*) in 2012, this measure also disproportionately benefits high-earners with bigger houses; at the same time, the government started spending drastically less on healthcare and education (Bozóki 2015a, 21)

⁶ The government’s announcement is available here: <http://www.kormany.hu/en/prime-minister-s-office/news/norway-grants-in-hungary-information-note>

⁷ See more: <https://444.hu/2014/08/05/sikkasztas-vadja-miatt-nyomoz-a-rendorseg-a-norveg-civil-penzeket-kezel-okotars-alapitvany-ellen/>

⁸ The speech is available here: http://2010-2015.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/a_munkaalapu_allam_korszaka_kovetkezik

⁹ See more: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/29/hungary-criminalises-migrant-helpers-stop-george-soros-legislation>

– also mostly affecting low earners. What Bozóki refers to as the “rhetoric of national unification” has been closely intertwined with continuous justifications of the sweeping system overhaul and decrease in welfare spending with references to perceived global crises (Szikra 2014). Additionally, the government’s heavily family-centric rhetoric within social issues (Grzebalska and Pető 2018) – with strong emphasis on the vital importance of having children – has been accompanied with the state’s consistent retreat from matters deemed (and reinforced by this same rhetoric) as belonging to the “private” sphere, most notably in the case of care work. The latter has been seen as especially afflicting for women in the lower-earning social groups (Gregor and Kováts 2018).

2.2 The populism framework

The dominant scholarly framework used to analyse the developments under the Fidesz-KDNP government is populism. Although scholars generally agree that “the regime” is “populist,” there is little clarity in the definitions of populism, and how it can be applied to a system of governance. I first introduce how populism has been conceptualised, before turning to how it has been applied to the case of the Fidesz-KDNP governments.¹⁰

As Farris explains, populism can be analysed in two broad ways: either substantively, as politics’ quality content or an ideology; or formalistically, as a form, or a “style” of politics (2017). Generally speaking, the former claims that it is distinguishable from other political ideology by its main tenet, the homogenising and antagonistic dichotomy between the “people” and the “elite,” and the call for politics to be led by the “people’s” “general will” – that is, an absolutising common sense (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017). The latter, in contrast, argues that

¹⁰ Another descriptive concept used relatively often is “illiberalism,” in use after Orbán’s speech in Tusnádfürdő (Baile Tusnad, Romania) in 2014, which announced the establishment of an “illiberal democracy.” Despite the term’s wide use, however, I have not found a delineation for it which would make it a sufficiently *analytical* framework rather than a description – therefore, it will not be discussed in this chapter.

as a form of politics, the dichotomisation between the “people” and the “elite” is applicable to a variety of political movements, parties, or leaders (see more in Farris 2017).

Analyses of the Fidesz-KDNP rule since 2010 as *populist* have presented a mixture of formalistic and substantive arguments – although without clear differentiation. Bozóki’s (2015a) analysis offers a thorough overview of the “autocratic” (2015a, 3) transformation, yet only mentions populism in relation to rhetoric – even though he did not define populism as primarily a political style or form. Another of Bozóki’s analyses concludes that “populism can fit easily both with different political regimes (...) and ideologies” (2015b, 310). In neither article, is it clear whether “populism” is used in the formalistic or substantive way, nor how it can be an analytical framework, or across case studies. Enyedi is much clearer in the differentiation between populism as “rhetoric” and as “ideology”, defining it as the latter (2016, 10). As an “ideology,” populism has features commonly associated with it (see e.g. Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017), such as the dichotomisation of “us” and “them” into “the elites” and “the people,” and a self-representation of “identification” with the latter; a call for more democratic participation and/or a bigger say in political decision-making for the “people”; and a disdain for “organised pluralism.” However, most political, non-rhetorical aspects of the regime are analysed in relation to a populist *rhetoric*: it follows that political measures are “populist” because they are justified by populist rhetoric. Though both Bozóki and Enyedi differentiate to some degree between populist rhetoric and populist “ideology,” it is unclear which their analysis actually refers to, or how a different analytical approach might facilitate the analysis of discourse or for policy content.

This inconsistency is propped up, for both authors, with the use of modifiers around “populism”: it is either antiliberal, nationalist, or paternalist, but the central framework remains populism. By modifying “populism” to, for example, “nationalist populism,” these analyses aim to supplement and amend the shortcomings described above. However, by insisting on the

centrality of populism and supplementarity of other theories, these frameworks do not resolve their primary rhetoric-orientedness. Focusing on populism as rhetoric or “style” (the formalistic approach to populism), as Farris argues, does not sufficiently explain the fundamental underlying understandings of the “us,” the “them,” and the nation (Žižek 2006, cited in Farris 2017). Below, I consider some of these arguments.

Bozóki argues that a specifically nationalist rhetoric is central to Orbán’s rule. More precisely, he describes this rhetoric as essentially populist first, and nationalist second, arguing that “the people” in this rhetoric are constructed on ethnonationalist grounds. According to him, the regime (equated with “Orbán’s policies”) is based on four “pillars”: the centralisation of political power around Orbán, a “rhetoric of national unification,” a change of the elite, and “power politics” (2015a, 13). Although he lists these all, undifferentiated, as populist, there are clearly differences in the degree to which these can be characterised as such, and how. For example, the first, centralisation of power, is related to the erosion of institutional democracy and the “personalisation” of politics around the personality of Orbán himself. The change of political, administrative, economic, and cultural elites is closely connected to this as well; these two are more policy or governance characteristics and describe populism as ideology.

On the other hand, the nationalist rhetoric and the power politics clearly belong to a different category. The “rhetoric of national unification,” according to Bozóki, is based on the underlying “messages” of Orbán’s statements: that both foreign and domestic politics gain meaning through the idea of national unification. This nation is understood ethnically, permitting the inclusion of *határontúli* Hungarians¹¹ into the nation, as well as the implicit exclusion of Roma Hungarians. In foreign policy, the “rhetoric of national unification” provides Orbán’s references to the Trianon Treaty with political context and renders them

¹¹ Ethnic Hungarians living outside the borders of the state, who are citizens of the surrounding states: most often Romania and Slovakia, but also Serbia or Ukraine.

politically legible (2015a, 14). In domestic policy, Bozóki argues, “national unification” means the System of National Cooperation,¹² proclaimed by the government as the new era of governance after their electoral victory in 2010 – described by Bozóki as “a set of unorthodox policies combining statism, economic nationalism, crony protection-ism, and neoliberalism which has emerged as an alternative to liberal democracy” (2015a, 14). Describing Orbán’s “power politics,” Bozóki argues that although there is a seeming contradiction between his populist rhetoric in defence of the Hungarian people from foreign interests and the government’s “attacks” on foreign banks and corporations on the one hand, and the weakening of the social welfare safety net and supporting the wealthy on the other, the two sides come together in the understanding of this regime as a “privatization” of “the state itself” (2015a, 14), resolving the seeming contradiction between nationalisation and privatisation. Therefore, Bozóki’s reliance on nationalism to supplement the framework of populism, to varying degrees in all his four main characteristics of the regime, is apparent.

Similarly Enyedi, who, arguing that although definitions of populism often include a homogenising tendency (both for the “us” and the “them”), acknowledges but excludes this from the properties of populism in his own analysis, because populist leaders do have to make certain statements “differentiating along specific values and interests” (2016, 23). He deepens his analytical framework by making several differentiations within his concept of “paternalistic populism.” First, he argues that Fidesz-KDNP’s populism is characterised by majoritarianism, a combination of étatism and nationalism: that is, a denouncement of individual interests and their subordination to the needs of the nation; this translates into a centralised state infrastructure and the compulsory institutionalisation of nationalist–conservative values, such as the replacement of “denominational neutrality with the inclusion of Christianity into the Fundamental Law as a “force that preserved nationhood” (2016, 11); or the replacement of a

¹² “*Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere*”

schoolbook market where each teacher could choose their own, with a single line of government-approved schoolbooks.¹³

Secondly, Enyedi argues that Fidesz-KDNP's populism is "paternalistic" because although their rhetoric is populist and anti-elitist, their view of the population is elitist (2016, 13). Fidesz-KDNP leaders, he claims, see the people as "gullible" and manipulated, by socialists or liberals, and therefore innocent. Apart from conventional populism's moralising judgement of the elite, paternalistic populism also has a moralising judgement against "the lack of self-discipline in lower classes" (2016, 14). Paternalistic populism thus enables the government to assume the position of "educating and disciplining the citizenry" (2016, 21). As Mudde and Kaltwasser point out, this moralising dimension is what allows the populists, even when already in power, to denounce elites as immoral while presenting their own position as moral and legitimate (2017, 12).

Enyedi's framework is highly useful in comparing how parties and/or governments uniformly described as "populist" differ in crucial aspects of their relations to their polities. However, several elements of his argument are exemplary of the ones listed before: they highlight the necessity of drawing on theories of nationalism in order to understand how differentiations within the population are made and deployed. As McClintock (1993) argues, nationalism is a powerful tool to mobilise for a putative *national* unity while obscuring and naturalising inequalities on other axes, such as gender, class, or ethnicity. Enyedi excludes this property in order to depart from a formalistic definition of populism; but this is precisely how the insistence on populism becomes inadequate. As Farris (2017) argues, a formalistic approach to populism is insufficient to understand how antagonisms are constructed in the identification process: to see better how "differentiation along specific values and interests"

¹³ See more here: <https://mno.hu/hetvegimagazin/mit-hozott-az-allamositott-tankonyvpiac-1381377>

(Enyedi 2016, 23) is made, or how the “people,” the “we,” is constructed, more emphasis on theories of nationalism is needed. This is especially true in the case of Hungary, since scholars already agree on the nationalist character of the Fidesz-KDNP regime.

Even if we accept that populism is an “ideology,” a quality content rather than merely a form, such analyses of populism nevertheless focus on the populist *elite* – whether a “strongman” leader, a party, or a social movement (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017), and how populism figures in these actors’ political work. With these definitions it is hard to conceptualise a populist audience or population, what “historical regularities” (Farris 2017, 58) populist leaders’ rhetoric taps into. If we characterise a Fidesz-KDNP voter as “populist”, what would we mean? Someone who has been mobilised by the ethnonationalist discourse of Orbán? Even though the *aim* of Orbán’s rhetoric could be to *create* a “populist” audience, such an audience is very difficult to conceptualise within the analytical framework of populism.

Turning to the question of gender – drawing on Farris’ argument that populism is insufficient to explain femonationalism, I argue that theories of populism do not sufficiently explain how “familialism” or “anti-genderism” is mobilised in Hungary. Populism, as framed by Bozóki and Enyedi, has no a longitudinal dimension: it is unhelpful to examine the socio-historical “historical regularities” representations of gender in nationalist–populist regimes draw on – the reason why such representations can be so resonant within a society. Moreover, since in the context of eastern Europe, populism scholarship has paid little attention to the “autocratic turn’s” gendered dimensions, with Farris, I argue that nationalism is a more productive framework for revealing the connections between the Fidesz-KDNP regime’s constructions of gender and the nation.

These theories of populism also neglect the gender dimension: how the “us” and the “them” is gendered. Mention of gender, is confined to references to Fidesz-KDNP’s family

policies, which are discussed in passing, within their social policies, and therefore understood as merely a characteristic of conservatism. As Farris argues, by focusing on the “dichotomisation” of society onto an “us” and a “them” (2017, 63) theories of populism do not explain why the mobilisation of ideas of gender in nationalist rhetoric or policy is successful: for an analysis of their particular configurations, the lens of nationalism (itself heavily gendered) is more suitable.

2.3 Anti-genderism and gender as “symbolic glue”

As Grzebalska and Pető (2018) argue, the gendered dimension has been, in fact, not just an element of the autocratic, “illiberal” transformation in Hungary under Fidesz-KDNP, but central to understanding the regime. The development of the anti-democratic Fidesz-KDNP regime, they claim, is a “deeply gendered political transformation” (2018, 1) and can only be understood fully through an analysis of its constructions of gender relations. Targeting ideas and initiatives associated with gender as “gender-ideology” are all parts of the same phenomenon, named by them elsewhere as “anti-genderism.”

The most prominent recent research analysing contemporary anti-genderism in Hungary (and Central and Eastern Europe in general) is organised around the conceptual framework of “gender as symbolic glue.” This framework emerged in a semi-academic publication in 2015 (Kováts and Põim 2015) and has since gained more scholarly elaboration (Kováts 2017; Pető and Kováts 2017; Grzebalska and Pető 2018). The authors argue that anti-genderism is a movement; that it is a new phenomenon that emerged in the late 2000s. Its attack on “gender” – which encompasses attacks on gender and sexual equality initiatives, educational initiatives both domestic (e.g. an initiative to include questions of gender equality into a school curriculum (Félix 2015, 62)) and international (e.g. Hungary’s refusal to ratify the Istanbul Convention) – is merely the surface. When targeted by political actors, they argue, “gender” functions as a

“symbolic glue”: it represents the aspects of “progressive” politics that are not working, in the general perception of the population. It enables them to gather under one umbrella popular grievances about the perceived failures of the post-state socialist transition to “neoliberalism,” such as the erosion of social welfare or increasing employment (Grzebalska and Pető 2018, 2). Therefore, “gender ideology” or “gender theory” is used to collect everything that is “attributed to the liberal agenda simultaneously with vilifying it within “illiberal politics” (Ibid.); a “crisis” of “liberal democracy” itself (Kováts 2016). In the case of Fidesz-KDNP specifically, by framing “genderism” as imposed on Hungary by external powers such as the European Union, the US, or “foreign-funded NGOs,” the government frames equality politics as such as serving foreign interests and thus being non- or even anti-Hungarian (Ibid., 3-4). In other words, framing “gender” as the key to the failure of “liberalism” can serve as a tool for the Fidesz-KDNP government to establish an “illiberal” regime.

This scholarship and the framework of gender as a “symbolic glue” has been among the first to analytically capture the dynamics of political actors’ targeting of “gender-ideology.” It has successfully identified the novelty of the phenomenon: that, instead of feminism, LGBT people, or reproductive rights, it is now specifically *gender*, as a concept that is targeted and blamed for all society’s ills. In the Hungarian case, it reveals the connections between the rhetorical deployment of “gender” and Fidesz-KDNP’s wider anti-democratic nationalist-conservative politics. It has been especially illuminating in highlighting how anti-genderism is facilitated by international actors worldwide.

However, several issues are left unexplained. First, the authors argue that within these movements and discourses, “gender” is a “metaphor,” a “symbol,” or a “rhetorical tool” (Grzebalska and Pető 2018, 2). This implies that “gender” is used strategically to achieve political aims; but does not clarify why is it specifically gender that is being deployed to do the political work against liberalism – why it is being constructed as dangerous, what is at stake,

and what makes it politically efficacious. As mentioned above, Grzebalska and Pető do argue that families and a very specific gender regime are central to the “illiberal” nationalism of Fidesz-KDNP, but the symbol/metaphor framework still points to a strategic deployment. They only focus on the instrumentalisation of “gender” for other ends, and since none of the four publications mentioned here meaningfully discusses why it is specifically “gender” that is so effective in this symbolic mobilisation, a conclusion is that it is but one possible symbol among the many, since the polity believes (or not) in all of them equally.

Second, the authors do not clarify what “anti-genderism” actually is: though they sporadically list characteristics of the phenomenon, a clear delineation is missing. In the case of Fidesz’s anti-genderism, this is particularly tricky, since in political communication, “gender” may denote multiple things simultaneously, and sometimes a clear meaning is wholly absent – for example, in the speeches quoted in the introduction. Similarly, the authors do not clarify their use of “neoliberalism” as a concept: they make no distinctions between Fidesz’ use of “liberalism” in political rhetoric, and the use of “neoliberalism” in their scholarly analysis. Since Fidesz’s politics have generally been favourable for “neoliberalism” (e.g. supporting foreign multinational companies and weakening workers’ rights,¹⁴ it seems clear that Fidesz targets “liberalism” (a more political concept) when addressing “neoliberalism” (a more economic concept) in order to construct their “illiberalism” with the perks of neoliberalism for the elite, but without the bothersome aspects of liberalism, such as a system of checks and balances and press freedom, or a social welfare safety net. This strategic discrepancy, however, is not differentiated in the “symbolic glue” framework, and is obscured by its own ambiguity.

¹⁴ See for example, <https://444.hu/2017/08/13/ket-ev-alatt-80-milliard-forintos-adokedvezmenyt-adott-a-multiknak-a-kormany>

Third, not only do they not give a clear delineation of what anti-genderism is as a phenomenon, the categories they use to define it are contradictory. In a 2017 comparative anthology, Kováts and Pető, despite arguing the opposite in the three other publications, claim that the Hungarian anti-gender mobilisation is a discourse – and *not* a movement (Pető and Kováts 2017, 117). Throughout the text, they argue where they see the difference between the two; but since in none of the four publications do they delineate nor theorise what they understand movements or discourses to be or why and how this particular theorisation differs from their other ones, it remains unclear how they understand a “movement.” Nevertheless, they list five main reasons why Hungarian anti-genderism is not a movement. The first is that there are no institutionalised gender equality policies on the state level, and therefore there is “nothing one can protest against” (2017, 124). Since there is no representation of gender equality in the government, and since the majority of NGOs working for gender equality had been “eliminated” (Ibid.) or contained, there is also no chance for these policies to be implemented in the future. Secondly, the Catholic Church is much weaker in Hungary both in terms of the number of adherents and its political influence, and thus unable to “facilitate” a movement (Ibid.). Thirdly, due to a rupture in its history, Hungarian conservatism had to “selectively” reinvent its traditions and continuity after state socialism, resulting in closely converging family models between the conservatives and the far right. As a result, the two camps compete for the “same discursive space (...) which makes conservative discourse more susceptible to fundamentalism” (Ibid., 125). And, finally, because of “conflict-avoiding initiatives,” such as particular think-tanks or cultural institutions which invite participants from across the political spectrum, or members of the Hungarian churches open to gender equality both within and outside of the church (Ibid.).

There are several problematic points in this line of argumentation. For example, the authors claim that the low number of practicing Catholics in Hungary is indicative of the Catholic

Church's political weakness, and the reason why it is not "facilitating" a movement (Ibid., 124). On the one hand, it is true that no strong campaign against "gender ideology" has been organised by the Vatican, or the Catholic Church in Hungary. However, it is unclear why particularly the Catholic Church, or even religious Christianity is so necessary for an anti-genderist movement. As Irvine argues, a political mobilisation of conservative morality itself, (without references to civilizational foundations,) is immensely powerful to garner wide-spread support for political action (Irvine 2008, 2). In contemporary Europe, as others have argued, a culturalised, secularised Christianity, posited as the foundation and cornerstone of European civilisation and European identity has been much more powerful than Christianity as an organised religion or even as religious belief itself in mobilising and justifying anti-democratic politics (Brubaker 2017). And when it comes to gender specifically, Gal and Kligman (2000) argue that already by discussing issues related to reproduction as specifically *national*, states foster discourses of state- and national boundaries, which serve to "moralize politics" (2000, 29). Thus, even a public engagement in discussions of reproduction serves to claim moral legitimacy for a political regime. Therefore, an active Catholic Church is not necessary for an anti-gender movement – to invoke "Christianism" (Brubaker 2017, 1199), or morality itself can be very powerful in itself. This is very dominant in Fidesz-KDNP's political communication: in the speeches cited in my introductory paragraphs, references to the Hungarian and even European civilisation as culturally Christian abound. Additionally, as some analyses discussed in the first half of this chapter argue, the way in which the Hungarian nation is constructed in political communication is already closely intertwined with Christianity as mutually inclusive; thus, the nation is already seen as Christian, and proper Christianity is seen as national.

This dichotomisation between movements and discourses is not only unsupported with theoretical justification, it contributes to several contradictions within the framework, making

it difficult to apply in analysis. Although the authors do not clarify what understand under “movement” and “discourse”, some implications do emerge. First of all, Pető and Kováts see two separate spheres: the state and its population – and (social) movements are seen to happen separately from and outside of the state, by the population. They claim that unlike in other countries, in Hungary “anti-gender mobilizations” do not “piggyback on general public discontent with the government” (2017, 124), which implies that there is no (social) movement when the government has allegedly done all the work. This appears to be a binary understanding of power and resistance, in which the state has the former and the polity does the latter: as they write, if there is “nothing to *protest* against,” it cannot be seen as a movement – it is the polity which does the resisting and carries out social movements. On the one hand, Pető and Grzebalska argue that within these movements and discourses, “gender” is used by political actors as a “metaphor,” a “symbol,” or a “rhetorical tool” (2018, 2). This conceptualisation implies that “gender” is used consciously and strategically to achieve political aims, while mobilising certain beliefs which are not necessarily in the interests of the targeted population – much in line with classical social movement scholarship (see e.g. McCarthy and Zald 1977; Cohen and Arato 1992). This scholarship argues that rather than “generalized beliefs (loose ideologies)” (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1214) it is interest which drives people to support or join social movements. Since there are always sufficient problematic issues, disagreements, or conflicts in any given society to feed movements, the success of a movement is highly dependent on its infrastructural organisation and mobilising efficiency. Hence, social conflicts and beliefs about them cannot explain why movement emerge or even succeed – and an actual interest is not necessary for a successful movement. However, even these frameworks see movements within a dichotomous understanding of power, and make it difficult to conceptualise movements with the participation of the state. On the other hand, Pető and Kováts deny that what the Fidesz-KDNP government is doing is a

movement – but since they do not define what it *is*, what does become clear is that it is *not* a movement. This argument, however, contradicts the “symbolic glue” argument, according to which it *is* the general discontent which, mobilised by the government, “piggybacks” on anti-genderism – although it is not directed towards the government, but by the government as well as institutions of the “parallel civil society” (Grzebalska and Pető 2018, 6) supported by the government. This, in turn, brings us back to the previous point: that social movements ought to happen outside of the “state.” In sum, these incompatibilities, highlighting its difficulty to conceptualise movements as something that the state is part of, point to the framework’s contradictory and undertheorised structure.

Considering the authors’ insistence on Hungarian anti-genderism being a discourse, it is also unclear how they conceptualise discourses, apart from that they are not movements: since the argument on the absence of a movement is supported with the absence of institutionalised, anti-governmental, mobilisations, it seems that discourses are seen as disconnected from political action for social change. With these premises, it is difficult to conceptualise a discourse outside of the realm of the political. Especially, considering the political factors Pető and Kováts list at the outset, such as those contributing to the discourse, nevertheless considered not a movement (e.g. the conservative right's conscious (“selective” [2017, 125]) move to the right; and its very tangible political consequences (e.g. the non-ratification of the Istanbul Convention and lax legal approaches to domestic violence); or the numerous non-governmental organisations carrying out anti-genderist initiatives and utilising very similar rhetoric as the official governmental discourse: for example, the “Bring Another Hungarian into the World Movement,” which organises annual conferences on the topics of the survival of the nation, the demographic situation, and “the Hungarian family.”¹⁵ Although this

¹⁵ The movement’s latest media appearance has been a video, in which movement leader Edda Budaházy implores women to give birth – or else, Hungary will become “flooded with African cannibals.” See more here:

movement is associated with the far right, its rhetoric fits smoothly into the Fidesz-KDNP government's rhetoric on the fundamental importance of having children – therefore, the close convergence between the conservative and the far right seems to facilitate rather than preclude the emergence of the movement. In a similar vein, even if there is no realistic chance for the implementation of pro-LGBT policies which could spark a counter-movement, it is unclear why movements cannot be started for imagined goals. On the premises of the “symbolic glue” framework, therefore, conceptualising a discourse outside of the realm of the political seems then to be achievable if by conceptualising the boundary between discourses and movements as between a long-term change in understandings and an institutionalised political initiative for an explicit goal – which is hardly productive for analytical accounts aiming at more than description.

Fourth, and most importantly, Pető, Grzebalska, and Kováts all agree that anti-genderism is a new phenomenon. They trace the emergence of the terms themselves, and the development of the discourse to the late 2000s, early 2010s, both in its national iterations as well as in the movement's transnational influences (e.g. the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church, Kováts 2017). Thus, they frame anti-genderism within the framework of “illiberalism,” as a characteristic of an authoritarian regime's exploitation of neoliberalism's failures (Pető 2015; Kováts 2017). While they do sometimes allude to contemporary anti-genderism's precedents in passing (Pető and Kováts 2017), their assertions that these are very recent phenomena are the dominant argument of this body of work, which might be either a consequence or a cause of the movement's framing within illiberalism and its transnational focus. Since the completion of the latest publication (February 2017), it has become even clearer that Fidesz's vision of the family is crucial to their attack on “gender” – most explicitly in the case of Minister of Human

<https://merce.hu/2018/05/25/afrikai-kannibalok-arasztjak-el-europat-de-ha-szulsz-megallithatod-oket-uzeni-videoban-budahazy-edda/>

Capacities Zoltán Balog's announcement about the launch of a Family Studies program at Budapest Corvinus University in response to the shortly before announced launch of the first Hungarian-language Gender Studies program in Hungary at Eötvös Loránd University in March 2017 (Balog 2017).

I argue that the “traditional,” patriarchal, nationalist family is even more important to Fidesz-KDNP's anti-genderism than Grzebalska and Pető claim; and that it is, in fact, central to the way the Hungarian nation is gendered in its governance. The authors do include “familialism” into the structure of “illiberalism” by illuminating the Fidesz-KDNP regime's heavy reliance on a very particular construction of gender relations, the family, and its importance to selective and disciplinary social policy. However, they, first, focus on how “gender” is an umbrella for other grievances of failed “neoliberalism.” Second, and more importantly, in insisting to focus on the comparative–transnational approach to analysing anti-genderism, this body of literature does not look for socio-historical precedents for the politics of demographics and reproduction – for how “reproduction makes politics” (Gal and Kligman 2000) in the wider social context. The limitation of this analysis is that it puts more weight on “illiberalism” as a regime of governance since 2010 as its central object of study, and applies other analytical frameworks to supplement it; while not examining patterns of “historical regularities” which preceded it. In other words, while Kováts, Pető, and Grzebalska analyse anti-genderism *within* “illiberalism,” I argue that “familialism” and family-centric demographic anxieties have been a longstanding feature of Hungarian (conservative) politics; and anti-genderism (as well as the so-called immigration crisis) were “folded into” this longstanding discourse as acute reference points and offered new ways to articulate it; Chapters 3 and 4 lay out this argument in detail.

In the Hungarian national context, there is extensive scholarship, published in the 1990s and early 2000s, on post-state socialist demographic and reproductive dynamics and the

political reactions to them – discussed in Chapter 4. This scholarship analyses stances on gender, sexuality, and reproduction within the general population as well as political groups not only in the 1990s, and also traces their continuities and discontinuities with the state socialist era; and provides a powerful analysis of how politics in general – and nationhood in particular – are “contested and legitimated” through reproduction and gender. The strength of the analysis stems from both a temporally deeper and socially wider examination of discursive and policy changes on gender relations.

The approach of Pető, Grzebalska, and Kováts is highly useful for analysing anti-genderism in its particularly contemporary configuration as an international movement with various transnational actors, as well as the ways in which political actors deploy gender anxieties to target wider social grievances in specific national contexts. At the same time, the “symbolic glue” framework does not draw on earlier scholarship, nor does it connect contemporary phenomena to earlier ones. It traces the emergence of the “anti-gender discourse” by localising the explicit terms’ emergence; but does not embed it into larger-scale societal processes and scholarly enquiries. Therefore, although it promises to uncover a deeper relationship between anti-genderism and the underlying political-ideological processes, it does not transcend the common assumptions that anti-genderism is social conservatism – which risks reifying both the latter and the former, as well as a causal relationship between them; and it also suggests that anti-genderism is replaceable with other discriminations (see e.g., Renkin 2009), and has no connections to older political anxieties over national demography as well as longstanding attitudes to gender and sexuality; and implies that it is a product of the Fidesz-KDNP regime since 2010, which, again, does not consider these longstanding political anxieties. This is especially disadvantageous to the “symbolic glue” framework: since the authors’ insistence on a strategic deployment of “gender” suggests the mobilisation of a pre-existing pool of grievances (or discourses) already present in society, a longer-term historical

overview is especially necessary to illuminate why it is specifically *gender* that is so politically effective.

Finally, Grzebalska, Kováts, and Pető discuss anti-genderism as done by political actors, media, or the conservative NGO sector with little differentiation between them, giving the impression that all participate in similar ways and/or to a similar degree. A more focused approach can offer a more nuanced picture of how, within Fidesz-KDNP party coalition or within the government, anti-genderist discourses actually operate. For this reason, in the remaining chapters I analyse understandings of gender specifically in Viktor Orbán's speeches; which are, at the same time, put into the wider context of Fidesz-KDNP's family-oriented discourses and policies since 2010; as well as broader stances on gender and reproduction in the last decades in Hungarian politics.

Chapter 3: Analysis of discourses on the family and the nation in Viktor Orbán's speeches

3.1 Research design and methods

To understand Viktor Orbán's public messages about gender and gender relations, I analyse his public speeches and radio interviews between January 1, 2015 and April 7, 2018. I choose these dates because Fidesz-KDNP members' public engagement with "gender" took off significantly in 2015 (Kováts and Põim, 2015), and the parliamentary elections were held on April 8, 2018; and attention to issues of gender relations and demography was expected until the last weeks of the campaign. At the same time, the elections also offer an opportunity to change political direction – therefore, I do not analyse speeches after April 8. My analysed material includes speeches on national holidays (March 15th and October 23rd), the opening speeches of the autumn parliamentary sessions (September every year), Orbán's year-evaluation speeches (a format similar to state-of-the-nation addresses, given by Orbán at a yearly event of a pro-government NGO), and speeches at particular events (e.g. the International Demographic Forums in 2015 and 2017). Additionally, I analyse several of his bi-weekly radio interviews in Kossuth Rádió, specifically those with major focus on gender relations – which proved to be the topic mostly when Orbán discussed family policy and/or demography.

Although in Orbán's speeches anti-genderism is not present explicitly, it has been widely debated in the media (Félix 2015; Pető and Kováts 2017;) and addressed frequently by members of his governments. Orbán's speeches, therefore, considering his position of centralised power (Körösényi and Patkós 2015; Illés et al. 2017), cannot be seen as separate from these debates; and his avoidance of "gender" is all the more noteworthy in this context. My aim in analysing only Orbán's speeches is therefore to delineate the precise conception of

him, as party and government. I use critical discourse analysis (CDA) as outlined by Fairclough (2003). The results of the analysis are connected to and interpreted within the socio-political context of contemporary Hungarian politics in order to prepare drawing them into connection with long-standing Hungarian discourses on reproduction, discussed in Chapter 4.

The main research question is, how does gender figure in Orbán's speeches? To answer this, the analysis is guided by the following questions. What kind of conception of gender relations is enabling, and/or is contributing to various configurations of anti-genderism? What type of gender constructions are posited as desirable?

Since political discourse since 2015 has been dominated by the questions of refugees and immigration, Orbán, too, positions the issue of demography and reproduction in contrast to the proposal allegedly set forth by the EU and/or George Soros, of boosting the population through immigration. Therefore, an analysis of the gendered discourse on immigration is unavoidable. However, I include it only insofar as it is relevant in terms of the construction of the nation itself. Rather, I focus on how the longstanding discourse on the family and the nation – which, as I argue in Chapter 4, is in continuity with previous similar discourses in the 1990s and 2000s – is co-opting, utilising references to immigration or to the contemporary international anti-genderism movement as acute international reference points.

3.2 Introduction

A preliminary overview of the source material reveals that, despite the intense media debates on the various questions of “gender-ideology,” Orbán himself is not particularly fixated on it, or even on “gender” itself. Instead, the focus of his speeches is predominantly the importance of defending the nation and ensuring its survival. Issues of demography, such as the sinking birth rate, or various family planning policies, are central to this theme. And since the general style of his rhetoric, from vocabulary to its clause structure, is very militarised,

starting a family and birthing offspring most of the time figure as a national duty within the general mission of “defending” the nation.

Compared to the various utterances of Fidesz-KDNP members in the popular debate in the media,¹⁶ or even government members’ rather sharp pronouncements against “gender ideology” and their (implicit) arguments against gender equality in their speeches,¹⁷ Orbán’s speeches, when it comes to gender relations, are surprisingly moderate. On the surface, he positions himself as merely a supporter of generous child benefits and tax waivers for those who choose to have children. He rhetorically admits to having a hope in more patriotic families, but claims to understand that some people (sic) just do not want to have children, and does not refer explicitly to childbearing being a duty. Except for his speeches at events specifically about demographic issues (e.g. the International Demographic Forums in 2015 and 2017), he rarely devotes large segments to questions of childbearing, but includes them in a list of his other achievements or concerns, such as the goal of full employment, or political “sovereignty” from “Brussels.” Exemplary is the following quote from his opening speech of the parliamentary session in Autumn 2016, given at a parliamentary plenary session:

Independently from political debates there is a country-wide agreement that we have busy years behind us: we put the country’s finances in order, we brought inflation and unemployment under control (...). We’re supporting the families in ways never seen before, (...) we lowered energy prices,¹⁸ and for four years we have been defending the results of the *rezsicsökkentés* [energy price cuts]. We saved the families and we saved the settlements from the debt trap” ... (2016.09.12)

¹⁶ See for example Bence Rétvári’s (a state secretary at the Ministry of Human Capacities) television interview, where he equates “gender theory” as taught at universities with “gender-ideology,” the most important ideology of liberal politics,” which “denies the most fundamental tenets of social sciences”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7iPNcMmpgE> (Rétvári 2017)

¹⁷ See for example Zsolt Semjén’s speech, where he makes, among others, “gender-ideology” responsible for the “spread of Islam” in Europe: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok-helyettes/hirek/migracio-kovetkezmenyeit-nem-lehet-jovatenni> (Semjén 2017)

Or the speech of Katalin Novák, state secretary for family policy, where she claims that liberalism, by “using gender-ideology” to target children, is threatening to alienate them from their family’s love: <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/emberi-eroforrasok-miniszteriuma/csalad-es-ifjusagugyvert-felelos-allamtitkarsag/hirek/a-kormany-szamit-a-civilek-es-az-egyhaziak-tamogatasara> (Novák 2017)

¹⁸ “*Rezsicsökkentést vittünk véghez.*”

At first glance, then, his conception of gender relations is that “traditional,” conservative families – meaning, a mother, a father, and at least two children, as will become clearer later – are simply preferred because they are seen as the more optimal for raising the birth rate, the importance of which, however, is never questioned.

Therefore, my analysis will show that a particularly patriarchal understanding of the family is central to Orbán’s conception of the nation. I argue that, for Orbán, reproduction is primarily a collective, *national* issue; that the “traditional,” patriotic family is an effective tool to produce hierarchical gender relations – seen as necessary for the creation of a purely Hungarian, nationalist population – through an encouragement and sanctioning of *proper* reproduction.

To present a thorough backing for these claims, I move from the general to the particular: first, I discuss how Orbán constructs his own position as a national leader and his relation to the population-as-audience. Secondly, I analyse how he represents social and political processes and actors, and argue that Orbán represents politics primarily as zero-sum conflicts, that is, war. In section 3.5 I argue that within the context of politics-as-war, the nation’s construction is strongly militarised, crystallised in the image of the nation-at-war. Section 3.6 dissects how this nation is characterised – primarily, as pure and Christian. These three sections, although lengthy, are necessary to establish the foundation for the subsequent argument: that if the nation is militarised, it is also necessarily heavily gendered. Therefore, 3.7 and 3.8 will discuss *how* the nation is gendered, and the role reproduction plays in the war that is politics.

3.3 Self-presentation and authenticity

In his speeches, Viktor Orbán comes across as speaking to *you* personally: his style is personal both in the sense of addressing his audience directly, as well as presenting an “authentic” self: such as sharing his thoughts and feelings as if undistanced or unmediated and

without pretence, and presenting himself as being a simple man, one of “the people.” He achieves this by inserting references to first-person mental processes, such as, “for me, the most important thing is...,” or “I am grateful to...”. A very characteristic feature of his speeches is the interjection “Ladies and Gentlemen,” which, in different variations (“Compatriots,” “Dear fellow Commemorators,” “My dear Friends”) is inserted at the beginning of about every two paragraphs; after which, commonly, sentences in present tense follow. He often uses old-fashioned or folksy words and idioms or street slang, with the occasional reminder that he himself is a village kid – as in this example, from his speech opening the international Demographic Forum in Budapest in 2017 (organised with the support of the government), in front of an invited audience of politicians, church representatives, “pro-life activists,” and demographic scholars:¹⁹

In Hungary, when I was young, if you asked someone – *although, I grew up in a village* – how many children they had, you would ask how many families they had. And this question reflected that *sober thinking* that in each child they saw the seed of a new family. (2017.05.25, emphasis mine)

This creation of an impression of authentic self-presentation is achieved through all of the above elements (frequent and congenial direct address, slang and folkish terms, present tense). One of the effects it achieves is the imposition of an artificial “we” – and hence an assumption of a pre-existing agreement between “us,” which is reinforced through repetition. Such an assumption of “us” is also characteristic of populist leaders’ performance styles (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017; Wodak 2015), because it serves to include the political leader, although very much part of the elite, into the addressed audience, the “people,” and therefore, to legitimise the leader’s self-positioning as the “voice of the people.” Therefore, the performance of authenticity is functioning to represent the leader and his position as natural, unconstructed, or unstrategical. Additionally, when the “we” is invoked within nationalist rhetoric, it also

¹⁹ The list of presenters is available here: <https://www.budapestfamilysummit.com/hu/bdf2-eloadok/>

functions to obscure internal divisions within the addressed group (see e.g. McClintock 1993). Furthermore, authenticity is also a way to create a sense of “common sense” for the established “we”: which, aside from its normalising/normative functions, also works to depoliticise the establishment of both the “common sense” and the “us,” as well as to thus exclude political opponents and challenges from the “us” on the basis of the depoliticised “common sense.”

On the semantic level, Orbán’s sentences are characteristically short and simple, with few sub-clauses. These simple sentences are predominantly declarative, and where elaboration is required, he rather uses a sequence of declarative sentences instead of sentences with causal or elaborative sub-clauses. Exemplary is the quote from his October 23 address, given in front of the House of Terror²⁰ in Budapest (and televised live):

The truth is that now, three decades [after 1956], everything we think about Hungary and the order of Hungarian life is under threat again. The truth is that after fighting for victory in 1990, we are at the crossroads of our history again. We wanted to believe that the old ills would not return. We wanted to believe that the communists’ outdated dream, to sculpt a Homo Brusselicus instead of Hungarians out of us, would not return. And now we stand here and are shocked to see that the forces of globalisation (...) are working to, instead of Hungarians, make us Homo Brusselicus-es. We wanted to believe that we would never encounter political, economic, and intellectual forces again, which want to sever our national roots. We wanted to believe that terror and violence would not emerge in Europe again. It happened otherwise. (2017.10.23)

Here and in similar passages, Orbán avoids making arguments: his statements, although they depict causal relationships, draw parallels based on perceived similarities, and therefore are very strong claims in need of backing; are, in fact, void of any elaborations. By repeating short and simple sentences, which are already loaded with many assumptions about historical actors

²⁰ The House of Terror is the building of the former headquarters of the Arrow Cross Party (a Hungarian Nazi party led by Ferenc Szálasi), later the headquarters of the Államvédelmi Hatóság (ÁVH, the secret services of the Hungarian Communist Party); symbolically significant as the location of torture perpetrated by two totalitarian powers. The building was transformed into a memorial museum for the victims of the two regimes, established in 2002 by the first Orbán-government. It is run by Mária Schmidt, one of Orbán’s staunchest supporters, and the owner of *Figyelő*, a weekly paper which ran a series of articles vilifying the Central European University and specifically its Gender Studies department in spring 2017, as well as publishing a list of roughly two hundred “Soros mercenaries,” Hungarians allegedly financially supported by George Soros to carry out political work undermining the government and national security in Hungary.

and events (elaborated in more detail later in the chapter), as well as with predominantly relying on additive instead of elaborative clause structures (i.e., adding on statements as if in a descriptive list instead of explaining relations of causality and, in fact, obscuring the necessity of explaining them), Orbán creates a series of equivalences (Fairclough 2003, 88) between social actors, and thus creates merely the appearance of logic (2003, 94) aimed to persuade the listener. As Fairclough argues, such constructions of logic and equivalence serve to create and maintain political legitimacy (Fairclough 2003, 98-101), as well as to assume a unity of Hungarianness, where everyone as one nation has the same experiences and feels the same, erasing internal disagreements.

Even in speeches commemorating past events – whether three or 160 years ago, “here” or “far away” – Orbán predominantly uses the present tense to describe events or actors. He often changes between describing the past and the present, even within one paragraph, without changing tenses. The speech commemorating the 1848 revolution, given by Orbán in front of the National Museum²¹ in Budapest (and televised live) exemplifies this:

The Tatars vanished, the mighty Ottoman Porte faded away, the Habsburg Empire disappeared into thin air, and the Soviet colossus simply died. Mighty empires! Where *is* your sting? March 15th *is* the indisputable proof that we were, we are, and we will be. That *is* our victory. (2017.03.15, emphasis mine)

It is thus precisely this seamless integration of past and present, which allows him to draw parallels and equivalences between political entities in the past with those in the future. At the same time, this feature gives his speeches a very dynamic character. Rhetorically, there is no distance between the described events and the present, between the described actors and the audience, and between the speaker and the audience. Additionally, there is an added sense of immediacy: circumstances call for decisions, and decisions have consequences now.

²¹ The National Museum is a very significant location of the 1848 revolution, as it was here that poet and later soldier Sándor Petőfi recited his revolutionary poem on March 15th, which, according to popular historical knowledge, inspired the Pest youth to spark the revolution.

As a result of this dynamism, the line between “us” and “them” is even sharper. Since his rhetoric on Hungarians is strongly homogenising, erasing all internal divisions, it becomes even easier to construct a difference, and eventually, opposition, to the “others.” The division between himself, his government, his audience, all Hungarians, and *Hungary*, as a nation itself, is continuously blurred by the use of a shifting “us.” Orbán uses “us” and “we” interchangeably for all of the above. Often, within one sentence, “us” and “we” can simultaneously mean the Hungarian nation or the revolutionary heroes; and his government. Exemplary are the quotes below: the first one from the commemorative speech on 23 October 2017 in front of the House of Terror:

For a thousand years *we* [people living on the territory of present Hungary] protected the frontiers of Europe and fought for *our* national independence [Hungarian armies since the modern era]. *We are* a brave and fighting nation (...). That is why *they* don’t understand *us* [the government representatives to the EU] in Brussels today either, because *they* didn’t understand *us* [the anti-Soviet revolutionaries of 1956] even then. (2017.10.23, emphasis mine)

Or, the below quote from his speech at the Congress of the Christian Intellectuals’ Alliance:²²

We do not follow the same paths. *We* will not forget that when *we* were building the fence, the Germans, the Austrians, the Western media were judging us with smug arrogance and moral imperialism. (...) Anyone (...) could see that this was a (...) campaign *against Hungary*, as revenge for [what *we* had done]. (2017.09.16, emphasis mine)

By thus extending and blurring the “us,” Orbán creates an impression of a “nation as collective individual” which acts and feels together (Verdery 1994); and where each member is in a “metonymic” relationship “with the national whole” (McClintock 1993) – and not just now, but for the nation as eternal in the past and the future: a “deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 1983, 7), crystallised in his common saying, “Every Hungarian is responsible for

²² A secular religious organisation, which mostly organises various events (e.g. exhibitions, children’s camps, conferences) for the promotion and support of the Christian churches and values in Hungary. This event, taking place in the parliament, was organised to discuss the issue of “Protectors and Builders: Hungarians in Christian Europe,” and Orbán was invited to give a speech, titled “Hungary’s Future in Europe.” See more: <https://www.keesz.hu/helyi-csoportok--kesz-kozpont#2017-09-16>

every Hungarian.” Furthermore, Orbán constructs himself not as an elected public servant, but as the national leader, representing Hungary not as a state, but all Hungarians as one unified nation; and depoliticises political challenges (whether domestic or international) by constructing them as challenges to Hungary and the Hungarians, and not his government’s actions.

This homogenising move is also common when Orbán presents the premises of his arguments or refers to legitimating sources. In all the analysed speeches, the most specifically cited source is, “According to a prediction sent to us by NATO, which was made in their research institute, by 2020, 60 million people will start moving from Africa” (2017.09.18). He exclusively refers to vague and generalised “others,” such as “it is known,” or “we know.” Propositional and value assumptions are almost exclusively stated as statements of fact (Fairclough 2003), such as “Hungarians are a simple, freedom-loving people,” or “if you ask our young people, you will learn that...,” claiming that he is in touch with every ordinary Hungarian, regardless of age or location – since the nation is represented as one.

Further, Orbán also makes hypothetical or speculative statements declaratively, as if they were statements of fact; including widely generalised statements on everything from the state of European politics to others’ mental processes. Such as,

This is not the same world we used to know, and this feeling is incredibly strong in Western Europe (2018.02.02, Kossuth Rádió);

Now in Hungary the majority thinks that in modern times, the child is simultaneously a blessing and a reward in both the family’s life and in the society’s life as well (2015.11.05);

Respected Ladies and Gentlemen! Despite the favourable news from home, I must tell you that today there is a widespread European feeling²³ that we live in confusing times (2016.09.12).

²³ “Általános Európai életérzés.”

When describing generally other points of view, or when referring to specific others, Orbán very rarely gives a reference to or quotes the claims he is attributing to others. When the attributed claim is in his own (or his own argument's) support, he generally does reference the speaker, for example in his opening speech at the 2017 Demographic Forum:

At the [previous Demographic Forum] in 2015, one of our keynote speakers, Professor Pál Démény, who is also among us today, convinced us that stopping illegal immigration is only one side of the fight for Europe's future. This fight, which is a sensible fight, is only worth anything, if we can match it with a kind of family policy which restores natural reproduction on the continent, and for this thought we are grateful to the Professor (2017.05.25).

When he is referring to information or sets of circumstances which serve as the backing for his own claim, the attribution becomes much more vague. In his speech opening the 2017 autumn parliamentary session, when introducing his justification for Fidesz-KDNP's anti-immigration policy, Orbán refers to "a prediction which NATO sent to us, which was made in their research institute" (2017.09.12); or, when discussing Europe's Christian culture in a radio interview, he refers to "from various studies, discussions, analyses, *I see that* Christianity is primarily not a question of faith for *a lot of* Europeans" (2018.02.02, emphasis mine) – and his attributions are characteristically not any more specific than that. And when he is referring to the arguments, or general circumstances of his political opponents (the entities who form any position within the antagonist position), the attribution is either very vague, or is missing entirely, and without the attribution, the reference is presented as a factual statement. Below is a quote from his speech opening the 2016 autumn parliamentary session:

... what I see as especially dangerous, is that they [the EU] want to simplify the already not too complicated process of family reunification. But, dear fellow representatives, even that is not enough for Brussels. In Brussels, they're preparing for a trick. If they won't get along with the nation-states, they will get along with left-wing cities, so that they will accept the migrants instead. If they won't get along with Hungary, then they'll make a deal with Zugló, with Salgótarján, or Szeged.²⁴ That's what the president of the European Parliament

²⁴ Zugló is a district of Budapest, whose mayor since 2014 has been the left-wing Gergely Karácsony. Additionally, Karácsony was one of Orbán's main opponents as the Prime Minister candidate of the MSZP-Párbeszéd alliance. Szeged has been under the mayorship of László Botka of MSZP since 2002. Botka was the

announced. (...) [Loud comments from opposition MPs] If you don't like what I'm saying, I recommend you read the declaration of the left-wing president of the European Parliament, president Schulz ... (2017.09.12).

The absence of attribution serves two functions in Orbán's speeches. First, by not attributing the majority of his statements to any sources, and presenting his claims as if mere observations of events both in the past and present, both in Hungary and worldwide, Orbán presents himself as a humble first-person omniscient narrator. This narrator is humble as a result of the rhetorical strategies employed to construct his authenticity, described above; and also as a result of the mixture between the creation of the shared "us" with the audience and its treatment as a collective of mutual, and between the addressing of his audience as "Deeply respected Ladies and Gentlemen, (...) If you allow me another observation...". He is omniscient because his claims are not attributed, nor are they presented as hypotheses or predictions, but as sound knowledge; as well as because addressing the audience, when inserted in the middle of an elaborative sentence, reads as patronising lecturing. And he is a narrator, because, while including himself in the "us" which shifts between meaning the nation, the government, or the audience present; nevertheless removes himself from his actions, from his position of political accountability: he does not explain or justify his decisions, but narrates them as inevitable consequences of moral duty. Relying on the shifting "us" also diffuses the source of action between himself, the government, or the entire nation, and, as noted before, it also contributes to a depoliticisation of political into moral issues.

Second, it sneaks in profound assumptions disguised as observations. For example, Orbán began his opening speech at the Demographic Forum in 2017 with references to "Brussels" asylum policies. After pausing to address the audience, he continues: "In the Hungarian government's vision of the future, the family is in the centre"; although descriptions of

Prime Minister candidate of MSZP between fall 2016 till fall 2017. Therefore, Orbán here is clearly alluding to his two most likely challengers. Salgótarján has also been MSZP-led since 2005.

Brussels' policies do not include statements that they are against families, or that they have "migrants" in their centre, this is nevertheless the implication of the contrast in the declarative sentence. Later on in the speech, Orbán says that many Western European countries are struggling with "serious demographic problems," "despite" their wealth, and continues, "In Hungary, we spend 4,6% of the GDP on supporting families; yet, if the family, as a form of community, is not in the first place in young people's heart, economic strength and excellent economic results are in vain, and we will not get anywhere." The implicit assumptions in this passage are the following. First, a low birth rate is a problem – even though wealth should have solved it; therefore, it cannot be considered an economic issue, and needs to be solved differently. Second, the Western European countries are claimed to be failing despite their wealth, because, by implication, in their governments' vision of the future, the family is not in the centre, i.e. they are not centred around families, but immigrants. And third, "families" are automatically assumed to be heterosexual and reproductive: there is no space for either different forms of family, nor of having children differently.

3.4 Politics as war

The tone of describing events and actors is characteristically heavily militarised. Orbán's vocabulary is predominantly related to warfare, and therefore social-political processes are represented not as transformations or negotiations, but as zero-sum conflicts. His domestic opponents or international critics are represented as enemies, and thus the results can be either winning or losing, where losing means humiliation at best and "losing the country"²⁵ (2015.03.15) at worst. This is the case not only in commemorative speeches on national holidays addressed to a wide popular audience, but also in speeches in the parliament, or his radio interviews. Exemplary is the following quote from the parliament:

²⁵ "*Országvesztés.*"

In 2015, there are two kinds of political directions in Hungary: the one which wants to defend Hungary and the Hungarian people, which wants to preserve our national culture and Europeaness, and the other, which, for some reasons, works against this (2015.09.12).

While the clause and sentence structure in passages linking the past with present and positioning himself and his adherents within this continuity, is characteristically additive and parallel; in passages describing these social processes the structure is more commonly contrastive. This structure reinforces the impression of the necessity of an either-or, zero-sum outcome. Because he constructs processes as conflicts, these dichotomies serve to reinforce the imposed “we,” therefore reinforcing the assumption of two dichotomous sides, while the urgency of his tone implores the audience to take sides – easy because they are presented as a simple right-or-wrong choice. A crystallised example of substituting logical arguments with assumptive logical jumps is his speech at the Congress of the Christian Intellectuals’ Alliance:

It is obvious that in immigration countries, the laws connected to, referring to, accepting migrants enjoy a priority over laws connected to protecting external state borders. *We* do not accept this tenet, we put the right to protect borders in the first place. This also means – that is, what we see in the West, that the human rights of illegal migrants take precedence over *the will of European citizens*, who actually don’t want to accept them. This, in turn, raises the question of democracy. What we see in front of us is the democracy problem of the Western countries. (...) We don’t know of such democracy problems here, since we chose the solution [of the referendum] ... (2017.09.16, emphasis mine)

Here, Orbán displays several rhetorical moves discussed above: he imposes a shared common sense and constructs oppositions between immigration policy and protection of borders, refugees and citizens, immigration policy and democracy. Throughout this line of oppositions, entities remain very vague: “the will of European citizens,” his main reference point, is void of any specific meaning, as is his main claim, that certain rights “enjoy a priority” over others. At the same time, he brings in “democracy” as a loaded, normative term in order to make a moral judgement veiled as description.

Since his speeches are dynamic and his tone demanding, with an added sense of urgency and immediacy; the either/or passages function more like calls to arms. In speeches on national holidays and in parliament, Orbán stops short of proclaiming the outbreak of a revolution, calling his audience to follow him; yet this follows clearly from the structure; as well as from moral assumptions and judgements formed as demands. In the commemorative speech of the 1848 revolution in 2016, Orbán spends lengthy passages on “Brussels”:

This danger [of immigration] does not *attack* us like wars or natural disasters usually do (...) It pretends to be a humanitarian issue, but its *true* nature is spatial *occupation*, and *what is spatial occupation for them, is spatial loss for us*. (...) *We cannot allow* Brussels to put itself above the law. *We will not allow* [Brussels] to *impose* on us the bitter fruits of its cosmopolite immigration policy... (...) *The time has come* to sound the alarm bell. *The time has come* to turn around and to *resist*. (...) *The time has come* to stop Europe’s ruin and *save* its future. *We call all Hungarian citizens*, and all European nations into unity. (2016.03.15, emphasis mine)

Referring specifically to his political opponents, Orbán presents them not as a challenge, but an existential danger – and the vocabulary is militarised, while the statements are veiled demands. He presents his audience with polarised, easy, choices.

Orbán thus represents political processes as a struggle of two sides, the protagonists and antagonists. Challenges are not simply presented as problems to be solved, but as zero-sum conflicts; between decay and morality, civilisation and chaos, or liberalism and the nation. Characteristically, antagonist entities are very rarely identified; the most specific antagonist is George Soros; but even he is a vague, illuminati-like power pulling the strings from the background.²⁶ More often, the antagonist is an opaque concept like “Brussels” or “liberalism”; vagueness which allows Orbán to decontextualise and invoke specific associations by contrasting them to equally vague – but highly moralised – concepts, such as “sovereignty.” For example,

²⁶ “*Háttérhatalom.*”

If you allow me to make another comment in an intellectual, or ideological dimension. The ideology of the immigration countries is easily identifiable, and this is what, I'm convinced, actually made them into immigration countries. This is the realm of international liberalism. *But in the case of the non-immigration countries, however, the truth is that our guiding principle is not international liberalism, but sovereignty and the Christian social teaching.* To adapt the contemporary Western European liberalism would quite simply mean *suicide* for the Central European countries (...). And that would happen when we would become immigration countries as well. (2017.09.16, emphasis mine)

Here, the antagonists are the collective of the Western European “immigration countries” and “international liberalism.” In a contrastive clause, Orbán claims that while “we” have “sovereignty” and Christianity, “they” do not –implying that liberalism is against sovereignty, and is thus anti-national. This is followed by a declarative statement, equating liberalism with a loss of sovereignty; Orbán’s claim is therefore that liberalism itself (since “Western European liberalism” is not an easily definable entity) is national suicide.

As noted above, Orbán does not allow for space for other voices in his speeches, which are thus almost completely monological (Fairclough 2003, 42). No other perspectives or interpretations are cited, but are instead narrated from Orbán’s point of view, and filled with value assumptions. For example,

It is no wonder that they [foreign politicians opposed to the Fidesz-KDNP’s refugee policies] are criticising us Hungarians, for standing up for our thousand-year-old statehood, our homeland’s sovereignty, and our national independence (2015. 09.12).

Or,

I think that the European Union, which is our wider home, is carrying out a mistaken immigration policy and a mistaken foreign policy; what’s more, instead of admitting their error, they insist on it. Europe is carrying out politics not seen for a thousand years... (2017.09.18).

In these quotes, Orbán contextualises the “refugee crisis” not as an issue of politics which affects several states and needs negotiated action, but as an attack, enabled by Western European states, on the Hungarian *nation*, who, in this situation, is a blameless victim. There is no reporting or attribution to what foreign critics’ position is, only an interpreted narration.

Furthermore, this representation of political progress as a dichotomised and simplified conflict, is lined up with historical, similarly dichotomised conflicts –leading to Orbán positioning himself within the lineage of Kossuth,²⁷ as an honourable and heroic statesman.

Not only specific positions, but specific entities are also hardly ever defined – except when referring to those on his own side: poem excerpts from Petőfi²⁸ or witticisms from Kossuth are common in his speeches, as are attributions to members of the audience. On the antagonist side, however, “Soros” is the only specifically identified entity, although his views or “his plan” which Orbán makes claims against, are undefined. In arguments against EU policies or positions, similarly, neither are defined: Orbán once refers to “the Tavares-report”²⁹ – uncharacteristically specific – because, he claimed, it “failed” (2017.05.19 Kossuth Rádió). Otherwise, the most specific he gets is “Brussels” or, at most, “the European Commission” or “Parliament.”

Taken together, these rhetorical moves work to depoliticise political questions into questions of morality and common sense, and thus to dismiss political disagreements and challenges as ideological. Orbán’s self-positioning as an omniscient narrator allows him to make wildly universalising statements; which work to establish, impose, and reinforce an “us” along with a “common sense,” onto both his co-present audience, as well as, by extension, the nation. For example, in a parliamentary speech in September 2015, after an account of the so-

²⁷ Lajos Kossuth was one of the leading figures of the Hungarian Reform Era in the nineteenth century. In the 1830–40s he primarily engaged in politics and journalism, through which he published and debated the time’s major political and social questions. During the 1848–49 revolution and uprising he became a political and military leader. When the revolution failed, Kossuth emigrated abroad.

²⁸ A young poet of the early 19th century, one of the main figures of Hungarian Romanticism. During the time of the 1848 revolution, whose poem *Nemzeti Dal* (“National Song”) is conventionally remembered to have sparked the Pest revolution on March 15. Petőfi died in battle in 1849 fighting with the Hungarian troops, therefore his personality and revolutionary poetry is highly idealised and heroised.

²⁹ Titled “Report on the situation of fundamental rights: standards and practices in Hungary” and presented to the European Parliament in February 2012 MEP Rui Tavares, the report was largely a critique of the new Fundamental Law and associated issues of rule of law. The government harshly criticised the report, and rejected its criticism. See more here: <https://www.helsinki.hu/en/the-truth-around-the-tavares-report> The full report is available here: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2013-0229+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

called “refugee crisis,” and its threatening implications for Hungary, Orbán pauses to address his audience, and says,

According to our understanding, it is the most natural thing in the world for one to protect his³⁰ family. That is exactly what we are doing now. Hungary has been a respected member of the European family for a thousand years. It is our historical and moral duty to protect Europe, because like that we also protect ourselves. This is also true in reverse: when we protect Hungary, we protect Europe. (2015.09.12)

After this set of truisms which reinforced the “us,” he addresses the audience again, and turns to “our” duties to protect the nation.

3.5 The nation at war

In Orbán’s speeches analysed here, history is represented as a series of revolutions. Political processes now (represented as conflicts) are direct continuations of 1989, the communist regime, 1956, “Trianon,” or 1848.³¹ Events in-between these, and especially *longue-durée* processes do not appear. The revolutions Orbán selects as forming the backbone of Hungarian history are easily simplified into good-versus-evil dichotomies. First, this enables him to position himself within his chosen lineage of history and confer moral legitimacy on himself. At the same time, if national history is a history of righteous war, the nation itself is constructed as a war-nation, or a military-nation.

Orbán presents two camps into which he categorises the world: the “internationalists” and the “nationals,” and these two “revolutionary traditions” are traced from 1848 to today. This

³⁰ “...*ha az ember megvédi a családját.*” Although “ember” in Hungarian is not explicitly gendered (neither is “his” in this sentence), Orbán’s use of the word in other instances points to a very gendered, masculine understanding of the neutral pronoun. For example: “Because in the modern world the woman is also working, not just the person” (“*Mégpedig a modern világban az asszony is dolgozik, nemcsak az ember*”), (2016.05.20 Kossuth Rádió). Additionally, as will become clearer in the following paragraphs, “protecting” in Orbán’s speeches is a militarised, therefore masculine term, too.

³¹ The fall of communism; the Hungarian anti-Soviet revolution; the post-World War I treaty detaching two-thirds of Hungarian territories; the anti-Habsburg revolution for more national sovereignty, respectively.

categorisation appears implicitly throughout his speeches, but most explicitly in the 2016 March 15th celebratory speech:

We Hungarians have two revolutionary traditions. The [national one] runs from 1848 through 1956, and from the regime change (“*rendszerváltás*”) to the Constitution, up to today’s constitutional order. The other tradition’s bloodline runs from the European Jacobin predecessors through 1919 to the post-World War II communism. Hungarian life today was organised by the intellectual heirs of the ’48 and ’56 revolutions. (...) the ’19 tradition is also still with us. (...) If it doesn’t receive ammunition from abroad, (...) its roots will dry out in the Hungarian motherland, incapable of accepting internationalism.”

The “national” side on which Orbán positions himself and his followers is traced from 1848 to 1956 to today: the side of heroes, fighters for freedom and national sovereignty; and simple working people. On the “liberal” side, however, he positions not only the former empires such as the Habsburgs or the Soviets,³² but also the Hungarian 1918-19 social democratic revolution. Orbán only describes this last as “Hungarian-hating” and “started for foreign interests,” not mentioning its ideological tenets. This allows listing it among the imperialist (or pro-imperialist) political movements worthy only of contempt; yet this vague description allows him to compel his audience to fill it with their own associations. Therefore, the term “foreign interests” – due to its frequent use in connection with Hungarian progressive and/or government-critical NGOs, as well as “Brussels” – is particularly effective to draw parallels between the two. Characteristically, Orbán uses the same (or very similar) adjectives to describe “Hungary’s” “enemies” in the past as in the present: contemporary left-wing politics becomes “internationalist.” These parallel structures create not only a continuity between the heroes of 1848, 1956, and today, but also between the empires, imperialists, and the multiculturalists/liberals. This, in turn, creates the representation of Hungary’s eternal victimisation and blamelessness. Therefore, importantly, the Hungarian nation’s contemporary

³² Nazi Germany, or the Hungarian Nazi Arrow Cross movement, curiously, are not mentioned. The only mention of Hungarian fascism I found was a comment in the 2017 October 23rd commemorative speech, held in front of the House of Terror.

struggle is not with the refugees, but with “Brussels” – precisely because in civilisational terms, the struggle is between Europe-as-Christianity (of which Hungary is part) and Islam; and “Brussels” is represented as enabling, or even encouraging the “world offensive”³³ (2017.09.18) of Islam.

Importantly, however, this national history is a lineage of men. The heroes are often named (most often Kossuth and Petőfi),³⁴ but more often they are just “common men” who form a masculine army in this militarised flow of history, constructed as a series of revolutions. Although Orbán claims to address everyone in the nation metonymically, only men are addressed as agents. Similarly to speeches analysed by Verdery (1994), Orbán here constructs history as “an endless sequence of male heroes (...) like a series of ‘begats’,” which creates the “impression of the nation as a temporally deep patrilineage” (1994, 238-39). Verdery draws on Mosse’s notion of the nation as “homosocial masculine bonding” (1994, 242); in which there is seemingly even no need for women: the nation reproduces through the *spirit* of the nation, delivered by its great men.

At the same time, Orbán often says that the Hungarian nation is by its nature a fighting – although honourable – nation:

“a big freedom fighter nation;” “we, Hungarians think not in terms of one battle or one campaign. We here, (...) in the clash zone of cultures, empires, and civilisations can be proud of the biggest possible victory: eventually, we always won the war, the war fought for the survival of the homeland (“*haza*”), for the survival of the nation” (2017.03.15).

Altınay argues for the case of Turkey that, “by defining men’s compulsory participation in the military as a *cultural/national/racial characteristic of Turkishness*, the myth naturalizes military service, while at the same time naturalizing a state-sponsored *political* differentiation

³³ “*Világoffenzíva.*”

³⁴ The founding king of the Kingdom of Hungary in the 11th century; a king in the 15th century popularly remembered as just and a reformer (and is the hero of many a folk tale); and an eighteenth-century revolutionary, respectively.

between male and female citizens as *cultural* differentiation” (2004, 34). In other words, if masculinised militancy is represented to be naturally a national characteristic, it extends to the nation as such being constructed as a masculinised “military-nation” – which, in turn, depoliticises the differentiation between men’s and women’s national membership.

As Orbán re-narrates a history of Hungary (as *the* history of the Hungarian *nation*) as a series of revolutions and wars, claiming that fighting for freedom and justice is a natural part of Hungarian identity – an identity of being a metonymic part of the nation – he is also creating what Altinay calls the “myth of the military-nation.” The militarised vocabulary, the common masculine pronouns (“the nation’s sons”), the demanding sentence structure and sense of urgency, and the intense vilification, militarisation, and depoliticization of political issues – point directly to the imagining of a nation at war. Furthermore, even ideas such as bravery, honourableness, duty, or patriotism, even when appearing in not explicitly militarised contexts, are gendered through their understanding of primarily men’s direct relation to the nation (Nagel 1998, 252; Enloe 1989, cited in McClintock 1993, 62).

The “myth of the military-nation” encourages a very particular identity-formation. Altinay argues that when the army is conceptualised as central to the national identity – or if national identity is conceptualised through being an army; then it is constructed as “the whole nation as a unified body” (2004, 68). Drawing on Verdery, she argues that from this construction follow two senses of national identity: first, the individual as being “given a sense of national self”; and second, the “national collective self” becomes “represented through men-in-uniforms” – both of which are expressed in terms like ‘nation-in-arms’ or ‘military-nation’ (Verdery 1996, cited in Altinay 2004, 68). There are significant differences between the cases of Turkey and Hungary: primarily, that Hungary does not have compulsory conscription.³⁵ Therefore, terms

³⁵ After having compulsory conscription throughout state socialism, it was abolished in 2004. It is still popularly associated with the socialist regime, and not, as in the case of Turkey, with national–territorial unification and modernisation.

like ‘nation-in-arms’ or ‘military-nation’ do not figure explicitly in Orbán’s speeches – and he does not emphasise every individual citizen’s duty as that of a soldier, but of the nation as one unified army; therefore, the equivalences he creates rhetorically are sufficient for a very strong association. Especially, since in Orbán’s speeches, the nation is literally represented by “men-in-uniforms.”

Consequently, if the nation is constructed as a unified body (as an army), which is necessarily gendered; *body politics* will also be crucial for how reproduction is represented and sanctioned institutionally. Note that the militarised image of the nation is not only a rhetorical feature of commemorative events of the past revolutions: the Fidesz-KDNP government also toyed with the idea of reintroducing compulsory conscription, although it was immediately dismissed;³⁶ in 2017 introducing “patriotic sports classes” in primary education, seen by many as a militarised form of sports education.³⁷ And, as Altinay points out, education and militarism both serve the homogenisation of nation, as well as the creation of disciplined, “proper citizens” (2004, 68); both of which are encouraged in Orbán’s speeches, too.

3.6 A Christian Europe

When describing “national” revolutions and their participants, Orbán regularly lists workers’ professions, and their guiding principles as “homeland” or “freedom.” When describing the anti-Hungarian side, he highlights their “ideologies,” such as “internationalism” or “socialism,”³⁸ and draws a correspondence between intellectuals, “philosophy,” “ideology,” and chaos; and “simple” working people and dignity, as here:

All revolutions are like those who make them. (...) The Hungarian revolutionaries are not the confused knights of obsolete ideologies, lunatic utopias, and definitely not of unsolicited world-saviourism. In Pest, we can find

³⁶ <https://444.hu/2016/01/17/orban-nem-lesz-kotelezo-sorkatonai-szolgalat>

³⁷ http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170803_Hazafias_testnevelés_kormány_rado_pedagogus

³⁸ Even though he does include intellectual occupations, such as “writers” or “doctors,” to the “national” side, their intellectualism is exempted from being “ideological.”

no trace of dilettante philosophers' mirages, or failed intellectuals' bloodthirsty insatiateness.³⁹ (2016.03.15)

The assumptions underlying these statements are therefore that “national sovereignty” is unideological (meaning natural or neutral), and that “ideologies” not centred on the nation (such as social democracy, women’s or international workers’ rights) are *anti*-nation.

In Orbán’s speaking present, the continuity of this opposition is drawn between his government (equated with all Hungary through the shifting use of “us”) and the European Union or “Brussels.” Although he does not claim explicitly that “we” are the descendants of the 1848/1956 revolutions, he makes the equivalence with referring to them in the present tense, with additive clauses which draw parallels between then and now, and with references to “the chroniclers” of human history and God himself, such as, “let us give thanks that the Lord of History that he put us on this path. Soli Deo Gloria!”⁴⁰ (2016.03.15)

Positioning himself within this heroic and thus blameless lineage also functions to legitimise Orbán’s leadership as, first, a clairvoyant historical figure, and second, as the genuine voice of the people; as well as to moralise politics into a question of national honour. At the same time, the dynamism is intensified into an impression of immediacy and thus an urgency to act. These two rhetorical moves, taken together, add up to a call to arms to join forces and follow Orbán.

Europe itself is framed in different ways in Orbán’s speeches, and he uses different aspects of it to shape his claims; Hungary’s belonging to different aspects and dimensions of Europe is thus also differentiated along symbolic lines. There is a striking difference between what is designated when he refers to “Brussels” and the “European Union”; and a slight difference

³⁹ “Minden forradalom olyan, mint azok, akik csinálják. (...) A magyar forradalmárok nem hagymázás ideológiák, nem holdkóros utópiák és végképp nem a kéretlen világboldogítás zavart elméjű lovagjai, Pesten nyomát sem találjuk a botcsinálta filozófusok délibábos látomásainak vagy kudarcot vallott értelmiségiek vérgőzbe fojtott kielégületlenségének.”

⁴⁰ A Protestant (and especially Calvinist) saying, used to express gratitude to God and emphasise his will in whatever happens. Literal meaning: “glory to God alone.”

between the latter and “Europe.” “Europe,” on the one hand, expresses positive or neutral attitudes;⁴¹ “Brussels,” on the other hand, is used to designate undemocratic, oppressive, and even imperialist politics: in a quote cited before, “homo Brusselicus” is an obvious reference to the “homo Sovieticus,” and thus a claim that by pushing Hungary to comply with EU legislative norms, the EU is carrying out a homogenising, imperialist mission, moulding all nations into one empire and stripping people of their national identity. He forms this opposition both by the explicit mentioning of “Brussels” instead of the EU in the explicit list of occupant empires or the parallel clause structures implying equivalence between them, e.g. with terms like “homo Brusselicus”; as well as by a retrospective projection of “liberalism” onto those empires in the past.

Another way to draw this distinction is the incongruous descriptions such as “the German flood” when referring to the Habsburg Empire (2016.03.15) – where, since the Habsburgs were not “German” in the sense we use the word now, the expression of “German” and “flood” is echoing contemporary discourses on refugees and German immigration policy, since “flood” as verb and noun is frequently used to describe either the amount of refugees or the event of their arrival in Europe. Similarly, referring to the 1918-19 socialist democratic revolution as fought against “foreign interests” is echoing contemporary discussions on Hungarian “liberal” NGOs being “funded from abroad” and representing “foreign interests.”

In several speeches, additive and contrastive clauses suggest that Western European states – former colonial powers and current “immigration countries” – used to be “great” nations in the past but are no more, and considering they are not great despite their current wealth, they have failed. France, Germany, or the Netherlands, countries which are often mentioned either synonymously with “Brussels,” are presented as anti-nationalist and anti-European. These

⁴¹ Such as “our home, our common home, Europe” (2017.05.25).

states and “Brussels,” Orbán claims, have abandoned their commitment to “European values” – according to him, Christianity, religious freedom, equality between men and women, and the tolerance of Jewish people (see especially the speech at the Congress of the Christian Intellectuals’ Association on 2017.09.16; and the radio interviews on 2017.12.22 and 2018.02.02). These countries are claimed to be endangering the foundation of European “culture” and “civilisation” – by enabling the “mass immigration” of “Muslims,” which poses a threat to these European values. In contrast, Orbán and his government, and Hungary itself are shown to be protecting these values by refusing to allow refugees in and valiantly standing up to “Brussels” imperial decrees. The issue of immigration is thus used to assert “ourselves” as more, or even the only truly European, as opposed to the above listed countries, or Western Europe in general.

There are several contradictions in proclaiming the Hungarian government as the true protector of these values. In all the speeches and radio interviews analysed, the need to protect European values – indeed that there is a set of “European values” at all, of which gender equality and protection of Jewish people are two – comes up only in the context of the “refugee crisis” and the allegedly ubiquitous presence of refugees, assumedly Muslim – from whom these values need to be protected. And to claim that gender equality, freedom of religion, and other values are “European” and are threatened simply by “Muslims” mere presence is to obscure inequalities and intolerances in “Europe,” and to externalise them exclusively onto the “Muslims.” These values, therefore, and by implication, our “European” identity is constructed as a response to their alleged Muslim identity. To create this exclusionary identity construction, where the basis of the opposition is between “true Europeans” and “Muslims,” Christianity becomes central to substantiate the “European” identity. As Brubaker (2017) argues, this Christianity is not a religious Christianity, but a “secularized Christianity-as-culture, a

civilizational and identitarian Christianity" (Mouritsen 2006, cited in Brubaker 2017, 1199).

Indeed, Orbán claims that

I see that for many Europeans, Christianity is now primarily not a question of faith. (...) *we all* think that we have an everyday way of life that emerged from Christianity, that is built on *Christian culture, that is ours*, in which we *feel at home*. The way we think about religious freedom, freedom of speech, the way we think about (...) men's and women's equality. *These can all be called Christian culture*. Since now certain countries are letting Muslim masses from the East and the South into Europe, now there's a mixed population where there never used to be a mixed population, and that's why we feel like *we are losing space*, and we start to *no longer feel at home*. (2018.02.02, Kossuth Rádió).

This construction of Christianity as the basis of European civilisation (or even the existence of a distinct European civilisation) is what Brubaker calls "Christianism": a (racialised) nationalism articulated in civilizational terms. Speaking of Christianity in civilizational terms, as coextensive with European culture, "culturalises" it, that is, allows it to be secular – at the same time, it is "precisely the ongoing erosion of Christianity as doctrine, organization, and ritual that makes it easy to invoke Christianity as a cultural and civilizational identity, characterized by putatively shared values that have little or nothing to do with religious belief or practice. As Europe becomes more secular, paradoxically, it is more easily represented as (culturally and civilizationally) Christian" (2017, 1199). Thus, Christianism also entails a monopolisation of secularism, which, paradoxically, is claimed to be part of Christian "culture": "If 'they' are religious (in suspect ways) because they are Muslim, 'we' are secular because we are (post-) Christian" (2017, 1200).

Brubaker draws several differences between Eastern European (and specifically Orbán's) Christianity and Western European, which he considers archetypal; in this regard, however, he is only partially right. First, he emphasises that when nationalist-populist leaders invoke Christianity as a secularised culture, they are not concerned with actual "practices of worship," but with "symbols of belonging" (2017, 1199). He points out that in Hungary, despite a very pronouncedly Christian new constitution and the rhetoric centred around an intertwining of

nationalism and Christianity, Orbán's Christianity is actually "entirely secular," serving primarily as a "marker of identity rather than as a sign of religious practice or belief" (2017, 1208). Therefore, he claims that Orbán's Christianity (and Hungarian political discourse on identity in general) remains "fundamentally nationalist" and not civilisationist, and that his anti-Muslimism is rather securitarian than identitarian.

My analysis confirms Brubaker's argument, but with important nuances. Although there are several elements of Orbán's rhetoric which point to civilisationism – he makes numerous statements about Hungary's belonging to Europe specifically on a civilisational basis; as well as about being "truer" or "purer" Europeans precisely *by virtue* of being Christian, and by defending Europe and "European values; in the analysed speeches these came up almost only in the context of "Brussels" immigration policies, suggesting a selective, strategic deployment, and, as Brubaker argues, not a characteristic of Orbán's Christianity in general. However, I would argue that Orbán's Christianity is not entirely secular: the Fidesz-KDNP government is encouraging Christianity in rhetoric, but also in practice: the Catholic church enjoys a prominent role in the Fundamental Law, is given privileges in managing educational institutions, and as an institution itself is given a lot of political and financial support, too (Szikra 2014; Fekete 2016). Additionally, while Brubaker does make the distinction between practices and symbols in Western European nationalism, he does not in the Hungarian case. It is important to add that, as Enyedi (2016) argues, for Fidesz-KDNP, to belong to the nation it is not sufficient to belong ethnically or legally – "full membership in the national community" (and inclusion in the welfare system) is based on a "performance" of nationalism: that is, working, forming a 'traditional' family, and sending the children to school (2016, 14). Even though, arguably, this performance can be reduced to symbolic practice, its importance for nationalist discourse (and welfare policies based on it) is significant enough to argue that

Orbán's Christianity is, even more emphatically nationalist (and less civilizational) than Brubaker claims.

Brubaker also argues that, by representing Philosemitism and especially gender equality as core European values based on Christianity instead of as "unique national values," one function of Christianity in Western Europe is to externalise gender inequality, anti-Semitism, etc. onto the racialised, sexualised, Muslim Other, while highlighting their own progressiveness and liberalism (2017, 1203). Orbán, clearly, deploys it differently. While appropriating Christianity for Hungary does also serve the purpose of externalising (the threat of) inequalities onto the refugees, for Fidesz-KDNP, it also functions to monopolise "European values" which "certain" Western European countries are claimed to betray by allowing refugees in (claimed to be *the* definitive testament to them no longer representing true European values), and to represent themselves (and Hungary as a whole) as more European than Western Europe.⁴²

Orbán's claim to gender equality as an allegedly Hungarian value is what specifically makes apparent the uncontextualised appropriation of the Christianist discourse from Western Europe, as it seems to have come out of nowhere: in all the analysed texts, Orbán only mentions gender equality in the context of the threats refugees' presence would pose. Not only does he not mention it, but neither does he even ever speak of women as being citizens or having agency on their own without being mothers. Women's rights and/or gender equality, therefore is not on Orbán's agenda: in fact, he almost exclusively sees women as participating in the nationalist duty of reproduction, and invisibilises them as citizens, as individuals; which is obscured by the externalising of gender inequality onto the Muslim refugees. This contradiction further highlights the deployment of Christianity: even though it seems contradictory and

⁴² Not only within the framework of Christianity, at the same time this can also be interpreted as a different attempt to reverse the trope of eastern Europe "developing" or "catching up with the West."

appropriated without contextualising; by adding the dimension of Western Europe's betrayal of "European values," Orbán can use Christianity to represent his politics as morally superior by virtue of being more European – meaning, more Christian.

3.7 Reproduction, children, and the eternity of the nation

What is claimed to be the danger of Western European countries' policies is not only the enabling the presence of outsider populations, but, as Orbán claims in contrastive clauses, that they are "choosing" immigrants "instead of" encouraging their "own" children; and the cause for that is that their guiding principles are liberalism and multiculturalism – while Hungary's are the nation and the family.

The modern world is suffering, because it has *forgotten* all of this [how to choose the right thing]. Europe today rather chooses the cheaper, the *diluted*, the more comfortable option. Instead of *own* children, immigrants, instead of work, speculation (...). We, Hungarians [chose the hard, but right option]: instead of immigrants, *own* children, (...) instead of raised hands, border protection (2016.10.23, emphasis mine).

"Choosing" immigration is equated with a "dilution" of national identity, and "forgetting" who they, as Europeans, are. Unlike in anti-refugee (or generally anti-immigration, xenophobic, or racist) discourses across Europe in both official rhetoric as well as media and popular discourse, where it is commonly claimed that the main threat the foreign men pose for "our" women – and thus to the body politic, the national land, and the nation itself (Žarkov 2001, Bracewell 2000, Farris 2017) – the threat for Hungary, if it succumbs to "the quota," is somewhat different. Although, as noted above, the sexualised threat of Muslim men is not absent from Orbán's speeches; the main danger is that by diluting our Christian population, we will lose our national identity and forget who we are. For example, throughout the 2016 March 15th speech, Orbán draws parallels between the Ottoman, Habsburg, and Soviet empires, and their unifying principle, to make Hungarians forget their nationality, and "lose" their love for the

homeland⁴³ – which is drawn in parallel with “Brussels” imperial move to impose a multicultural Europe with no clear national boundaries, as well as the refugee quota, and thus the presence of Muslims.

Orbán’s elaborations on Western European or EU policies on immigration are contrasted with “Hungary’s” “decision” to choose its “own” children – therefore, the core reason why Western Europe is “failing” is that they are not centring their national politics around families. Children, in this opposition, are portrayed as ensuring not only the survival of the nation, but the continuity of national identity itself. In the March 15th speech in 2017, Orbán said,

... it is precisely the *belief of belonging to the nation*, to the Hungarian nation, which will strengthen the backbone of many future generations. (...) We can never know in which Hungarian the *nation’s awakening word* will call out. (...) Our task is to preserve the country for [our children], to preserve the nation, and provide a support which will give them guidance in what they must do: ensure the nation’s continuity (2017.03.15, emphasis mine).

In “the belief in belonging to the Hungarian nation,” *belief* is nominalised, and is therefore the agent which acts through its vessels, the Hungarian citizens. It is therefore not just the citizens, it is this belief which will enable the nation to continue: as I wrote above, in Orbán’s conception of history, the spirit or belief of the nation reproduces through its great men: women just carry it out. As Anderson argues too, it is the nationalist belief which “[transforms] fatality into continuity” (1983, 11) and individual death into immortality, by making us part of our national community. On the one hand, this casts the net rather wide as to who belongs to the nation which here is more than the sum of its parts. On the other hand, it is also exclusionary, as only those devoted to the nation are part of it. Children, thus, can only become part of the nation when they believe in it, when their lives are believed into being part of “the epic, the common saga of our nation and freedom” (2017.03.15). Not only is the *national* identity the innermost centre of one’s identity, as shown before, but it is thus also the most precious, valuable thing

⁴³ “*Hazaszeretet.*”

one has: as long as we have our national identity by believing in it, we are part of the national continuity. “Freedom, if Hungarian, is beautiful even in its death” (2016.10.23) – even if everything is taken away by the “socialists” or the “internationalists,” the government, and Orbán himself, will protect and empower that inner core. Anderson argues that creating the “imagined community,” the nationalist belief is producing the continuity between the individual and eternity. In Orbán’s representation, children – the materialisation of “the nation’s will to remain young” (2017.02.10) – and therefore, the family, are the link creating continuity for the nation, and for eternity.

This is why “forgetting” who “we” are, what our “European,” “Christian,” and Hungarian values are, is so dangerous. The core of the danger is not primarily that “our” women will be violated by foreign men – but that they will dilute our identity of who we really are:

[Immigration] would mean that we would also become a country with a mixed culture in the foreseeable future, within our lifetime, *our national and Christian identity would be irreversibly shaken. And that would mean losing everything* we, here in the Carpathian Basin, (...) have been working for for a thousand years, for thirty-six generations (2017.09.16, emphasis mine).

Therefore, proper reproduction is not merely that within heterosexual and gender-hierarchical families – it is one within “traditional” families in the sense of them *living and embodying* a particular tradition of the Hungarian epic past. This tradition is, of course, a romanticized one, and is imagined retroactively (Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983). And, as Peterson argues, if the nation is conceptualised through “political homosociality,” that is, “abstract bonds between men” where women are not only biological, but also cultural reproducers of the nation; even the presence of foreign men is seen as threatening because potentially “disrupting” the continuity of the nation through reproduction (Peterson 1999, 48).

Orbán's account of Hungarian history is also a retroactive imagining in the sense that, as Tamás (2018) argues, he co-opts the 1848 and 1956 revolutions⁴⁴ into the right-wing political heritage; which, in Hungary, lacks a revolutionary tradition. And the nation that Orbán and his followers (as participants in these speeches) are imagining, as demonstrated above, is a war-nation. For a nation at war, hierarchies are crucial: there is only one leader, a chain of command, and one mission, outweighing personal differences and grievances. And if the nation is an army – or if the army is the agentic part of the nation – internal inequalities are not only obscured, but also naturalised (McClintock 1993). And crucially, they are based on a fundamental gender division and hierarchy: men become soldiers, women (whether actual women, or “the motherland”) bear children biologically – and reproduce the nation culturally (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989).

In light of Orbán's vision of the nation at war, his statement that “it is not history that makes demography – but *demography that makes history*” (2018.02.18) is not as far a departure from the punitive “winners write history,” as it first sounds. Losing, in this sense, alludes to a more than a century-long effort to raise the birth rate – which had always also been of political character, and not only economic; and was led by both politicians in power, as well as in opposition, seeking political legitimacy over each other; this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. “Losing” in this demographic struggle means the “death of the nation”: the demographic anxiety first gaining salience in the post-Trianon 1930s; maintained throughout the state socialist period, widely considered to be anti-national; and resurfacing in the early post-state socialist decade within the context of rebuilding national and nationalist politics.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Respectively republican and liberalising, comparable to today's progressives.

⁴⁵ A noteworthy example of Hungarian post-Trianon demographic anxiety is the well-known Hungarian saying that “the Carpathian Basin will belong to those who can birth it full with their offspring” (“*a Kárpát-medence azé lesz, aki teleszüli*”), which is widely attributed to Ceaușescu (within the context of the abortion ban and its implications for Hungarians in Transylvania), and used in a variety of contexts for contemporary politics. However, the saying is not known in Romania; and under Ceaușescu there was no ethno-national discrimination in the context of reproduction in general, or the abortion ban in particular, specifically with Hungarians in mind – the only ethnicity against whom such discrimination was present were the Roma, but to a negligible degree (Gail

Yuval-Davis argues that there are three “hegemonic discourses” of “population control” (1996, 18) and demography within nationalist politics – of which two are relevant here. The first is the “people as power” discourse: population growth is claimed to be of utmost importance for the nation’s future, and women are positioned as being responsible for it, who are therefore “called upon” to give birth. However, Yuval-Davis highlights, the ‘need for people’ is primarily a “need for males” (Ibid.) –the nation’s strength (equated with population growth) and its agency are thus gendered to be masculine. Additionally, she argues, in settler societies, such as Israel, the ‘populate or perish’ discourse is particularly salient: Israel had numerous *maternity* benefit schemes to encourage *women’s* willingness to have more children, as well as an award for ‘Heroine Mothers’ who had at least ten children. At the same time, rhetorically, population growth is claimed to be in itself a tool of international domination: Yuval-Davis quotes Shimon Peres, who, as Foreign Minister, stated that ‘Politics is a matter of demography, not geography’ (Ibid., 19). Although Hungary is not a settler society in the same way, it does oppose Hungarians to the Roma on ethnic grounds, as well as to the Jewish on religious grounds, and therefore a parallel can be drawn – therefore, this conceptualisation is nevertheless revealing: as we can see from Orbán’s speeches, he continually creates an image of the nation-at-war, as fighting imperialism, as being endangered – not by immigration itself, but by a decline in “patriotic,” “traditional” family reproduction. Orbán, too, makes numerous statements on Hungary, a small nation, succeeding (surviving) despite being surrounded by “populous empires” – and, of course, he has also proclaimed that “demography makes history,” or that “The world has changed a lot in 167 years. Instead of breaking each other’s heads in, opponents now count each other instead” (2015.03.15). The second discourse of population

Kligman, personal email message, June 7, 2018). My research has been unable to locate the origin of this saying; however, its obscurity in Romania, but widespread usage in Hungary strongly suggests that the Hungarians created the saying to express their aspirations of spatial domination through reproduction, which they attributed to Ceaușescu in order to justify their own demographic anxieties.

control for Yuval-Davis is the “eugenicist” discourse which, instead of the size of the nation, focuses on its ‘quality’; mainly through selective reproductive policies targeting specific women based on their ethnicity and/or class (Ibid., 19). The Hungarian parallels of this discourse will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.8 Constructions of the family

For Anderson, nationalist belief creates the continuity and immortality for the individual persons; and Gal and Kligman argue that in the process of “moralising” politics through the issues of reproduction, the family is often seen as “providing continuity with the past” (2000, 68). For Orbán, clearly, the national family is thus seen as the locus creating continuity with the future as well as the past.

Turning to Orbán’s explicit discussions of families and family policies, we can see similar patterns: families are of utmost importance to the nation’s future. Firstly, even though he does not say that having children is a duty, it is nevertheless an act of national importance: it is done *for the nation, for the homeland*.⁴⁶ In turn, the nation reciprocates with support; both financial, in the form of welfare benefits, as well as existential, in the form of *national* acknowledgement:

We set ourselves as goal (...) that those, who decide to have children, who image their life within a family, that they should feel not only that they do everything for this homeland, but that the homeland does everything it can for them as well. (2015.11.05)

However, even though Orbán, in several speeches and interviews says that it is “everyone’s decision whether to have children or not,” at the same time, he asserts that having children is crucial in order for the nation to survive. For example, discussing the aims of Fidesz-KDNP’s family policy in Kossuth Rádió:

⁴⁶ “*A haza.*”

The situation is such that not enough children are born in Hungary. We don't want to horn in on anyone's life (...) but it is important to say that if there won't be enough children, we will fade away⁴⁷ (2017.05.19).

Children are, thus, a way to ensure the nation's future: in several other speeches, Orbán proclaims explicitly that “future” means survival – and a precondition for survival is for “us” to “remain Hungarian”:

I believe that the families hold up – like a spine – the whole country. I believe that everyone who has children, must be supported – from our whole heart and ability (...) and if we will do this, we, Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, will be more numerous. I believe that we, Hungarians, only have a future if we remain Hungarian. (2018.02.18)

In the speech given at the 2015 Demographic Forum, children also mean the survival of the entire European civilisation:

We Hungarians, we know that children multiply their parents' strength, multiply the family's strength, while the children's generation multiplies a nation's, a country's, and finally our whole civilisation's strength. (2015.11.05)

And, in line with Orbán's general view of politics, future and survival are at stake, because “we” are under attack by the refugees, the “Muslim masses,” and the spread of Islam – which is threatening not only Christian faith, but European civilisation itself. In several speeches and interviews, Orbán positions Hungarian family policy in opposition with alleged EU immigration policy through re-orienting the discussion by bringing in the issue of immigration: asked about family policies, he starts answering with comments about African or Middle Eastern countries' emigration and birth rates; opening the Demographic Forum, he spends the first third of the speech detailing the “failures” of “Brussels” asylum policies:

Everyone can see that Europe is being hit by a never before seen wave of migration.⁴⁸ The politics that Brussels is carrying out now will lead to a civilisational catastrophe. The nature of the civilisational catastrophe is such that it doesn't happen overnight, but instead it comes about slowly, but

⁴⁷ “*El fogunk fogyni.*”

⁴⁸ “*Népvándorlási hullám.*”

irremeably, as differences in fertility and new waves of migration transform the composition and culture of the European population. (2016.09.12)

In the above quote, Orbán makes “Brussels” responsible for the “spread of Islam,” and thus the looming “civilisational catastrophe.” Since, as demonstrated before, in his representation, politics is a series of zero-sum conflicts, and at the same time, the nation is depicted to be at war, the antagonist is therefore not Islam, but “Brussels.” Orbán constructs the following dichotomies. “Brussels” is enabling immigration – this claim appears in a clause contrastive with a mention of Hungary’s family policies, implying that “Brussels” does not have family policies at all. The consequence of having asylum policies instead of family policy is, firstly, “terror,” and secondly, the implication that “Brussels” is anti-national. Hungary, however, has a family policy; which means that only Hungary is protecting the future – of its own nation as well as of the European civilisation. Not merely expressed in the same war-like vocabulary as general descriptions of politics, demographic growth is depicted as a tool of politics and civilisational conflicts: the representation of processes as either-or outcomes, as well as the comparison of demographic “loss” through less births to the losses in World War II (2017.05.25), or the proclamation that demography makes history, point to this representation.

Given the enormous attention given to issues of national reproduction, it is however noteworthy, that references to women (and issues of sexuality) are almost completely absent not just from his speeches in general, but also from direct discussions of families and family policy. As a great number of feminist scholars of nationalism argued before, women’s sexuality and its role in the nation’s biological reproduction, as well as the creation and maintenance of national boundaries, is central to nationalisms (see e.g. Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989; McClintock 1993; Gal and Kligman 2000) – therefore, an attention to these issues in Orbán’s rhetoric could have been expected. The absence of sexuality is less surprising: after the abortion debates (the most common topic to articulate attitudes to women’s sexuality and reproductive capacities in politics) of the 1990s subsided, it has been present only in traces in Fidesz-

KDNP's discourse as a whole, and abortion as an issue does not figure as a reference point in Orbán's discourse on reproduction. In the last decade, it has mostly been brought up by the far-right party Jobbik, in discussions about the Istanbul Convention.⁴⁹ Therefore, in Orbán's discourse on reproduction and families, the question of national boundaries is characteristically not expressed in terms of women (and/or their bodies and sexuality) bearing the nation's boundaries. One exception is his claim that the goal of family policy ought to be the "restoration" of "natural reproduction on the continent" (2017.05.25). As he does not elaborate, it is unclear what this is a reference to, but some connections can nevertheless be made. One, in two speeches Orbán made passing references to technology's sinister potentials in reproduction – so one interpretation can be a denunciation of reproductive technologies such as IVF.⁵⁰ However, since technology otherwise has no discursive presence, a more likely interpretation is that "natural" refers to "ethnically homogenous." Before this statement, Orbán spent many paragraphs discussing the "failed" asylum policies of "Brussels," which he put in contrast to Hungary's family policies; "natural," therefore implies reproduction without the presence of other "cultures" and "civilisations"; in line with Peterson's argument above – that the presence of other cultures threatens to "disrupt" the "temporal" continuity of the nation (Peterson 1999, 48). At the same time, although the Roma are not present in Orbán's speeches, ethnic and class stratification have been a very strong characteristic of Fidesz-KDNP family policies; discussed in Chapter 4. Taking these factors into consideration, a call for "natural

⁴⁹ For years, Jobbik opposed the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on the grounds that it does not address "the most wide-spread and most brutal form of domestic violence," abortion. See: <https://444.hu/2015/03/02/a-jobbik-nem-tamogatja-a-nok-ellen-iranyulo-eroszak-elleni-europai-egyezmenyt-mert-abortionuz> However, running up to the last elections in April 2018, even Jobbik changed their position to support the ratification; see <https://abcug.hu/szocialis-ugyekben-a-jobbik-is-baloldalibb-a-fidesznel/>

⁵⁰ In Poland, the announcements on the planned ban on abortion was accompanied with the announcement of the state no longer supporting the costs of IVF treatment for infertile couples; making a strong connection between restricting reproductive rights and "natural," i.e. not technologically aided reproduction. See more: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/02/poland-end-state-funding-ivf-treatment> This interpretation, however, is not very likely, as there are insufficient similarities between the Polish and Hungarian debates on reproductive rights.

reproduction” most clearly points to hetero, married, fertile – and ethnically non-Roma – families.

Yet, in his speeches, Orbán nevertheless engages in a lot of “imagining” (Anderson 1983; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989; Martin 2000) of the nation’s boundaries through discussions of specifically *Hungarian* families. As Martin argues, “the solidification and maintenance of both real and imagined national boundaries involves a disciplining of those bodies onto which the image of the nation has been projected” (2000, 66). Reproductive Hungarian bodies are “disciplined” both on the discursive and policy levels. Discursively, Orbán very clearly includes families of the *határontúli* Hungarians, and potentially also of emigrated Hungarians living in Western Europe: “We will also open *our* family support system to our compatriots staying or living abroad. Cautiously, but we’ll open it” (2017.05.25). These bodies are pushed to reproduce, even abroad (although on “*our*” benefits), because that will enlarge the Hungarian nation; both in the cases of *határontúli* and emigrated Hungarians. Further, as Yuval-Davis also argues, a common pattern within nationalisms is that even a rhetoric of differentially encouraging women from different social groups (e.g. ethnic or class groups), as well as institutionalising their differing access to family benefit schemes, are both part of the eugenicist discourse of controlling reproduction within the nation (1996). On the other hand, as demonstrated in the beginning of the chapter, “liberals” are not considered to be part of the nation. At the same time, on the level of policy as well, Fidesz-KDNP also excludes the poor and the Roma from the reproductive generosity of the state-nation, as will become clearer in Chapter 4.

However, the explicit absence of gender difference and/or sexuality from discourse, in the context of the *national* unity, is highly significant in itself; and Orbán’s de-sexed discussion of reproduction reveals a great deal about how women and reproduction are conceptualised. If women are taken out of the discourse on reproduction, their reproductive ability is inscribed as

something that happens naturally, and, taken for granted, is objectified. No wonder women appear so rarely in Orbán's speeches (even as *mothers*) – and then in very particular ways. They appear once as objects⁵¹ – but commonly, they appear as *asszonyok*: a term difficult to translate, which has connotations of mature age, respectability, and belonging to a man.⁵² Even when the radio interviewer asks him about *women* (*nők*), Orbán continues to talk about *asszonyok*. (See another example in footnote 30).

As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989) argue, one of the five ways of women's participation in "national processes" they differentiate is reproducing the nation's boundaries; and in this framework, even encouragement or discouragement of women to have children for the nation is a form of control. Additionally, beyond the number of children they ought to have, women "are also controlled in terms of the 'proper' way they should have" children (1989, 9). Both these aspects are strongly present in Fidesz-KDNP's governance: in his rhetoric analysed here, Orbán indiscriminately urges women (hidden within "the family") to reproduce – and as he announced in his first radio interview after the elections, he wants to "make a comprehensive agreement with *women*" about children,⁵³ confirming that he does indeed see solely women as being responsible for reproduction. At the same time, the new Fundamental Law defines a family as the marriage of one man and one woman, and their children; and Fidesz-KDNP family policy strongly favours the reproduction of affluent and non-Roma women, within the structure of the hetero family. This family is, for Orbán, also *heteropatriarchal*: the nation's conceptualisation as a military-nation described above and the invisibilising of women in the

⁵¹ "If [someone thinks of Hungary,] they think of Budapest, of the Balaton, of the beautiful Hungarian women, of *gulyás* soup, and of good wines" (2018.02.18).

⁵² For example, "*az asszony*" in colloquial use means "the wife."

⁵³ In the interview, Orbán said, "I think it's important that [women] can say, and that we can understand, what they want, because having children is the most personal issue, but an issue important for the community." See here: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-a-kossuth-radio-180-perc-cimu-musoraban-25/>

After the interview, the government announced a National Consultation about childrearing – which, despite Orbán's emphasis on wanting a "deal" with "women," will be sent out to every citizen. See more: http://hvg.hu/itthon/20180605_Nyugi_a_nagypapa_is_konzultalhat_majd_a_gyerekvallalasrol

reproductive process both point to hierarchical gender constructions. And, as Verdery argues, if reproduction is constructed as a *national* issue, and thus women's obedience to participate in it as necessary for the nation's survival and strength, that necessitates the construction of a "new patriarchy" (1994, 255) – even if with democratic means; meaning the construction of political agendas which would broaden social equality and women's reproductive rights; as *anti-national* (Verdery 1999).

Closely connected is the concern over the integrity of national borders: biological as well as cultural reproduction of the nation is inseparable from the maintenance of difference from other groups, and thus, of spatial integrity (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989; Peterson 1999). In Orbán's case, this is significant not only because of outsiders coming in, but also because of the large numbers of people leaving Hungary, temporarily or permanently; and the *határontúli* Hungarians living in the surrounding countries but mentioned regularly among the addressees of Orbán's speeches. In this regard, Orbán's claim to "open *our* family support system to Hungarian compatriots staying or living abroad" (that is, Hungarian emigrants) is a discordant point – as, on the one hand, it suggests a progressive approach towards Hungarians working abroad and to extending benefits to those previously excluded – e.g. the 2012 regulation on having to work in Hungary after attending university.⁵⁴ On the other hand, the possessive pronoun suggests that the family support system is not theirs by the right of being a citizen, and they will graciously be included in it, into the group of *nationally significant* families of which they are not automatically considered to be part. Therefore, this remark also illustrates how the integrity of geographical borders plays a role in conceiving the integrity of the nation within it.

⁵⁴ In 2012, the Fidesz-KDNP government announced that higher education students not paying tuition fees (i.e. receiving a governmental scholarship) would be obligated to work in Hungary for twice the amount of time they studied within twenty years after their graduation. Later on, the length of time to work in Hungary was decreased to the same length as the studies. See more: http://eduline.hu/erettsegi_felveteli/2014/5/27/hallgatoi_nyilatkozat_felveteli_6ISGCY

Discussions of reproduction do not only serve the purpose of establishing or maintaining gender hierarchy. As Gal and Kligman argue, “public debates about reproduction” (2000, 17) do heavy political work to “moralise” politics (Ibid., 29); that is, debates on reproduction have an ability to endow with moral credibility, legitimacy, and “political authority” (Ibid., 15) political actors who engage in them. “Discussion and control of reproduction” (Ibid., 17) in itself can “reconstitute” (Ibid., 15) or “recast” the “relationship between” (Ibid., 21) state power and the population – especially when both are conceptualised and expressed in national terms. Therefore, the deployment of reproduction in nationalist political discourse enables “[governments to justify their] acts as the protection of ‘national essence’” (Ibid., 27); and, crucially, the legitimation offered by reproduction extends to other areas of governance too. In Orbán’s speeches, the “recasting” of nationhood by way of the imagining and the protection of its essence – as well as the claim to political legitimacy, is done through representing the nation at grave danger to which the government’s idea of reproduction is the solution. In other words, Orbán is moralising politics both through reproduction, as well as nationalism; which are constitutive of each other: reproduction gains significance within the nation, and the nation is expressed dependant on reproduction.

However, Gal and Kligman’s account is an analysis of post-state socialist nationalisms and reproduction debates – of social contexts of intense transformation; it is important to examine why there is such affinity between transitological literature on gender and the discourses Orbán references, thirty years later: even though he does come out of the post-state socialist political context Gal and Kligman describe. If reproduction “makes politics” by “reconstituting political authority,” why and how is Orbán *re*-constituting his? Szikra argues that Orbán has been justifying the Fidesz-KDNP government’s ‘unorthodox measures’ – i.e. the radical and undemocratic system overhaul – with domestic as well as global crises since the beginning of his reign in 2010 (Szikra 2014); and in the first post-election radio interview, he used similar

justifications.⁵⁵ Furthermore, as demonstrated in this chapter, Orbán has been consistently encouraging the image of the nation-at-war, and fostering an atmosphere of impending revolution in his speeches, in a way himself creating (the appearance of) a social crisis. Social upheavals, in turn, often come with crises in both gender identity (Bracewell 2000) as well as national identity (Tolz and Booth 2005). Orbán, therefore, through the maintenance of social crisis, aims to reassert both. Gal argues that in the Hungarian post-state socialist context, the issue of abortion became a powerful site for the articulation of anti-communist opposition politics (1994). Arguably, then – and in line with Gal and Kligman (2000) – today the wider discourse around reproduction and demography itself can be interpreted as having been recontextualised as “a population issue” and not as, for example, an economic issue; and thus, the act of not participating in *national* reproduction as a “cultural rather than economic problem, a challenge to national identity” (1994, 284). In that context of “reasserting nationhood” through reproduction, communism became equated with being anti-national; and reproduction became a site for an “argument in absentia” with communism, a site through which anti-communists, moralising their politics, positioned themselves against their constitutive other. Today, Orbán is in an argument in absentia (both explicitly and implicitly) with communism, too – as well as with all the things he constructs as being of one lineage and continuity with communism; anything represented as an anti-national oppression. In fact, “restoring natural reproduction” is an echo of the anti-abortion debates in the early post-state socialist years: depicting communism as having derailed proper, moral, reproduction by allowing abortion, or only encouraging reproduction for the workforce, politicians of the 1990s “promised to uphold the unchanging forces of a natural gender order” (Gal and Kligman 2000,

⁵⁵ In the interview, Orbán said that so far, there had always been something (a political crisis) which diverted his energies from leading the government properly. See: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-a-kossuth-radio-180-perc-cimu-musoraban-26/>

29). Today, in Orbán's rhetoric of demography and the nation, reproduction is recontextualised as a tool for the nation-at-war, a tool for "making history."

Chapter 4: Precedents to Fidesz-KDNP's anti-genderism

In Chapter 3 I established that Orbán primarily constructs reproduction as a national issue, *proper* reproduction as necessary for the nation's survival – and thus, a tool for political strength. In this chapter, I discuss developments in Hungarian social policies since the state socialist era. Synthesising scholarship on Hungarian social policies and discourses on reproduction in the past decades, I demonstrate not only how family-centric social policies have been highly central for Fidesz-KDNP's governance since the 1990s, but also how reproduction “made politics” (Gal and Kligman 2000); that is, how policy change throughout three post-state socialist decades has been driven primarily by political necessities rather than economic considerations. Therefore, I argue that for the transformations of family policy specifically, a family-centric approach – that is, an understanding of specifically heteropatriarchal families as fundamental to the nation's survival, and thus the subordination of women's various positions in *society* (e.g. women as citizens or as workers) to their reproductive capacity in the *nation* – had already been very prominent before Fidesz-KDNP took office in 2010. The representations prevalent in Orbán's rhetoric are therefore in continuity with much older discourses on nationalising reproduction, and moralising nationalist politics through reproduction.

First, I will briefly discuss family policy before 1989, before turning to the transformations of the state socialist model in the 1990s. Finally, I will discuss the developments in the 2000s, which, I argue, are direct precursors to Fidesz-KDNP's family policies after their come to power in 2010.

4.1 State socialism: leading up to the 1990s' demographic anxieties

Preoccupation with the *nation's* survival, manifested in political claims about women and biological reproduction and positing the latter as being essential to the former, have been present in Hungarian politics for more than a century. Although the family policy model of the early 1990s was passed down directly from state socialism, family policy itself was first legislated in the 1890s, in a context of nation-building within the Austro-Hungarian Empire; which included state-run kindergartens and a few weeks of paid maternity leave for factory workers (Szikra and Szelewa 2010). Families, however, were constructed as the key to the nation's survival most prominently in the 1920s-1930s, after the post-World War I Treaty of Trianon and the loss of two-thirds of Hungarian territories – when the association between a declining birth rate and the “death of the nation” became especially strong and explicit. It was during these post-war years that Hungarian nationalism turned from inclusionary to exclusionary: fixated on the concepts of ‘death of the nation’ and the “racially threatened culture” (Ránki 1999, 2), it became focused both on raising the birth rate and on ‘purifying’ the nation from the non-ethnically Hungarian – and, becoming conceptually closely intertwined with Christianity, also from Jews (Ibid., 3).⁵⁶ In classical biopolitical fashion, after the Treaty, the state ensured the recording of large amounts of data on birth rates and abortion, testifying to a political fixation on population decline – and, based on those data, enabling future claims-making on reproduction in the following decades (Gal 1994, 269; Szikra and Szelewa 2010, 93; Szikra 2014, 494).

During state socialism, women's emancipation was necessitated not only economically (the need to have more workers to reconstruct the post-war state) and ideologically (the

⁵⁶ During the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the liberal nobility carrying out the modernisation of society “in order to create an independent nation-state” (Ránki 1999, 1) sought to emancipate Jews and relied on them for both economic modernisation and strengthening of the middle class as well as to increase the number of nationally Hungarian within the Monarchy (Ránki 1999).

communist ideal of women's liberation), but also politically: emancipating women to be full citizens enabled the state to have a more direct control over them, instead of the previous indirect control through their fathers or husbands (Fodor 2003, 154). Therefore, family life, and, hence, social welfare policy became the sites for the state's most direct attempts at shaping gender relations (Zimmermann 2010). However, as in other areas of social life, the main operating principle was "avoiding" (Zimmermann 2010, 1) any serious challenge to the pre-communist gender order. Therefore, even though various welfare policies did address women's needs independently from their husbands or families, the nuclear, heterosexual family remained the state's main orientation point (Ibid., 6). In both official and popular discourses, reproductive work never ceased to be a women's task, and the attempts to transform parts of it into paid care work, or paying women for childrearing, did not challenge the notion that solely women are responsible for it. Men's superior position within the spheres of politics, work, and the family, therefore, remained largely unchallenged (see especially Fodor 2003); the ideal family of state socialism, therefore, despite the communist ideal, remained heteropatriarchal.

Although the conventional memory of state socialism is that there was near-universal employment and welfare for all throughout its four and a half decades, as Haney (2002) argues, the welfare system went through different stages of defining legitimate need, and thus of defining the legitimately needy groups: the three main periods were the "welfare society" (1948-68), the "maternalist welfare state" (1968-85), and the "liberal welfare state" (1985-1996). As this periodisation already makes clear, the welfare state was "maternalised" even before it became oriented towards the materially needy: in other words, around the 1960s women were constructed by the welfare system primarily as *mothers*, and their consequent needs were separated from their belonging not only to the sphere of work, but also their families and husbands. It was also during this period that demography, as a scientific tool of population control, became central to designing the welfare system; relying on data that had been being

collected after Trianon. Although this meant a relative withdrawal of the state from reproductive issues compared to the strict post-war period, Haney asserts that social policy never ceased to be ideologically laden in terms of what was considered to be the “proper” reproduction for society. The importance of proper reproduction was highly salient even in the period of the relative state withdrawal, in that the scientifically driven and highly specialised welfare system was specifically targeted at women *as mothers*, and thus instead of e.g. encouraging their better integration into the sphere of work (as in the preceding welfare period between the 1940–50s), or targeting their material needs and lacks; it worked to “[shape] *how women mother*” (Haney 2002, 11; emphasis mine). In other words, by defining women’s needs as *mothers’ needs* in order for them to be considered legitimate needs, while depoliticising this process with a highly specialised welfare structure legitimised as neutral by the establishment of and reliance on the administrative-scientific field of demography (Ibid., 10), the state began to narrow down women’s possibilities for identity and gender construction. As Haney argues, by differentiating women’s and men’s legitimate needs, welfare systems are simultaneously based on and are producing distinct gender relations, and the definition of need itself becomes highly gendered (Ibid., 13).

As Zimmermann argues, although the state socialist welfare system provided for large segments of society, it tied welfare to employment and to the family: provisions for those outside of either were very limited (Zimmermann 2010, 6); encouraging reproduction within the family. Specifically in the case of childcare, from the second half of the century onwards, state socialist family policies included a “tracked” system of maternity leaves: depending on their employment status and income before birth, they were eligible for either a two or three-year paid leave; they had the possibility to work part-time after their child’s first year; and kindergartens (as well as other forms of socialised care work) were widely available for working women (Haney 2002; Fodor 2003; Zimmermann 2010). This stratification of benefit

according to employment status and sector (i.e. the disproportionate disadvantage of rural women employed in agriculture and/or the Roma) and thus, social class, strongly encouraged the reproduction of educated, higher-earning, married women.

During state socialism, in official discourse, the rationale for boosting birth rates was not expressed in national terms, that is, it was not strengthening the Hungarian *nation* which was the goal. At the same time, birth rates themselves, as well as their locating within the family – assumed to be married, heterosexual, and heteropatriarchal – were the focus throughout the decades. Therefore, although the welfare system transformed to be less generous, stricter, and more punitive in the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, it is still important to consider the 1960s–80s system among the precursors to contemporary family policies for several reasons. First, although there were several austerity-driven policies during the 1990s, departing from the more generous maternalist system of the 1960s–80s, these were later overturned by the 1998–2002 Fidesz-KDNP government, whose governing direction was later reinforced and continued during their governing since 2010 (and to some degree, even during the MSZP-led governments between 2002–2010). Secondly, the maternalist welfare system established a high level of sex segregation (that is, it sharply differentiated between policies aimed at men and women, resulting in their widely differing possibilities for participation in the welfare system), which only intensified in the following decades (Haney 2002, 16). In other words, “family-” and “child-” benefits were predominantly aimed at women, whose roles and needs for national reproduction were sharply separated from men’s on the one hand, and from their other needs as workers, citizens, family members, on the other. Thirdly, the punitive late-state socialist period – especially within the sphere of *reproduction* and the *politics* of reproduction (in the sense of Gal and Kligman, 2000) – brought not only meagre benefits and a stricter definition of need, but it also meant an increase in state control and “pronatalist demagoguery” (Haney 2002, 6) present to this day.

4.2 The nationalist discourse around the abortion debate in the 1990s

After the end of state socialism in 1989, Hungary did not implement new family policies for several years, but maintained a wide range of “family protection policies” originating in the state socialist period (Inglot et al. 2012) – with the exception of policies on abortion (Fodor et al. 2002), to which I will return shortly. As the adaptation to a market economy led to enormous job losses (around 20% of all jobs, [cite](#)), deeply affecting the population, the state kept the majority of its protective welfare policies, and introduced new ones – although the amount of benefits was reduced (Inglot et al. 2012). Family policies in particular remained an important target: as Inglot et al. argue, the protection of families – assumed to be heterosexually reproductive – remained a “national goal” (2012, 28) for the newly emerging political elite.

As mentioned above, policies on abortion were a striking exception in the immediate legislation after 1989. Fodor et al. point out that although in family policy in general there were no changes for several years, in practically all formerly state socialist states, abortion was among the first issues to be discussed after 1989 (Fodor et al. 2002, 481) – in line with Inglot et al.’s argument on declaring families a “national goal” soon after the end of state socialism (2012). In other words, raising the birth rate came to be considered of national importance, and heterosexual, reproductive families were seen to be an insurance to achieve this. Although during the socialist regime, legislation on abortion also went through periods of stricter or more lax periods, the overall approach to abortion and contraception remained as generally available to women (Gal 1994), and the attempt to ban it in the early 1990s did not go through either. Therefore, in its post-state socialist re-evaluation, the issue of abortion served as a node for the articulation of anti-communist politics. As Gal and Kligman (2000) argue, political claims about reproduction in general, and abortion in particular serve as a way of moral legitimization

in politics. In the Hungarian late and post-state socialist context, this meant a series of recontextualisations (Fairclough 2003, 32) of the meaning of abortion: that is, the conceptualisation of abortion (its understanding as being part of women's access to reproductive choices as well and their lax regulation within state socialism; or as an economic issue) became appropriated by the nationalist anti-communist opposition, and re-conceptualised as an issue of national reproduction, and by extension, as a proof on communism's anti-nationalness. This process of appropriating and changing meaning was part of what Gal and Kligman (2000) refer to as the moralisation of politics through public engagement in discussions on reproduction, which conferred moral and thus political legitimacy on those who engage in them.

As Gal (1994) argues, in Eastern Europe in general, and Hungary in particular, – even at the height of state socialism and its woman-inclusive political agenda – discourses around abortion had less to do with actual women's reproductive rights or with sexuality – but instead were strongly connected with questions of “national identity and defense of civility” (1994, 284). Preoccupation with such questions, in turn, intensified during times when politics was organised around state rebuilding (1994, 284); and the connection between women's reproductive capacities and the nation crystallised in the years shortly before and after 1989. Within the context of anti-communist oppositional politics, abortion became a central site for the articulation of identities and ideologies, and for the production and maintenance of political legitimisation on both nationalist or liberal sides of the anti-communist opposition (1994, 258). Thus, especially on the nationalist–conservative side, questions of abortion and reproduction were recontextualised not as economic issues or as having to do with women's or families' personal choices, but, due to their primary framing within the concern for low birth rates, as political issues of *collective* magnitude – and specifically of *national* significance (1994, 269). Similarly today, when Orbán talks about the importance of the family, he assumes it to be

married, heterosexual, heteropatriarchal, and reproductive – and represents bearing children to be a national duty.

The basis for such recontextualisation were the nationalist–conservative opposition’s assumptions that, first, communism was anti-national *because* it allowed abortions; and that the reproduction that communism fostered was not “natural,” proper reproduction because it either allowed the abortion of thousands of Hungarians, or because it only encouraged births in order to have more workers (Gal and Kligman 2000, 29). And, second, since women were seen to have benefited from the relatively liberal provisions on abortion as well as other emancipatory policies, they had allegedly benefited from communism itself; and thus were seen as having had been co-opted by communism against proper reproduction. Therefore, women themselves, as well as political agendas for furthering their social equality and reproductive rights were seen as anti-national (Verdery 1994), and, on the discursive level, were discredited from political participation in issues of national rebuilding. Therefore, anti-communist oppositional politics in the 1980s and 1990s were generally opposing an expansion of women’s rights and were “suspicious” of women’s “power (...) to decide about reproduction” (Gal 1994, 284). Consequently, as Verdery argues, the post-communist nationalist opposition’s goal was to institute a “new patriarchy” – this time with democratic means (1994, 255).

This recontextualisation took place within the larger context of the reconfiguration of Hungarian political life, when the anti-communist, nationalist opposition claimed to be leading the nation’s ‘rebirth’ (Verdery 1994). Politics of reproduction and family policies were “retraditionalised” (1994, 250): in other words, post-state socialist nationalist politics called for a ‘return’ to ‘traditional values’ in the spheres of family life and religion; at the same time, the family’s image was idealised as “providing continuity with the past” and being a “constant

in a world of social uncertainty" (Gal and Kligman 2000, 68-69) – which largely meant a reassertion of women's place as the home (Verdery 1994). And although women participated in oppositional politics in large numbers, the majority of the high-profile nationalist-conservative oppositional politicians were men – who, proclaiming themselves as delivering the national rebirth, preoccupied themselves with women's reproductive capacities and rights. As McClintock argues (1993), images of the family used to describe the nation as well as social change serve both to sanction social hierarchy within its "putative unity of interests" (1993, 64), as well as to frame social change – which might be conflict-ridden or even "violent", as a "natural, organic" process. It is in this sense that periods of political upheaval serve for the emerging political elites to reassert national (Tolz and Booth 2005) as well as gender identity (Bracewell 2000). Simultaneously, as McClintock argues, the framing of the family as ahistorical, a repository of old traditions, serves to position especially women as, within the family, carriers of the national tradition – and thus, culture, and ultimately, essence.

When Orbán now refers to the purpose of family policy as "restoring natural reproduction on the continent," he echoes this context of political transformation and the "reconstitution" of political authority (Gal and Kligman 2000, 15). With this statement, he suggests that reproduction is now not "natural," not proper because the family is not "in the first place of young people's hearts," implying low rates of marriage and childbirth – and crucially, the presence of immigrants and refugees in Europe, which he represents to be at the centre of Western European states' social policy, instead of family policy. At the same time, habitually referring to the revolutionary and "genuine system change" ("*valódi rendszerváltás*") and to the impending revolution against the imperial forces of "Brussels" he, like his 1990s predecessors and contemporaries, also positions himself as a revolutionary, an anti-imperialist, and the leader carry out the nation's rebirth; as well as reinforces his own image as the genuine anti-imperialist heir of the 1989 *rendszerváltás*. Additionally, his representation of the national

duty of childbearing is clearly gendered: women and all aspects of care work involved in childrearing are almost completely absent from his rhetoric –men lead the nation through history, which *belief* can make you part of.

As several scholars point out, reproduction is therefore not merely a site for “producing” and “legitimizing” (Gal 1994, 259; Gal and Kligman 2000) power for political groups – in the Hungarian post-state socialist context, it continued to be an “argument in absentia with state socialism that no longer [existed]” (Gal 1994, 284) – and thus also arguably, with anything ideologised by nationalist political groups to be ‘against the nation.’

4.3 Developments in family policy in the 2000s, and 2010s

After the 1990s, the liberal-turned-conservative Fidesz-KDNP and the socialist-liberal MSZP-SZDSZ coalition (Hungarian Socialist Party and Alliance of Free Democrats, respectively) were the main actors on the political landscape. MSZP continued to be widely seen as the successors of communism; and in the years after 2000, this perception also became accompanied with the continuous loss of the socialist-liberal governments’ political credibility. These two tendencies translated into easily mobilisable support for conservative, familialist, traditionalist social policies; and even when MSZP did introduce reforms in social policy, these were not significant enough to change the conservative leaning of the welfare system. During the 2010s and definitively by the early 2010s, neither the conservative nor the liberal governments were willing to commit to a “reorientation of conservative family policies” (meaning the family’s centrality to the welfare system; e.g. favouring benefit transfers to families over investment into care services), or to an expansion of social equalities, such as gender equality or the social inclusion of the poor (Inglot et al. 2012, 36). Inglot et al. argue that this longstanding tendency (present since the 1980s, as described in section 4.2) had been the main reason, the “most powerful insurance” for the entrenchment of conservative politics

with very little chance for oppositions to contest it (2012, 40). Under the Orbán government after the 2010 elections, social policy has seen an “accelerated merger of conservative, pro-natalist ideologies with neoliberal emphasis on individual rights reserved primarily” for the “emerging urban middle classes” and wealthy “working families” (Ibid., 41). In other words, what Verdery described in 1994 as the construction of a “new patriarchy” with democratic means, continued – and has been the program of the Orbán governments as a reinforcement of “traditional state paternalism” (Ibid.; see also Szikra 2014; and Enyedi 2016 on the mixture of paternalism and elitism in Fidesz-KDNP’s governance in Chapter 2).

The social policies of the socialist MSZP government between 1994–1998 had many elements of austerity, neoliberal governance, and increased state control (Haney 2002; Fodor et al. 2002). As Haney argues, this contradiction (of a nominally socialist government introducing austerity measures) is due to MSZP’s efforts to shed their communist legacy and their wide-spread image of the successors of communism. Entering into coalition with a liberal party and adopting an IMF and World Bank-type economic discourse, MSZP “[abandoned] its prior commitment to social justice as overly idealistic and outdated” (2002, 184). State spending on social benefits decreased significantly, maternity benefits became financially restricted and means-tested. GYED (*gyermekgondozási díj*, childcare benefit), the two-year income-based childcare benefit was planned to be abolished – which was prevented by a mobilisation by several women’s organisations (Szikra and Szelewa 2010); and a successful mobilisation of the rhetoric of mothers’ and children’s welfare.

For one term, Fidesz-KDNP formed a government between 1998–2002, led by Viktor Orbán. Among their first actions, they reinstated the universal system of maternity benefits (Szikra and Szelewa 2010) – however, even though benefits were no longer means-tested, applicants’ households and parenting practices were inspected. On the one hand, this meant

that every mother was entitled to some sort of benefit, on the other, it was also this period when Fidesz-KDNP really began establishing a tracked system similar to the maternalist system of state socialism, built to “channel” women into particular tracks (Fodor et al. 2002, 487), meaning that, since benefits were distributed based on employment status and especially income, the welfare system became strongly shaped to reproduce and strengthen class segregation; since less educated and low-earning (or unemployed) mothers – who are more likely to be rural and/or Roma, and thus have significantly less work opportunities – receive significantly less in the universal GYES (childcare allowance), than women in employment or education, who receive the GYED (childcare benefit); which reproduces their social situation. Furthermore, although the benefit system was fairly generous, it reflected a return to the construction of women primarily as mothers, characteristic of the welfare system built in the 1960s. For children under the age of three, there were practically no childcare institutions, forcing women to stay at home; while most benefits ended after the child reached the age of three – between 1998–2002, 85% of children of that age were in state care (Fodor et al. 2002, 486). There was also a third option for receiving childcare payment, for so-called “career housewives” staying at home with at least three children under the age of eight. Additionally, for retirement provisions, years spent on maternity leave count as working years (Fodor et al. 2002); which, while could be interpreted as a progressive policy, followed the rationale of primarily seeing women as mothers, and discouraging them from employment.

Furthermore, the 1998–2002 Fidesz-KDNP government began implementing family benefits, in one of its to this date favoured forms, as tax deductions. Deductible taxes increase with each child – but, obviously, only if the income is high enough to be taxable. Therefore, this policy, gradually expanded over the years, strongly privileges middle-class and wealthy families and disadvantages the poor, increasing class stratification. In addition, the amount of the universal child allowance (GYES) increases only up to the third child – which many have

argued, is targeting the Roma population (see e.g. Haney 2002, Fodor et al. 2002; Inglot et al. 2012; Szikra 2014). Therefore, although the first Orbán government re-established universal paid maternity leave and ended means-testing, which has been enabling women to not be dependent on their families and/or husbands, the welfare system became decidedly pro-natalist (that is, shaping the welfare system primarily to increase birth rates, Fodor et al. 2002) and strongly built to benefit the non-Roma, well-off Hungarians.

Although Fidesz-KDNP were in opposition for eight years between 2002–2010, under the MSZP-led socialist-liberal government, several areas within social policy continued to develop in the directions set forward by them, without challenging the bases of the “conservative welfare state” (Inglot et al. 2012, 33). Nevertheless, the government announced a “welfare turn” in their social policy, albeit this meant complementing the welfare system’s “traditional pro-natalist” structure bias with more “emphasis on poverty reduction” and the aim of increasing the living standards of the entire population (Inglot et al. 2012, 33). Family benefits were raised especially generously: the amount of all three types of family allowance was doubled, a 13th-month payment was established, and children’s school attendance was no longer a requirement for the families’ eligibility for the allowance. Mothers receiving the universal GYES were allowed to work full-time after their child’s first birthday, employers of women returning from GYES became eligible for a 50% “exemption from social insurance contributions,” and every settlement with a population above ten thousand was obligated to have a nursery (Ibid.). At the same time, the government initiated a systematic attempt to restructure the cash redistribution scheme to benefit low-income families. However, even though the socialist-liberal government’s agenda did target poverty, actual social policy nevertheless focused on supporting families, and not furthering gender equality (Ibid.).

In 2007, the government initiated the establishment of the Centre for Child Poverty, the aim of which was to research and develop a long-term policy to reduce poverty. Their proposal, targeting not only ethnically white poor children, but also the Roma, was accepted by parliament, and a large sum was allocated to its implementation. However, the government saw a severe decline in political support and credibility after the 2006 scandals, and backed off from the plan; importantly, they did so before the economic crisis of 2008, and therefore not on economic grounds (Inglot et al. 2012, 34). The last years of the socialist-liberal government, led by Bajnai (2009–2010) were focused on ‘crisis management,’ meaning a serious retrenchment of social spending. Policies enacted at this time clearly demonstrated that a conservative “middle-class bias” had become constitutive across the political spectrum; as austerity measures disproportionately affected the poor (Ibid.).

4.4. Fidesz-KDNP family policies after 2010

When the Fidesz-KDNP government took office in 2010, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced a radical, comprehensive change in the “entire governmental system” (“*valódi rendszerváltás*”) – which actually meant a return to conservative social policies; including family policy, which has been clearly based on a vision of a ‘traditional family’ (i.e. heterosexual and reproductive couple) and “focused on fertility rates” (Inglot et al. 2012, 35). As Szikra (2014) demonstrates, this return meant a fast and sweeping reorganisation of the entire welfare system.

The welfare system itself after 2010 has been not conventionally conservative or neo-liberal, but, as Szikra argues, consists of neoliberal and étatist, as well as neo-conservative elements. It has been neoliberal, because the welfare system is designed to redistribute from the poor to the wealthy; étatist because practically all “policy areas” have been centralised and the involvement of the state has strongly increased; and neo-conservative because, especially

in the areas of education and family policy, the government increased the influence of the Catholic church (both in terms of policy content, as well as in increased number and support of institutions managed by the church), and maintained as well as encouraged a rhetoric of “explicit promotion of the ‘traditional family’” (Szikra 2014, 488) and its construction as dichotomously opposed to gender equality.

Part of the neo-conservative strain of Fidesz-KDNP’s regime has also been the new constitution, renamed the Fundamental Law,⁵⁷ which verbalised Fidesz-KDNP’s longstanding assumption of the family as heterosexual and reproductive: it defined the family as the marriage of a man and a woman (heterosexual), and/or as the relationship between parents and children (reproductive). Further, it included a passage on the protection of life from conception, and removed the passage on the right to social protection (Inglot et al. 2012, 35). While several passages on social equalities had been removed, and many have an “anti-egalitarian character” (Szikra 2014, 489), several other passages blur the boundaries between a secular state and the church; the ‘preservation of nationhood,’ families as the basic unit of the nation, and Catholicism are mentioned explicitly. As Szikra (2014) highlights, the new conservative-nationalist constitution is centred around key concepts such as family, nation, work, and order.

Driving the Fidesz-KDNP government’s traditionalist, familialist rhetoric is the underlying assumption that low birth rates are a political issue rather than an economic one; and an issue of ‘liberal’ politics at that – the “‘liberalisation’ of relationships” (Szikra 2014, 494), meaning a decline in the number of marriages, in “traditional” gender roles, increase in births out of wedlock (Fodor et al. 2002, 482), and the increasing visibility of same-sex relationships. The rhetoric on traditional ‘family values,’ on opposing gender equality and

⁵⁷ Available in English at:

<http://www.kormany.hu/download/e/02/00000/The%20New%20Fundamental%20Law%20of%20Hungary.pdf>

LGBT rights (Szikra 2014, 494) therefore stems from this political assertion, from the claim to nationalist moral legitimacy through reproduction (Gal and Kligman 2000).

The area of family policy was separated from the rest of the welfare system and assigned to KDNP – which is significant, Szikra claims, because while Fidesz had had a certain leaning towards “a more flexible policy of giving mothers a choice,” KDNP had had a strong record of condemning changing gender roles, “lamenting the ‘crisis’ of the family,” and a political-rhetorical fixation on low birth rates; as well as a tendency to support only wealthy families’ reproduction (Szikra 2014). In the following years, therefore, several generous family policies were (re)introduced – yet their generosity has been highly selective and intended to benefit the wealthy at the expense of the poor. The three-year universal GYES, cut to two years by the Bajnai-government, was restored – but it has not been re-indexed since, and quickly lost value: by 2018, 30% (Szikra 2014; Szikra 2018). Although the restrictions on mothers’ work while receiving GYES were reduced, the rhetoric of expanding women’s ‘choices’ were not accompanied by actual attempts to address gender equality – except for high-earning women with “a good labour market position” (Szikra 2018). At the same time, the government expanded its tax deduction scheme as a form of family benefit; which, paired with the introduction of a flat tax rate, strongly benefits the high-earning families, who have a high enough taxable income: provided one has a stable, well-earning job, they keep ten thousand forints monthly for each child up to two children. In case of three children, families keep thirty-three thousand forints, per child (Szikra 2018). The other side of the coin has been the taxation of the minimum wage (exempt under the previous progressive tax scheme; Szikra 2018), and an increase in “disciplinary measures” (Inglot et al., 35) accompanying cash benefits (a form of benefit primarily claimed by poorer families) – such as revoking benefits from families when children miss school – a policy Fidesz-KDNP first introduced in 1998. This latter policy has been seen as targeting the Roma population directly; at the same time, no attempts were

initiated to address Roma integration across the spectrum of social policies. Although new child-care facilities have been built or expanded (by local municipalities, instructed by the government) in rural areas, these are small institutions, and a mixture of nurseries and kindergartens (for children older than two), which frees municipalities from their obligation to establish nurseries – especially since they are partly financed by parents – these are therefore aimed at the rural better-off (Inglot et al. 2012, 36).

At the 2011 Hungarian EU-presidency, the government attempted to increase the influence of their familialist politics at the EU level by announcing that family policy would be at the centre of their term. Orbán asserted the importance of increasing birth rates and called for the privileging of traditional means to achieve that over immigration. Zsolt Semjén, Orbán's deputy and the minister without portfolio responsible for national policy, declared that by placing families and birth rates at the forefront of EU agenda, the Hungarian government was breaking a 'long-time taboo' of EU politics (Inglot et al. 2012, 36), implying, already then, that the government positioned their family policy as opposed to EU policy – thus representing the latter as anti-family. As we have seen, this attitude has, over the years, transformed into a strongly anti-imperial rhetoric; which has constructed the EU as anti-national – justifying, in turn, stricter anti-democratic legislation.

Félix (2015) and Kováts and Pető (2017) argue that anti-genderist utterances – targeting “gender” and “gender-ideology” – first emerged in Hungary around 2008; although for years remained a low-key phenomenon in the media. After 2015, however, it intensified also in governmental discourse – culminating in the denouncement of the ELTE Gender Studies master's program and the announcement of a counter-program at Corvinus University (see also sections 2.3 and 3.1 of this thesis). During these years, “gender” emerged as the blamed cause of social problems. As the symbolic glue framework (Kováts and Pöim 2015; Kováts 2016;

Kováts and Pető 2017; Grzebalska and Pető 2018) argues, international actors such as the Vatican, or German sociologist Kuby, or even the US-American anti-choice movement have been instrumental in facilitating the spread of the phenomenon throughout Europe, both on the societal and governmental levels. The authors have furthermore highlighted, that the targeting of “gender” in rhetoric and policy serves the government to undermine other democratic institutions. This chapter, in turn, has demonstrated that familialism – argued to be central to the Fidesz-KDNP regime (Grzebalska and Pető 2018) – has, in fact, been a mainstay of not only Fidesz-KDNP, but Hungarian politics for decades.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis has sought to examine of the gendered construction of the nation in Viktor Orbán's political speeches, to identify whether and how this construction fits into the longstanding discourses on national reproduction in Hungary. It also aims to contribute to the contemporary scholarship on Hungarian anti-genderism, which – although critiqued extensively in this thesis – drew my attention to anti-genderism as a phenomenon, and enabled me to analyse it from a different perspective.

Through a systematic analysis of Orbán's speeches between 2015–2018, I have demonstrated that gender appears in Orbán's speeches predominantly in the context of the family – which, in turn, is predominantly discussed as the fundamental unit of the nation. In line with conventional nationalist rhetoric, Orbán always emphasizes the unity of the nation, while obscuring internal differences – women are almost entirely absent from his speeches, while reproduction is almost omnipresent in the form of a fixation on demography, and specifically, on raising the birth rate. It follows that reproduction is contextualized by Orbán as a national concern, pertaining to every Hungarian. The nation itself, in turn, is represented as being in a continuous war, and thus a continuous struggle for its survival, where winning or losing this war depends on reproduction. The militarized image of the nation is thus also highly gendered: action and agency are masculinised. Furthermore, through a synthesis of scholarship on Hungarian family policy and discourses on reproduction, I have shown how the conceptualisation of the nation's survival as dependent on proper reproduction, which happens in families conceptualised as specifically heteropatriarchal (and pressed to be reproductive), and thus the subordination of women's various positions in *society* (e.g. women as citizens) to their reproductive capacity in the *nation* – has been a significant element of Hungarian politics for decades before Fidesz-KDNP took office in 2010. Additionally, I discussed the trajectory

of familialism – and I discussed anti-genderism. Therefore, the question arises, how different and similar these two are; and how “moralising” politics through reproduction (Gal and Kligman 2000; Gal 1994) is different from deploying “gender” as a symbolic glue. Drawing on the scholarship on the 1990s enables me to argue that the significance of the continuity of Orbán’s rhetoric with older discourses on reproduction is precisely this: that he is *moralising* politics, within the social world that is the *nation*: more than using “gender” to undermine democratic processes, his speeches are redefining the nation and what it means to be part of it, and what the greater good is.

This thesis has some limitations. First, although I drew on Farris’ argument that theories of nationalism are better suited to analyse both the “novelty” as well as the “historical regularities” of the deployment of “gender” (Farris 2017, 58), I did not delineate what is *new* about the way “gender” is used as a symbolic glue within this trajectory. Second, although responding to the scholarship on gender as symbolic glue and critiquing its lack of a clear definition of “anti-genderism,” an alternative definition remains beyond the scope of the present work. Third, I hypothesised that the longstanding discourse of the family within the nation has co-opted the contemporary anti-genderist discourse – which embeds into it precisely because the former had already established certain nationalist tropes which it can resonate with. I have demonstrated the trajectory of the old discourse and its contemporary rendition in Orbán’s speeches – however, further research would be needed to confirm the hypothesis. The exact points of contact, of “embedding” would need to be examined further to give a better explanation of the exact political mechanisms of co-optation and referencing between the two.

The thesis chosen to focus on a narrow object of study. To get a fuller, more thorough delineation of anti-genderism and the genderedness of nationalist politics, further analysis into

political discourse beyond official communication, as well as with a wider scope of cases would greatly enrich this relatively new and developing field of scholarship.

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Appendix

The analysed speeches and interviews, ordered chronologically:

March 15 2015 Commemorative speech of the 1848 revolution

http://2010-2015.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/a_szabadsag_es_a_fuggetlenseg_tortenelmunk_vezercsillaga

September 12 2015 Opening of the fall parliamentary session

http://2010-2015.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/orban_viktor_napirend_elotti_felszolalasa20150921

November 5 2015 Opening of the International Demographic Forum

http://2010-2015.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/orban_viktor_beszede_a_budapesti_demografiai_forumon

February 28 2016 Year evaluation

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-evertekelo-beszede/>

March 15 2016 Commemorative speech of the 1848 revolution

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-unnepi-beszede/>

May 20 2016 Interview in Kossuth Rádió

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-interjuja-a-kossuth-radio-180-perc-cimu-musoraban-20160525/>

September 21 2016 Opening of the fall parliamentary session

<http://www.parlament.hu/felszolalasok->

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October 23 2016 Commemorative speech of the 1956 revolution

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-unnepi-beszede-az-1956-os-forradalom-60-evfordulojan/>

February 10 2017 Year evaluation

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-19-evertekelo-beszede/>

March 15 2017 Commemorative speech of the 1848 revolution

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-unnepi-beszede-3/>

May 19 2017 Interview in Kossuth Rádió

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-a-kossuth-radio-180-perc-cimu-musoraban-10/>

May 25 2017 Opening the International Demographic Forum

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-beszede-a-ii-budapesti-demografiai-forumon/>

June 2 2017 Interview in Kossuth Rádió

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-a-kossuth-radio-180-perc-cimu-musoraban-13/>

September 16 2017 Congress of the Christian Intellectuals' Alliance

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-eloadasa-a-kereszteny-ertelmisegiek-szovetsegenek-kongresszusan/>

September 18 2017 Opening the fall parliamentary session

<http://www.parlament.hu/felszolalasok->

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October 23 2017 Commemorative speech of the 1956 revolution

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-unnepi-beszede-az-1956-evi-forradalom-es-szabadsagharc-61-evfordulojan/>

December 22 2017 Interview in Kossuth Rádió

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-a-kossuth-radio-180-perc-cimu-musoraban-20/>

February 2 2018 Interview in Kossuth Rádió

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-a-kossuth-radio-180-perc-cimu-musoraban-22/>

February 18 2018 Year evaluation

<http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-evertekelo-beszede-2/>