

# **Roots of Nationalist and ethnicity populism in East Central Europe**

**Contemporary World Politics 2022**

# *Argument*

- **Twist** in development of ECE from diligent **reformers** towards Western model of neoliberal **economy** and **liberal democracy** to exemplary **right-wing populism**, economic nationalism and cultural conservatism (Poland and Hungary);
- Today's conservative **populism** is **intrinsic** to the historical **process** of **national state formation** in CE;
- Unique set of **challenges** since modern **national state formation**, different approaches and **strategies** to face them - and **disillusionment** from inability to achieve key **goals**;
  - the **Communism** is **not** a **cause** of ECE contemporary problems, but it was yet another **attempt** to achieve the **goals** of national projects.

# Goals of ECE

- **Goals:** to obtain an **independent** nation state, become respected partner in Europe -> **agency**;
  - characteristics seen necessary (emulation of West): **modern economy** (developed **strategic sectors** of industry, urbanized, developed countryside...) and **modern society** (strong **middle class**; undivided by inequalities; high level of human capital and public services...);
- **Traumas** and **conflicts** of **19th** and **20th** century -> forming ***a sequence...***
  - **independence** after **1918**, but the **rest** of goals **never achieved...**;
  - still **semi-peripheral economies** and after 1990 **divided societies** again (?);
  - this **persisted** despite *uprisings*, international settlements, experiments with *democracy*, centralized *authoritarian* regimes, *Stalinism*, reform *communism*, *neoliberal* (shock)therapy and liberal *institutional reforms...*(!)

# Sequence Poland

- **Partition** by Prussia, Austria and Russia (1795) -> **Germanization (Russification)**; crash of **insurrections** (finally in 1863 – groundwork);
- **Forces** behind **independent movements**: **peasants, workers, national intelligentsia, catholic church**;
- **Ethnic conflict** – vs. **German and Jew** elites - suppressing **class conflict** (Polish bourgeoisie weak);
- 1918 independence; since 1926 **authoritative centrist regime** of *Pilsudski* „**Sanacja**“ (1926-1935/39; extra- constitutional pol. force) (vs. nationalist „**Endecja**“);
- After WWII: **ethnic conflict** finally **solved** (expulsion, extermination); **emancipation** of **peasants, workers**; but lost agency - **subordinated** to **USSR**;
- 1990s: in order to secure **independence, modernization** and agency – **radical reforms** and **integration** into **Western** structures;
- **GFCs**: critical **revision... semi-peripheral** position in European **economy**; together **reconsidering** the **liberal** democracy package <– not a top priority for large part of polity...;
- **Populism**: **ethno-nationalist** (vs. immigration, cosmopolitanism); culturally **conservative** (vs. LGBT, Muslims...); **Eurosceptic** (vs. surrendering sovereignty; Green Deal); **economic nationalist** (vs. dominance of foreign capital)...

# Sequence Hungary

- Crush of national **revolt 1848** → **Germanization**; settlement and **dualism 1867** → idea of a **leading** role in **Eastern Europe**;
- 1920 – Treaty of **Trianon** as **historical injustice**; goal to **regain** lost **territory** and population;
- **Centrist authoritative Horthy's** régime (1920-1944): base of support **rural regions, church** vs. secular urban class and intelligentsia;
- After 1945 – industrialization and **modernization**; loss of agency – **subordination** to **USSR** – crash of **1956 revolt** → **economic pragmatism/populism**;
- 1990s: to secure **independence** and **agency** – **integration** into **West** (borderless Europe as de facto reintegration of „Great Hungary“); only **gradual reforms** → **lagging** behind other CEE countries → strong **dissatisfaction**;
  - **GFCs**: critical **revision** of semi-peripheral position in Economy (Obrán's **freedom fight**); reconsidering the liberal democracy package (Christian values); **nostalgia**...;
  - **Populism: ethno-nationalist** (vs. immigration, cosmopolitanism,); culturally **conservative** (vs. LGBT, Muslims); **Eurosceptic** (vs. political integration; foreign financed NGOs); **economic nationalist** (vs. dominance of foreign capital)...

# Sequence Czechia

- *White Mountain* 1621 - protestant **Bohemian revolt** against HRE defeated → **Germanization** and **catholization...**; *Munich 1938...*
- **Forces** behind Czech national **emancipation** – **peasants, workers**, in late 19th. strengtning **Czech** capital vs. **German** political, economic and cultural **elite**;
- After 1918: **economic nationalism**; **restricted democracy** with strong extra-constitutional elements (the „Five“ – **ethnic basis**); ethnical conflict suppressing class conflict;
- After 1945: **extensive** industrial **development**; **solving ethnical conflict** (expulsion), empowerment of **workers** and **peasants**;
- 1990s: **radical** economic **reform** → ambition to **outperform** other **ECE** and quickly close the gap to the West (moderately succesfull);
- GFC: partial **reconsideration** of **model** based on **foreign capital dominance...**;
- **Populism**: **soft** variant, *ANO movement* (PM *Babiš*) **technocratic**; logic of „common sense“ → **progressivist issues** (Green deal, LGBT, migration...) **not priority** of majority of polity...

# Conclusions: Populism in ECE the 21th century

- **Rush to the West** in 1990s – **vital** interest, **but** instrumental/**purposeful**;
  - to **gain agency**, **not** to **surrender sovereignty** to an organization they cannot control (EU);
- **History** of ECE – strong **dispositions** to populism:
  - **ethnic conflict** with powerful minorities;
  - threats to **sovereignty** from foreign powers and capital;
  - rich experience with specific **domestic solutions** - **centralized executive extra-constitutional regimes** (+ myths of their successes: Pilsudski, Horthy, CS First Republic...);
- Parts of society (workers and peasants, church in POL and HUN) that were the **backbone** of the **national project** are **losing** ground...
  - Ethnically **homogenous** societies, gaining the control of **own state** after long struggle in internal and external ethnic conflicts, are not considering the **protection** of **minorities** of any kind (ethnic, religious, sexual...) the **priority**;
  - Biggest projects of the moment, **Industrial transformation** and the **Green deal**, will **hit** disproportionately **hard industrial semi-periphery** (ECE) and, **within** it, those **less** successful and **flexible** members of ECE societies...

Poland does **not** want to remain a net **recipient** of EU subsidies **forever**. On the contrary: we want the **right to develop** in a fair market, and by this right, we want to one day **catch up with Germany** in terms of welfare and **economic power**. This will not take 100 years! And then many **Poles** who emigrated will be able to **return home**.

[Jarosław Kaczyński](#)

What is the basic principle of **democracy**? In the end, it is **loyalty** to the **nation**. We Central Europeans know from **historical experience** that sooner or later, we will **lose our freedom** if we do **not represent the interests of our citizens**.

My **lesson from history** is that **if** there is a **strong moderate centrist party** which can **lead the country**, there is **no room for extremists** from the right or left.

[Viktor Orbán](#)

Bohemians, Moravians, and Silesians are an extremely **inventive** and **creative** nation. Although our country is not as big as Germany, Italy, or Poland, we are a **great nation** because of our **talent to learn things** and to be inventive. Even **fifty years** of suppression of freedom and creativity was **not able to knock out the heritage of Baťa**; we have the talent in our genes. Inventiveness, creativity, and **extraordinary skills**. And the **Czech resilience**. The power to **get up again**.

[Andrej Babiš](#)



# Human rights and Rule of Law in Hungary

- 2011 new **Media law**: the **Media Council** – main regulatory body (nominated by government);
  - **Independent media fined** or obstructed; journalist and editors dismissed - critical comments towards government;
  - Crime to spread **fake news** or engage fear mongering (Covid) – many investigations;
  - **Advertising tax** – affects only independent TV channel;
  - **Pro-government media** used to **target opposition**, civil society, academics critical to government;
- After **2014: audit of NGOs** with **foreign donor** money, „**problematic**“, some **criminal investigations**;
  - During migrant crisis: public media attempting to discredit **civil society** as **Soros foreign paid traitors**.
  - 2017: 20 thousand EUR of **foreign funding** to **register as foreign funded** and **label all materials** as such;
  - **2018**: constitutional amendment **criminalized** services, advice and **support** to **migrants** and asylum seekers;
- 2017 **law** targeting **CEU** -> moving to **Vienna**; **public trust fund** managing public finances for **universities** (appointees **loyal to government**);
- **Immigration**: policy of **detention** of asylum seekers; **fence**; **criminalizing irregular entry**; **asylum procedure** extremely **accelerated**; use of **force**; **government campaign**;
  - **2017**: **automatic detention** in transit zones;
  - **2019** **banning settlement** of **foreign populations**; in **2020** **abolishing the right to seek asylum** on **Hungarian territory**;
- **Constitution of 2012**: **discriminating minorities**, does not promote **gender equality**;
  - **Roma minority**: violence by vigilante groups; children often **enrolled to special schools**;
  - **Criminalizing homelessness**;
  - **Istanbul Convention** communicated as **promoting gender ideologies** and **illegal immigration**.
  - Constitutional amendment: ...to **upbring children** in accordance with the **values** based on **homeland's constitutional identity** and **Christian culture**...;
  - **Prohibited** by law to **promote sexual and gender diversity** in Hungary;
- **Covid pandemic**: **state of emergency** - **government to rule by decree**; many decrees were **unrelated to health issues** (stripping funds from municipalities governed by opposition) .

# Human rights and Rule of Law in Poland

- **Homophobic** - presidency of Lech Kaczyński: **LGBT groups** associated with **pedophiles** and **narcotic trade**; promotion of sexual minorities' rights against nation's education policy...;
- **Reproductive rights**: lack of sexual education, limited access to **contraceptives**; **abortion** criminalized, **baned completely** in **2020**;
- **Istanbul convention** is often referred as **harmful**; there are **attempts** to **criminalize sexuality education**;
  - **President Duda** (PiS) during campaign: **LGBT an ideology worse than communism**;
  - Many **municipalities** in Poland declares themselves "**LGBT free zones**";
  - **2017 government controlled body** in charge of **distribution of funds** to **NGOs**...
- Poland strictly **against EU's reallocation quotas** of immigrants;
  - **Poland – Belarus border crisis**: asylum seekers routinely **denied asylum procedure**; state of **emergency declared** - **regular pushbacks** by police and military.
- **Government intervention in the judiciary**:
  - PiS government, **canceled** appointment of all **five constitutional tribunal judges** (elected under previous administration);
  - **2017 judicial reform**: **undermined Constitutional tribunal**; by **reducing retirement age** for **Supreme court judges**, forcing 27 judges to retire;
  - giving the **minister** of justice **control** over **judicial appointees** in **common courts**;
  - **judges** being **subjects** of **disciplinary proceedings** for **criticizing judicial reforms**;
  - compromised **Constitutional tribunal** ruled in **2021** that **interim measures** ordered by **CJEU** to **protect independence** of Polish **judiciary** were **contrary** to **Polish constitution**; Later that year tribunal **rejected supremacy** of **EU law**.
- **Freedom of media decreasing**:
  - **state owned media** in presidential campaign **strongly supported president Duda**;
  - **dismissals of professionals** from **state-owned media** without reasons.
  - **2021 law** preventing **non-EU shareholders** form owning **majority stake** in Polish media –**US owned TVN station licence suspended**.

## Governments in Hungary

In office	Prime minister	Parties
11/1988 – 5/1990	Miklós Németh	MSZP
5/1990 - 12/1993	József Antall	MDF, FkgP, KDNP
12/1993 - 7/1994	Péter Boross	MDF, FkgP, KDNP
7/1994 - 7/1996	Gyula Horn	MSZP, SZDSZ
7/1998 – 5/2002	Viktor Orbán	Fidesz, FkgP, MDF
5/2002 – 9/2004	Péter Medgyessy (caretaker)	MSZP, SZDSZ
9/2004 - 6/2006	Ferenc Gyurcsány	MSZP, SZDSZ
6/2006 - 4/2009	Ferenc Gyurcsány	MSZP, SZDSZ
4/2009 - 5/2010	Gordon Bajnai (caretaker)	MSZP
5/2010 - 6/2014	Viktor Orbán	Fidesz, KDNP
6/2014 - 5/2018	Viktor Orbán	Fidesz, KDNP
5/2018 – 5/2022	Viktor Orbán	Fidesz, KDNP
5/2022-	Viktor Orbán	Fidesz, KDNP

Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)

Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF)

Independent smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party (FKgP)

Christina Democratic People's Party (KDNP)

Aliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ)

Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz)

## Governments in **Poland**

In office	President	party	In office	Prime minister	party
1990-1995	Lech Walesa	Solidarity	1989-1991	Tadeusz Mazowiecki	Solidarity
			1991-1991	Krzysztof Bielecki	Liberal democratic congress
			1991-1992	Jan Olszewski	Centre Agreement
			1992-1993	Hanna Suchocka	Democratic Union
			1993-1995	Waldemar Pawlak	Polish People's party
1995-2005	Aleksander Kwasniewski	Democratic Left Alliance	1995-1996	Józef Oleksy	Social Democracy
			1996-1997	Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz	Social Democracy
			1997-2001	Jerzy Buzek	Solidarity Electoral Action
			2001-2004	Leszek Miller	Democratic Left Alliance
2005-2010	<b>Lech Kaczyński</b>	Law and Justice	2005-2006	Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz	Law and Justice
			2006-2007	<b>Jarosław Kaczyński</b>	Law and Justice
2010-2015	<b>Bronisław Komorowski</b>	Civic Platform	2007-2014	<b>Donald Tusk</b>	Civic Platform
			2014-2015	Ewa Kopacz	Civic Platform
2015-	<b>Andrzej Duda</b>	Law and Justice	2015-2017	Beata Szydło	Law and Justice
			2017-	<b>Mateusz Morawiecki</b>	Law and Justice

## Governments in Czechia

In office	Prime minister	Coalition
1992-1998	Václav Klaus	ODS, KDS, ODA, KDU-ČSL
1998-2002	Miloš Zeman	ČSSD
2002-2004	Vladimír Špidla	ČSSD, US-DEU, KDU-ČSL
2004-2005	Stanislav Gross	ČSSD, US-DEU, KDU-ČSL
2005-2006	Jiří Paroubek	ČSSD, US-DEU, KDU-ČSL
2006-2009	Mirek Topolánek	ODS, KDU-ČSL, SZ
2010-2013	Petr Nečas	ODS, TOP 09, VV
2014-2017	Bohuslav Sobotka	ČSSD, ANO, KDU-ČSL
2017-2021	Andrej Babiš	ANO, ČSSD
2021-	Petr Fiala	ODS, KDU-ČSL, TOP 09, Piráti, STAN

Civic democratic party (ODS)

Liberal democrats (ODA, US-DEU, TOP 09, STAN)

Christian democrats (KDU-ČSL)

Social democrats (ČSSD)

Technocratic populist movement (ANO)

Polls August 2022: ANO 31.1%; ODS 13.9%; SPD 13.1%; Piráti 7.2%.