PLAYING THE HUNGARIAN CARD: AN ASSESSMENT OF RADICAL RIGHT IMPACT ON SLOVAK AND HUNGARIAN PARTY SYSTEMS AND POST-COMMUNIST DEMOCRATIC STABILITY

Christina Devin Williams

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Approved by:

Erica Edwards

Graeme Robertson

Milada Vachudova

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ABSTRACT

CHRISTINA DEVIN WILLIAMS: Playing the Hungarian Card: An Assessment of Radical Right Impact on Slovak and Hungarian Party Systems and Post-Communist Democratic Stability.
(Under the direction of Erica Edwards)

Through comparative case studies of Slovakia and Hungary, I explore the competitive relationship between governing parties and radical right parties in post European Union accession parliaments. This research highlights the roles of ethno-nationalism and populism and employs Slovakia's ethnic Hungarian minority, as manifested through the 2009 Slovak language law and the 2010 Hungarian citizenship law, as a focal point of competition between party groups. I argue that this competition reveals a more influential role than typically attributed to radical right parties. The first half of the article tests these cases against Meguid's (2008) position, salience, and ownership theory of competition between unequals. The second half of the article analyzes this competition and points to electoral strategies, coalition and opposition policy payoffs, governing party reputations, and each country's legal landscape as areas affected by the radical right's presence.

Keywords: Radical right; Hungarian minority; language; citizenship; accommodation, issue ownership, issue salience; competition.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECB	European Central Bank
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
Fidesz	Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union
HZDS	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia
IMF	International Monetary Fund
Jobbik	Jobbik – The Movement for a Better Hungary
KDNP	Christian Democratic People's Party
MIÉP	Hungarian Justice and Life Party
MKP	Party of the Hungarian Coalition
MSZP	Hungarian Socialist Party
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PES	Party of European Socialists
PSO	Position, Salience, and Ownership
SDKU	Slovak Democratic and Christian Union
SMER	Direction
SNS	Slovak National Party

Introduction

After the fall of Communism across East Central Europe, the ethnic Hungarian population in southern Slovakia re-emerged as a traditional source of tension between the governments in Bratislava and Budapest. Every few years, diplomatic rows erupt over controversial laws, treaties, resolutions, or any other official measure that addresses this community, which is a shared object of attention by the two capitals. Over the past two decades, the Hungarian minority has served as a point of disharmony for each country's radical right parties in particular. As part of its overall nationalist platform, the Slovak radical right has always portrayed the Hungarian minority as a disloyal group that represents an internal threat to the solidarity and integrity of the Slovak nation. For the Hungarian radical right, this minority symbolizes a bygone era: co-nationals beyond the country's current borders stand for Hungary's historic but lost empire. They also serve as a source of the radical right's mission to protect those left behind after the turbulence and perceived treachery of 20th century geopolitics. In both countries, radical right parties have served in recent parliaments alongside more mainstream, moderate parties. As a result, these terms produced increased nationalism at the political level, leaving the minority in question to the machinations of both sides, caught between the give-and-take of parliamentary party politics in Bratislava and Budapest.

This research is about how political strategy, the radical right, and the potency of ethno-nationalism interact. More specifically, I investigate what happens when all three strands weave together and become entangled within the arena of parliamentary politics.

In particular, I look at how the participation of the radical right in mainstream politics sensationalizes the Hungarian minority issue and how, because of this, they influence politics directed toward this group. I draw on a time frame that falls after Slovakia and Hungary's accession to the European Union (EU) and that looks at each radical right party's most recent tenure in Parliament. For the Slovak case, I focus on the Slovenská národná strana (SNS) and its service as a coalition member in Prime Minister Robert Fico's government, led by his party SMER-sociálna demokracie (SMER) from 2006 to 2010. For the Hungarian case, I look at Jobbik and its run as the third largest party in the current Parliament under the unprecedented constitutional majority government led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party. My research will address the striking level of policy coordination between nominally center-left and center-right governing parties and radical right parties.

I guide my study with two over-arching questions directed at the radical right's position on nationalism, its activities with governing parties in Parliament, and its fixation with the Hungarian minority. My first question asks what the 2009 Slovak language law and the 2010 Hungarian citizenship law and their subsequent controversies reveal about the relationship between governing parties and radical right parties in parliamentary politics. The Slovak law generated much drama over its implications toward minority rights, while the Hungarian law provoked concerns over its intrusive nature in neighboring states' affairs. Moreover, these laws drew attention because of their ethno-centric bias and similarities to the platforms of each country's radical right party. Despite these controversies, SMER and Fidesz received bumps in political support at home after the passage of their respective laws. With these matters in mind, my second

question asks what kind of influence, if any, did the SNS and Jobbik have over the political processes involved in the passage of these laws.

I contend that a unique form of competition between these governing parties and their radical counterparts provides answers to my questions. I demonstrate that the nationalist vote matters in both countries, and SMER and Fidesz had designs over this voter bloc. Since the Hungarian minority falls within the purview of each country's traditional nationalist scope, the Slovak and Hungarian laws can be interpreted as appeals to this bloc. Therefore, I argue that competition over the nationalist vote provided these radical right parties degrees of influence over their governing counterparts.

I organize my research as follows. In the first section I survey the relevant literature on party competition and elaborate on my chosen theoretical framework. In the second section, I provide historical and political context. This overview highlights the emotion and stubbornness behind the ethnic Hungarian issue, general patterns of parliamentary competition, and how the radical right links together the two. In the third section I present my two cases in accordance with Meguid's (2008) position, salience, and ownership (PSO) theory. The two laws represent forms of program accommodation; the SNS's language policy and Jobbik's citizenship policy signify types of issue ownership; while geopolitical, socio-economical, and electoral conditions outline issue salience. These three components provide a model enabling one to easily visualize competition between SMER and the SNS and Fidesz and Jobbik. At the end of this section I reveal the results of this model, showing how SMER and Fidesz's accommodation strategy yields political gains for them and political losses for the SNS and Jobbik. In the fourth section I discuss these cases, demonstrating how SMER and

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Fidesz adjusted their competitive tactics and shifted further away from the center with laws to show for it. I argue that these results reveal degrees of direct and indirect influence on the part of these radical right parties. In the final section I repack my analysis to come up with some concluding observations and assertions.

Literature and Theory Review

Studies on competition in multiparty systems are vast, and much of this literature assumes contests between large, established parties. In recent years, however, there have been numerous works dedicated to the growing presence of niche parties[1] in multi-party systems. Scholars have theorized on how these parties fare among their larger, more established cohorts in engaging in elections, participating in parliaments and government coalitions, and projecting their issues onto the national stage. Some authors attribute institutional explanations to party competition and the rise of niche parties by pointing to permissiveness of electoral rules (Cox, 1997; Golder, 2003), state structure (Harmel & Robertson, 1985; Jackman & Volpert, 1996; Willey, 1998), and government type (Lijphart, 1994; Martin & Vanberg 2011), for example. Others have dedicated attention to sociological explanations in making sense of their membership in the political landscape by weighing the impact of certain cultural or socio-economic conditions. Some of these works, for example, accredit success of niche parties to post-materialism and

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[1] Meguid (2008) assigns three key traits to define niche parties: first, they reject traditional class-based orientations of politics by politicizing issues previously outside the dimensions of party competition; second, niche party issues often do not coincide with the existing, left-right lines of political division, therefore cutting across traditional lines of partisan alignment; third, they differentiate themselves by limiting their issue appeals and eschew from comprehensive policy platforms characteristic of mainstream parties, which makes them heavy reliant on salience and attractiveness of their primary policy stance.

modernization (Müller-Rommel, 1989; Taggart, 1996; Inglehart, 1997, Anastasakis, 2001; Minkenberg, 2002), or to immigration (Swank & Betz, 2003; Givens, 2005).

While institutional and sociological explanations do contribute context to the story, they fall short by deemphasizing the actors in question, the political parties. In turn, I am interested in how the parties themselves react to these conditions. My cases demand a closer look at these actors, their issues, and their strategies, and how they navigate the environment in which they operate. I also question how these niche parties, and in particular those of the radical right, find their issues being pursued and carried by larger, more center-oriented parties. Finally, I need to understand the behavior of large, governing center-left and center-right parties when serving alongside the radical right in Parliament.

Many authors have theorized on spatial models and behavioral strategies in explaining parties' and candidates' appeals to voters on policy grounds (Downs, 1957; Adams, Merrill & Grofman, 2005; Enelow & Hinich, 1984; Müller & Strom, 1999). Other authors have focused on more specific tactics in party competition. For example, issue ownership and salience theories offer persuasive insight in explaining how parties frame certain issues that play to their strengths and reputations in order to attract votes (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996). However, these explanations do not adequately address competition strategy between mainstream and niche actors.

I draw on Meguid's (2008) position, salience, and ownership (PSO) theory of competition between "unequals" to serve as the conceptual backbone of my research. Her theory offers a useful test with which to investigate how these controversial laws came into being. Furthermore, it illuminates the strategies of large, established parties in

dealing with these emerging niche parties, whether in coalition or opposition politics. Meguid argues that mainstream parties manipulate the issue dimension of niche parties by adopting an accommodative, dismissive, or adversarial stance toward their policy positions. Therefore, "the electoral trajectories of niche parties are the result of deliberate attempts by center-left and center-right political actors to quell new political threats and bolster their own electoral support" (p. 22). I believe this tactic accurately explains the situation in Slovakia and Hungary.

In my case studies, SMER and Fidesz use an accommodative strategy. Like Meguid, I build on the assumption that parties are rational actors and seek to capitalize on opportunities that are perceived as a means of delivering votes and granting election or reelection (Downs, 1957). I focus on strategy between cycles and how my actors model their activities in anticipation of the behavior of the electorate at the next election (Laver & Hunt, 1992).

I investigate two cases that embody this strategic competition among unequals. In the Slovak case, Prime Minister Fico pushed through a new state language law in 2009 that largely reflected key concepts behind the SNS's language policy. He did so in order to prime his party for the next election by attracting the nationalist vote. In the Hungarian case, Fidesz swiftly adopted a new citizenship law in 2010 to consolidate its electoral victory, tie up loose ends of previous legislative efforts, and deflect pressure from Jobbik. Finishing third in the elections and rising quickly in the ranks of the Hungarian political scene, Prime Minister Orbán may have been more vigilant and assertive in his citizenship project for fear of losing ground to his right to Jobbik.

In order for SMER and Fidesz to feel compelled to accommodate these issues, Meguid submits that they must be salient. I argue that three conditions merge during my time frame to increase the salience of nationalism and create opportune environments in which radical right parties can gain the political stage and operate therein. These conditions involve the geopolitical reality of incongruous state borders and ethnic groups, crises and trials of post-Communism, and strong vote shares in each preceding parliamentary election. Given these conditions, these governing parties used these legislative acts to gain and consolidate political support and mitigate the rise of these radical right parties.

Meguid argues that mainstream parties dictate the terms of competition; however, this downplays the agency of the radical right. I argue that the influence runs both ways. In other words, this competition shows radical right influence over governing party tactics and policy planning, their reputations, and the legal landscape of their respective countries. As I peel back the layers of this theory over the course of the following pages, I demonstrate that the SNS and Jobbik are not just passive onlookers; they carry more political weight than typically attributed to radical right parties (Minkenberg, 2002; Mudde, 2007).

Historical and Political Context

Slovakia and Hungary's Short 20th Century

Like other peoples of East Central Europe, Slovaks and Hungarians have experienced some form of direct or indirect domination for much of their history (Anastasakis, 2001). Particularly in the 20th century, borders delineating these two

nations have been redrawn many times by external forces. Understanding these shifts points to why ethnicity and nationalism can become such a political force.

For centuries, present-day Slovakia existed within the Hungarian-controlled territory of the Hapsburg Empire. However after World War I, the victors at Versailles dismantled the empires of East Central Europe. Nations formerly encompassed in the diverse Hapsburg Empire were given states of their own. In particular, some 60 million people were allotted their own nation-state, while some 25 million people became newly made ethnic minorities allocated to new states toward which they felt little or no affinity (Rothschild, 2008).

As punishment for its alliance with the Central Powers of Austria and Germany, the 1920 Treaty of Trianon whittled down Hungary to just two-thirds of its prewar territory. These revisions left approximately three million ethnic Hungarians beyond the borders of their newly truncated nation-state (Bugajski, 1995). Over half a million of these Hungarians found themselves in the new nation-state of Czechoslovakia, of which Slovakia was a constituent member (1995). After centuries of domination under Hungarian rule, Slovaks suddenly found themselves masters over a substantial Hungarian population.

In place of the prewar empires numerous newly independent nation-states struggled to find their way. They were soon overwhelmed by the "multiple divisions and rivalries that were born of competing territorial claims, ethnic-minority tensions, socio-economic poverty, mutually irritating national psychologies, and sheer political myopia" (Rothschild, 2008, p. 5). In Slovakia and Hungary, these grievances associated with their first episode of independence acted as preconditions for their eventual collaboration with

Nazi Germany and complicity in wartime genocide (2008). These legacies would later provide both "a source of confidence and a burden of history" (Cibulka, 1999, p. 120) for radical right politicians.

During Communist consolidation in the postwar years, nationalism was suppressed in East Central Europe. Memories of interwar independence and wartime collaboration were "conveniently hidden away, in order not to soil the pristine purity of socialist society" (Cibulka, 1999, p. 123). Politics and society were redrawn along class lines rather than ethno-national ones characteristic of the previous decades. These lines would shift again when Communism collapsed in the region in 1989. Rather than defining themselves based on their loyalty to Moscow or to the Communist party, Poles, Slovaks, Czechs, and Hungarians, for example, could now more strongly distinguish themselves based on nationality. This decentralization of political loyalty and self-definition, combined with newfound freedoms of association and expression, also opened up space for historical tensions to reemerge in the post-Communism years.

Hungarian politicians to this day struggle with the loss of so many fellow co-nationals. The radical right, however, has internalized this loss most intensely as manifested through its prominent position in their political platform. Conversely, Slovakia's gain at Trianon has served as a source of nationalism for the radical right there as well.

Overview of post-Communist Slovak and Hungarian Politics

Slovakia and Hungary had similar institutional starting points in transitioning from their Communist regimes to democratic ones. Organized and peaceful opposition movements ushered in regime change in both countries. A preferential voting system of

proportional representation characterizes the Slovak electoral system, while a combination of proportional and majoritarian representation typifies the Hungarian one. Both countries have unicameral legislative bodies with a five percent threshold marking entry for political parties (www.freedomhouse.org).

Slovak party politics has undergone many shifts since independence in 1993. The party system tends to have an amorphous quality, be complicated by multidimensional cleavages, and charismatic politics dominates (Szayna, 1997). The shifting nature of the system tends to follow two general patterns. The first pattern indicates alternating turnover along a core nationalist-populist and civic-democratic divide in coalition and opposition formation (Bakke & Sitter, 2005). The second pattern exhibits a "clean-corrupt" issue divide, in which the roster of each side rotates as the new "clean" parties entering office eventually come to be labeled "corrupt" with incumbency (Deegan-Krause & Haughton, 2009, p. 838). Over-arching themes of "the nation, levels of authority and economic distribution" regularly and consistently drive these two principal patterns of party competition in Slovak politics. (2009, p. 829).

Since the collapse of Communism, the Hungarian party system has exhibited a more stable structure than its northern neighbor. Four ideological blocs characterize the representative landscape: a strong socialist left, a liberal-centrist middle, a conservative-clerical right, and a populist-nationalist right (Szayna, 1997). "Social- and economic-based cleavages dominate, though religious-secular and urban-rural splits, as well as generational issues also play a part" (1997, p. 137). Responsibility for Hungarian diaspora populations also features prominently in political discourse.

<center>**Cases: Slovakia and Hungary**</center>

In following sections I test my two cases against Meguid's PSO theory. My discussion on position accommodation summarizes the 2009 Slovak law and the 2010 Hungarian law and highlights some of the accompanying political backlash. In the section on issue ownership I present the language and citizenship platforms of the SNS and Jobbik. The analysis on issue salience uncovers three key conditions that contributed political value to nationalist issues and the Hungarian minority issue in particular. Presenting these cases against the backdrop of Meguid's theory helps one visualize the political standing of the radical right vis-à-vis the actions of these governing parties.

Position of Accommodation

      2009 Slovak language law. The 2009 amendment to the state language law embodies an accommodative stance by SMER. Prior to its passage, Fico's party had no position on official language use (www.strana-smer.sk). However, this social democratic party pushed through this controversial amendment in June of 2009, one year before the next parliamentary election. The amendment overturned a more lenient and civic-minded legal framework applied in 1999 under the Dzurinda government by tightening the rules directing the use of Slovak in interactions with public bodies. The new restrictions apply to central state institutions, local governments, "legal persons and natural persons acting as economic entities, and in specific cases, also natural persons as such" (Bocian & Groszkowski, 2009). In short, the 2009 amendment gives precedence to Slovak in public settings and in communications with public bodies. For example, it strictly regulates language use not only with government officials, but also police officers, teachers, medical professionals, and other public figures ("Hovorte po slovensky!," 2009; Puhl,

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2009). Most controversially, it instates fines of up to 5,000 euros for noncompliance, which may be imposed on public institutions, legal persons, and economic entities (Bocian & Groszkowski, 2009). The broad use of the word 'public' and the provision for penalties creates ample room interpretation and possibly abuse and calls into question equal treatment of all Slovak citizens under the law.

The Slovak government reasoned that the amendment works in the name of the general population. Prime Minister Fico asserted that it ensures "every citizen's right to information…" and that if "one Slovak lives among a minority the state has to safeguard this person's full rights" (cited in Bocian & Groszkowski, 2009). The reactions from Budapest were immediate and highly politicized. Even though the law is geared toward all minority languages, the government in Budapest and the Hungarian political party in Slovakia argued that the law is indeed a violation of every citizen's right to information and is directed specifically toward the country's largest minority. Officials in Budapest claim the law suppresses the Hungarian minority's right to use its native language, which is perceived as the foundation of the group's identity. As Hungarian president Laszlo Solyom said at the time, the law "degrades Hungarian and demotes it to a kitchen language" (cited in Puhl, 2009).

Reactions from European and international institutions were mixed. For example, though the European Parliament (EP) has no legal authority on the matter, European parliamentarians demonstrated concern for the law's implications on minority rights ("EP President," 2009). Furthermore, then-serving Vice-Chairman Michael Hahler of the EP's Foreign Affairs Committee claimed that the law "violates commonly respected standards in the EU" toward the use of minority languages and demonstrates how the Fico

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government has "neither mentally nor politically arrived in Europe" (cited in "New Slovak law," 2009). Conversely, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Knut Vollebaek judged that the law does not in principle violate international law or prior commitments for minority language protection, but also expressed concern about its implementation ("Hovorte po slovensky!," 2009; "Statement," 2009).

  2010 Hungarian citizenship law. As in the Slovak case, the 2010 amendment to the 2001 Status Law on citizenship signifies an accommodation position by Fidesz. The 2001 law was a past effort by Orbán to extend institutional networks to ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries. Such networks included granting special benefits and subsidies, and permitting access to the Hungarian labor market and social welfare system (Waterbury, 2010). The new 2010 amendment takes the Status Law one step further by granting citizenship to those living beyond Hungary's borders through a simplified procedure, as long as ancestry and language proficiency can be proven (Brie & Polgar, 2011). Significantly, the right to citizenship is coupled with the right to vote in Hungarian elections, which benefits Fidesz (Szymanowska, 2011).

  Since the fall of Communism Hungarian politicians, ranging from former Prime Minister József Antall to Viktor Orbán and Jobbik's Gábor Vona, have championed the well-being and unity of the Hungarian nation throughout the region. Granting citizenship to diaspora populations is viewed as a legal mechanism that unifies the nation and mitigates assimilation processes of host states. Officials in Budapest can give credence to these effects by referring to areas in Slovakia in which Hungarian communities fall below 20 percent of the population (Szymanowska, 2011), after which these groups lose certain minority privileges as manifested in the 2009 Slovak language law. Dual citizenship, on

the other hand, creates an official link between such peoples and their ethnic homeland. From this link stems the law's controversy with regards to Slovakia. The primary concern has to do with questions of sovereignty and what Mareš (2006) calls "asymmetric influence" (p. 7) in bilateral relations. To curb this asymmetry, officials in Bratislava argue that Hungary must accept that its co-nationals abroad are citizens of other states. Furthermore, protecting them must be done within the efforts of the state of residence, rather than through legislation that may be interpreted as interfering with Slovakia's internal affairs or casting doubt on its sovereignty and territorial integrity (Brie & Polgar, 2011). More radically, such a law could serve as a legal basis for future Hungarian governments to attempt to modify the border between the two countries to more accurately reflect the region's ethnic makeup ("Controversial," 2010). However, this final argument serves more of a rhetorical purpose than anything else.

Passing the 2010 law was one of the first measures taken by Fidesz upon realization of its majority rule in Parliament. Reactions to the law outside of Hungary were mixed. Neighbors with substantial Hungarian populations, such as Serbia, Romania, Croatia, and Ukraine, have not objected to the law so far (Szymanowska, 2011). These countries either have similar laws or see the 2010 act as an access point to the EU. In Slovakia, however, opinions on the matter differed dramatically. The law was adopted less than one month before the next Slovak parliamentary elections, and reactionary statements and actions out of Bratislava were highly politicized: "Almost simultaneously, Slovakia voted to amend its own citizenship law, stripping anyone of their Slovak citizenship if they apply for Hungarian nationality…. Aside from the Hungarian case, dual citizenship is generally allowed in Slovakia" ("Hungarian citizenship law," 2010).

Prime Minister Fico even declared the law a "security threat" to Slovak interests and an attempt to "revise history" (cited in "Slovaks retaliate," 2010). Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič stressed the government's concerns in a meeting with his Hungarian counterpart, Pál Schmitt: "Creating an institutional link between the citizens of the Slovak and Hungarian nationality across the border is not good. It is unacceptable. Creating such a relationship between a foreign national and a new country, making it possible to side with one or the other in connection with certain crisis issues in the future, is not good" (cited in "Slovakia-Hungary row," 2011).

Issue Ownership

In this section I highlight portions from the SNS's and Jobbik's party manifestos that refer to language and citizenship. I expect to find parallels between the content and purpose of the 2009 and 2010 laws and these parties' policies. This section also lends a better sense of these parties' positions on the Hungarian minority and their credentials as radical nationalist parties.

The SNS, language, and the ethnic Hungarian minority. The SNS has been a fixture of the Slovak political scene since before the country's split from the Czech Republic in 1993. Over the years, the party has also become extremely relevant in shaping radical forms of nationalism on a political level. The party exudes an ethno-centric style of nationalism by proclaiming "itself as the most authentic proponent of the Slovaks' national aspirations…" (Mesežnikov, n.d., p. 10). This role includes activities such as building a national state, defending and protecting national interests, supporting national culture, interpreting national history, shaping relations with neighboring Hungary, and influencing politics with respect to ethnic minorities, especially ethnic

Hungarians (n.d.). For years this nationalist line has been fiercely championed by SNS chairman Ján Slota, all the while becoming one of the country's most popular politicians (Orth, Michel, & Jansen, 2008). Therefore, we see a clear association between political articulation of nationalism on the one hand and the SNS's reputation among the public on the other.

One of the party's better known platforms refers to Slovakia's large Hungarian minority. Its strong anti-Hungarian sentiment equates to incessantly questioning the loyalty of the almost 600,000 strong minority (Milo, 2005). One expression of these attitudes is the party's ethno-centric language policy, which serves to undermine the unity of this group. According to the SNS's 2006 election manifesto, one of the party's "concrete objectives" is to establish the primacy of the Slovak language in the public sphere (www.sns.sk). This same manifesto also reserves a section dedicated to the party's position toward Hungary and the Hungarian minority in southern Slovakia, openly accusing both groups of irredentist ambitions and disloyalty. Since the party is so strongly associated with anti-Hungarian policies, and the primacy of national culture and language over this community in particular, it is able to compete and participate in political discourse in this issue area.

Jobbik, citizenship, and the ethnic Hungarian minority. Like the SNS in Slovakia, Jobbik has become a party notoriously associated with radical nationalist policies. Founded in 2003, Jobbik is a young, well-networked, and modern radical right party (Verseck, 2012). However, its philosophy represents a "crude blend of inferiority complex and megalomania, coupled with a clear set of bogeymen, including the Jews,

Gypsies, globalization, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund" (Follath, 2010).

A key pillar of Jobbik's ideology is its position on the status of Hungarians living beyond the country's territory. Jobbik's party website clearly lays out its primary foreign policy objective as "… the reincorporation into the national body of both Western and Carpathian-basin Hungarians… closer relationships with those nations related to us by culture and descent" and "the development and support of a Hungarian-to-Hungarian institutional network...." In the same manifesto, the party considers its "most important task to be the reunification of a Hungarian nation unjustly torn apart during the course of the 20th century." Finally, Jobbik claims that their "most fundamental moral duty is to represent the interests and defend the rights of Hungarian communities" and to "strive, perpetually, for the collective rights of the Hungarians of the Carpathian basin, and for the realization of their territorial, economic and cultural self-determination" (www.jobbik.com). The party's election campaign manager, Zsolt Varkonyi, sums up this position in an October 2010 interview: "More than half of our brothers live outside their fatherland, and we want to bring them back" (cited in Follath, 2010). Such a robust and revisionist position forces one to think about Jobbik's ability to encroach on an issue territory to which Fidesz has long been associated.

Issue Salience

In the paragraphs that follow I discuss how issues such as language policy and citizenship become salient. I highlight geopolitical circumstance, crises, and elections results as three overarching reasons that point to the increased salience of nationalism, and also how these two laws appeal this demand. By the end of this section I expect to

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have a clearer picture of the motivations of SMER and Fidesz in employing this accommodation strategy.

Geopolitics. Brubaker's (1998) theory of triads provides an analytical environment in which to assess and examine the ethnic Hungarian issue. This thesis explains the political and social consequences of East Central Europe's 20th century territorial reconfiguration as well as how this group fits into each country's traditional nationalist scope. It gives a sense of physicality to my two cases, effectively linking together this minority, the nationalizing state in which they live, and the external national homeland to which they can be construed as belonging by ethnic and cultural affinity, but not by actual citizenship. This "relational nexus" (p. 56) creates mutually antagonistic nationalisms engendered by politics because the host state and kin state both "advance jurisdictional claims over the same set of people" (p. 111). In this regard, the nationalizing host state makes claims directed against this minority in the name of protecting the sovereignty and integrity of the "core" nation. Conversely, the external kin state asserts their responsibility to their co-nationals beyond their borders by citing reasons of national survival (1998). With this relational structure in mind, it is easy to see why politicians in Bratislava and Budapest became so entangled in a mutually retaliatory battle over these two laws.

By approaching issue salience through this lens, Slovakia and Hungary exist in an environment ripe with ethnic tensions and vulnerable to political manipulations. The radical right excels at sensationalizing this relational nexus in particular. Moreover, one sees how concepts like language preservation and paths to citizenship can satisfy certain popular demands for more nationalist policies in such circumstances. Therefore, when

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radical right parties gain access to the parliamentary arena, it is not surprising to see these deeply rooted grievances dragged back onto the political stage.

Crises. East Central Europe has undergone "multiple modernization processes" (Minkenberg, 2002, p. 336) since the fall of single-party rule just over 20 years ago. From political democratization and economic privatization to globalization and ethnic conflict, many people in the region are simply exhausted, overstretched, and suffering from democracy fatigue and even Euroscepticism. The crisis thesis (Taggart, 1996) is one way to explain how these trials of post-Communism can trigger the salience of nationalism and the usefulness of politicizing the Hungarian minority, language, and citizenship. This theory also helps make sense of the revival and endurance of far right political elements over the years.

Reform fatigue from the EU accession process and disillusionment with eventual membership represents a first crisis. Simply put, the benefits of EU membership have delivered unbalanced results throughout the region, with the capital cities reaping most of the rewards while people beyond these urban centers still wait "for the fruits of the market economy and social welfare state" (Mayr, Kraske, and Puhl, 2007). For example, during the 2006 campaign the challenging parties successfully connected the negative effects of the incumbent government's structural reforms to Slovakia's accession into the EU (Henderson, 2006). Though membership is, of course, widely viewed as a positive track for Slovakia, the methods and pains of getting there echoed strongly throughout the general population. Tibor Dessewffy, founder of the think tank Demos Hungarian Foundation, stressed a similar atmosphere in Hungary: "There is an underlying dissatisfaction about the situation, a democratic hangover stemming from the 1990s. This

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situation deteriorated when the hopes that Hungarians had tied to EU accession proved illusory" (cited in Siek, 2009). This uneven distribution of benefits coupled with the perceived deterioration of national identity vis-à-vis a new European one presents opportunities for radical right parties to step in with alternative explanations. By framing this disappointment as an infiltration of foreign structures and foreign reform strategies, these parties can generate nostalgia for national structures and institutions (Anastasakis, 2001). These circumstances also undercut voter faith in the more civic-minded parties who led them through the accession process.

Corruption scandals associated with incumbent governments serve as a second crisis. In 2006, Slovakia experienced such a situation when voters became disillusioned with the incumbent center-right government. In addition to its unpopular structural reforms, the Dzurinda government could not shake allegations and speculations of associated corruption and bribery (Mikulová, 2006). During the same year, Hungary's socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány was taped at party conference admitting that he deliberately lied about the state of Hungary's economy in order to win reelection (Krekó, 2010). Coupled with mounting financial crises and austerity measures, anti-incumbency sentiments simply boiled over. These events presented an opportunity for the entirety of the political right to capitalize on the mistakes of the badly tarnished left (Batory, 2010). In fact, the primary driver behind a more than doubling of extremist sentiments among Hungarians around this time was a decline in public morale due to distrust in their political elite ("DEREX," 2010). Corruption scandals create space for all opposition parties. However, the populist, anti-establishment, and law and order

characteristics attributed to radical right parties make them appealing alternatives in light of crises revolving around corruption.

The on-going world financial crisis illustrates a final crisis, and in many ways compounds the potency of the previously mentioned ordeals. Like most of Europe, Slovakia and Hungary are feeling the pressure of this uncertain environment. Slovakia's economy is tied to the troubled euro-zone, which exacerbates fears among Slovaks of a protracted recession. These concerns also increase temptations to turn inwards and away from Europe. Hungary, on the other hand, is not in the euro-zone but has been one of the EU member-states most severely affected by this crisis. Due to high levels of private and state borrowing, the country was particularly vulnerable to the credit crunch starting in 2008 ("Hungary Profile," 2012). As a result, Hungary has had to seek aid from international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Central Bank (ECB) so as to avoid economic collapse (Deloy, 2011; "Hungary Profile," 2012). Austerity measures enacted by Gyurcsány's replacement government dealt a "final blow" (Batory, 2010) to the incumbent center-left government, paving the way for parties on the right to sweep the 2010 parliamentary elections (Day, 2010). Furthermore, while more moderate governing parties struggle with crisis management, mounting debt, and bankruptcies, they can lose sight of more nuanced problems brewing in their societies (Broder, 2009). They may overlook underlying tensions amassing between ethnic populations and perceptions of identity loss, for example, that many people sense as important to national survival during such turbulent economic times (2009).

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While these conditions do not all speak directly to minority relations and language and citizenship policies, they do speak to the tendency of politicians to turn to "solvable" problems. During times of such stress, Bugajski (1995) argues that for the peoples of East Central Europe, "shared ethnicity with all its mythic, ritualistic, symbolic, cultural, and social attributes may provide an important anchor of continuity, predictability, and stability" (p. xii). This instinctive and reactionary desire for such an anchor makes it easier to perceive threats to national interests and integrity. In turn, the 2009 and 2010 laws are official measures signaling political action in the name of the nation. They bring something tangible to the table that underscores strength, tradition, and character. The Slovak law exemplifies this point by shoring up the primacy of the titular nation's language, while the Hungarian law does so by uniting co-nationals with their kin state. SMER and Fidesz manipulated the salience of nationalism by co-opting policies similar to the SNS's and Jobbik's as the best answer for overcoming times of rapid and deep change.

Elections. The parliamentary elections in Slovakia and Hungary represent a final condition that signaled to SMER and Fidesz that nationalism was salient. Both elections reveal a significant percentage of voters opting for an outright nationalist direction for their respective countries. Therefore, these results show that the SNS and Jobbik were a force to be monitored and their policies to be reconciled with on the part of the incoming governing parties.

In the 2006 Slovak parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda's center-right government was voted out after two terms as punishment for its reform program meant to get the country back on track for EU membership. Though popular

with foreign investors and international financial institutions, the reforms led to high levels of unemployment and negatively disproportionate effects on low wage earners and welfare recipients. These reforms were poorly received by ordinary Slovaks and sharply criticized in particular by Robert Fico ("Slovakia Profile," 2012). As a result, Fico's SMER earned 29.14 percent of the vote and a mandate to form the next government. Dzurinda's party, SDKU, came in second with 18.36 percent. The elections also revealed a relatively strong showing for the nationalist tickets. The SNS received the third largest percentage with 11.73 percent, while former Prime Minister Vladimir Mečiar's party, HZDS, followed with 8.79 percent. The Hungarian party, MKP, which served previously alongside SDKU, earned 11.68 percent. (European Election Database [EED], 2012).

Fico ultimately refused the possibility of allying with parties of the previous government as well as other smaller parties, and chose instead to invite the SNS and HZDS to form a government. After spending the past eight years in opposition, the SNS and HZDS were the most compliant in coalition negotiations (Henderson, 2010). Stanley (2011) argues that with considerations of office and policy in mind, the rejuvenated SNS and the declining HZDS also proved more congenial to SMER's etatism and shared their criticism of the previous government's reforms. Not surprisingly, the new governing coalition triggered instant criticism abroad, especially in Budapest, thus perpetuating the perceived need for a more nationalist line.

The SMER-SNS-HZDS coalition signifies a very pronounced spike in populist, nationalist, and radical political representation. As pointed out in the overview of Slovak politics, nationalism is a relevant cleavage and populism is a common practice. Therefore, although SMER claims center-left credentials, it must be noted that this party

also employs a more centrist interpretation of nationalism and populism (www.strana-smer.sk; Učen, 2007). Furthermore, combining the electoral earnings of the SNS and HZDS shows that over 20 percent of voters selected an outright nationalist direction for the country. This 20 percent bloc signaled the value of the nationalist vote to SMER.

The 2010 Hungarian parliamentary elections also resulted in a large portion of the electorate voting for a more conservative and nationalist direction. After eight years of mishaps, debacles, and failures surrounding corruption and economic mismanagement, the governing Socialist party, MSZP, had deprived itself of so much credit that voters delivered a massive swing to the right (Magyar, 2010). Viktor Orbán's Fidesz swept the elections with over 52 percent of the vote, and received 263 seats and a two-thirds majority in Parliament, awarding a mandate to govern alone with its satellite party, the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP)(EED, 2012). However, what was equally if not more striking than Fidesz's sweep was how successful Jobbik had been. Compared to its dismal showing of 2.2 percent in the 2006 elections, this radical right party garnered 16.67 percent of the vote and a total of 47 seats in Parliament, giving it the third largest representation in Parliament (EED, 2012). In certain areas of Hungary, particularly east of the Danube River, Jobbik did so well as to attain the position of second strongest party behind Fidesz (Batory, 2010). Although Orbán's party captured a large portion of the vote, Jobbik's success clearly shows a growing portion of voters opting for more radical and more anti-establishment solutions (Krekó, 2010). Despite falling on the same side of the political left-right spectrum, Fidesz refused to form a coalition with Jobbik, placing this fast-rising party as a competitor to Orbán's right.

The 2010 parliamentary campaign had taken a nationalist tone with Fidesz in particular promising to restore Hungary's greatness after almost a decade of protracted decline. As Batory (2010) notes, "a recurring theme was the charge that the socialists' incompetence forfeited what was commonly seen as Hungary's leading regional economic position early in the decade…" (p. 4). A central component to Fidesz's campaign of national rehabilitation was Orbán's promise to unite Hungarians throughout the region with a new citizenship law ("Slovaks Retaliate," 2010). Although the media often describes Fidesz as a center-right party, this label tends to reflect the party's dominate position on the right rather than its policies. Indeed, Fidesz has long championed of the Hungarian nation, taken a more reserved stance on market capitalism, and promoted social conservatism (Batory, 2010). But after the elections, Jobbik proved itself a rising threat to the position of best alternative to the left as well as best supplier of the electorate's nationalist needs. The combined percentage of votes going to Fidesz and Jobbik shows almost 70 percent of voters supported the populism and nationalism that was on display during the campaign, clearly demonstrating the relevance of these themes.

Results: Gains and Losses

In the previous sections I showed how these two cases stand up against Meguid's theory of accommodation. Nationalism and the Hungarian minority issue provided fields in which SMER and Fidesz could play out their political strategies. In the following paragraphs I reveal how these tactics paid off. As predicted by Meguid, both cases affirm these governing parties effectively undercutting support for the SNS and Jobbik for their own benefit.

SMER gains, the SNS loses. Fico successfully manipulated the salience of nationalism by accommodating the SNS's language policy. In turn, this strategy created tensions in relations with Budapest, thus making his actions more credible to those 20 percent plus voters with nationalist sympathies and possibly soft supporters as well. As a result, the nationalist parties were unable to build on their 20 percent bloc from 2006 because SMER had adequately catered to their sympathizers (Henderson, 2006).

The next parliamentary election in 2010 revealed their losses. The SNS and HZDS suffered heavy blows dropping them to 5.08 percent and 4.33 percent respectively. SMER gained in this election, receiving 34.8 percent of the vote (EED, 2012). The SNS was so weakened after the 2010 election that they could no longer remain in coalition with SMER. For its part, HZDS did not meet the required five percent threshold to enter Parliament. Co-opting the nationalist vote did cost Fico the premiership in 2010 by losing his coalition partners. However, Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2012) argue that the gains made on the nationalist vote between 2006 and 2010 actually helped increase his parliamentary majority further in 2012, returning him as Slovakia's Prime Minister. Integrating more nationalist policies into the coalition's program served to consolidate Fico's power and gain future success.

Fidesz gains, Jobbik loses. The Hungarian case follows a similar pattern. Because of the dramatic rise in Jobbik's popularity, its anti-establishment stance, and its ownership of an even more nationalistic citizenship policy, I suggest Orbán pursued (and continues to pursue) a more assertive nationalist line this cycle. These actions are manifested in the early passage of the citizenship law. With this act, he signaled that his

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party was the most suitable caretaker of the Hungarian nation at home and abroad, therefore preventing Jobbik from effectively taking over this topic.

Polling data show that this strategy worked. By passing the citizenship law Fidesz was rewarded for its strong nationalist stance: the law was evaluated positively by the Hungarian public and contributed to a fall in support for Jobbik from 17 percent in the 2010 elections to seven percent by February 2011 (Szymanowska, 2011). Orbán tapped the Hungarian card to the fullest extent by calling forth a highly symbolic and emotional issue for short-term ends (Brie & Polgar, 2011). By connecting national recovery and renewal to the support of ethnic Hungarians abroad, Orbán mobilized a powerful issue in order to consolidate and stabilize his electoral victory.

Discussion

This discussion section employs a different approach to Meguid's model of competition between unequals by looking at how radical right participation affects parliamentary politics between elections. In the following paragraphs I integrate the case evidence above and argue that this accommodative strategy reveals a more influential stature of the radical right. First, I underscore the status of junior coalition partner and opposition party as instrumental in forcing governing parties to adjust their overall policy planning. As a coalition member, the SNS was able to solicit favors by directly influencing their senior partner SMER. As a party in the opposition and by virtue of its position as an untested rival, Jobbik was able to indirectly influence Fidesz. Second, these radical right parties also compel their governing counterparts to shift their programs away from the center, thus altering their reputations as center-left and center-right parties. These laws reflect an ethno-centric bias characteristic of policies belonging to the issue

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territory of the SNS and Jobbik. The SNS is known for advocating discriminatory changes to the state's language policy designed against the Hungarian minority. Jobbik is known for championing the extension of protection and rights through the state's citizenship policy to the Hungarian minority in southern Slovakia. Now these issues and policies are also firmly tied to Slovakia and Hungary's center-left and center-right parties. Finally, even though the SNS and Jobbik suffered short-term losses, they did achieve long-term victories by seeing policy goals made into law. Therefore, these parties left a lasting imprint on both countries' legal landscape.

Coalition partnership versus opposition party

Attaining seats in Parliament provides political actors institutional tools to promote their programs that they would not have otherwise. For example, members of Parliament may lobby one another for influence, serve on legislative committees, obtain ministerial portfolios, and use their offices to publicize their politics. In this respect, the very fact that the SNS and Jobbik gained seats in Parliament grants them a degree of influence in policymaking and legislative processes. However, I go a bit further and distinguish between the SNS and Jobbik's circumstances within Parliament. Their roles in the coalition government and in the opposition, respectively, shape the delivery of their influence.

Coalition partnerships imply certain levels of bargaining and payoffs between members. Some payoffs involve rewards of certain ministerial portfolios or other higher governmental or non-governmental office. Other payoffs refer to policy, and the opportunity to influence it (Laver & Schofield, 1990). In a series of expert surveys, Laver and Hunt (1992) build on this conclusion and found that nationalist parties in particular

tend to be driven by policy-seeking motivations, intimating a willingness to sacrifice a position in government in order to achieve a policy objective. In the Slovak case, there exists a strong coordination between the governing coalition's policy toward official language and that of the SNS. This close similarity signals a "policy payoff," (Laver & Schofield, 1990, p. 188) with the 2009 language law representing a "real policy output" (p. 192) that one can use to measure this overlap. Indeed, the law was widely viewed as a favor to the SNS from Robert Fico (Puhl, 2009). Therefore, the SNS's position in the governing coalition allows me to conclude a degree of direct influence in the politics behind the 2009 law.

The notion of policy payoffs can also apply to parties in the opposition. Governing parties may very well adopt certain policies falling within the same issue territory as parties in the opposition as a form of payoff in order to secure their government's survival (Laver & Hunt, 1992). This line of reasoning over policy motivations also posits that parties in the opposition will be satisfied with this exchange because it does not necessarily matter *who* enacts the policy, just so long as it is enacted in the end. This explanation goes a long way in framing Fidesz's approach of mitigating Jobbik's rise and ensuring a sound start to its tenure in power.

Moreover, its status as second largest opposition party grants Jobbik certain liberties that membership in a governing coalition does not. Simply put, the party is well positioned to critique Fidesz's performance with little responsibility. For example, on the one hand, if Fidesz's citizenship law proved unpopular, Jobbik can disown this policy or claim it was poorly executed. On the other hand, if it is judged favorably, then the party can accuse Fidesz of highjacking its program. Even Jobbik's president Gábor Vona

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verified this lucky position. He attributed the law's fast-track procedure for citizenship to Jobbik's presence in Parliament, and accused Orbán of trying to "take the wind out of Jobbik's sails" by framing the initiative as an entirely Fidesz-led project (cited in "Reelected Jobbik Leader," 2012). Vona continued: "Fidesz is talking in terms of the right-wing…. It says what Jobbik says and what the public wants, but acts just as the Socialists act and as the powers in the background demand" (cited in "Reelected Jobbik Leader," 2012). Significantly, this last statement also portrays Fidesz as equally corrupt and conventional as the previous, much maligned Socialist government and predicts that soon it will be Fidesz damaged by the anti-incumbency bias. Vachudova (2005) refers to this condition as a "peril of monopoly" (p. 176), meaning that as voters realize their unrealistically high expectations in Orbán's party cannot be met they will turn to other options. Moreover, Jobbik benefits from a generational divide in Hungarian politics, and is especially popular among young, educated people (Batory, 2010; Verseck, 2012). Much depends on how Fidesz reacts to and counters Jobbik in the future. Provided the Socialists manage to regroup and rebuild, voters may swing back to the left, restoring a normal fluctuation to the electoral cycle. More troubling, Jobbik may gain more ground as the only remaining untested alternative (Batory, 2010). However, if Orbán wants to avoid both of these situations, he will continue his accommodation routine of nationalism and radicalism in hopes of preserving power.

It is worth formulating ideas over how policy payoffs to coalition members and opposition parties play out when the radical right is involved. Their programs, as these cases show, promote discrimination on various levels. In practice the 2009 language law may yield little effect on the public, but in principle and because of its radical right

origins, it suggests a troubling trend. While dual citizenship is not an unusual concept in Europe, the history behind the actors implicated in the 2010 law as well as its subordination of civic-based membership is what makes it so easily sensationalized at the political level. Policy payoffs are, of course, typical of these two political relationships, yet they raise important questions about the sturdiness of moderate politics in the face of future challenges from the radical right.

Shift in Reputations

This accommodation strategy also causes shifts away from moderation and alters the center-left and center-right credentials of these governing parties. Party strategy is an inherent aspect of multiparty systems, but what occurred in Slovakia and Hungary challenges the consistency and stability of political moderation. *Gazeta Wyborcza* contemplated this potential danger facing East Central European parties in June of 2009:

> The so-called traditional [centrist] parties are finding it increasingly difficult to reach people, and are becoming distanced as a result…. For this reason a growing number of people vote for people who stand out, because they talk plainly, use populist language, and reach the masses with their message…. But if the traditional parties start to match their programs to the anti-European trends a real threat will emerge (cited in Land, 2009, p. 282).

Whether or not SMER and Fidesz are "traditional" centrist parties is beyond the scope of this analysis. For my purposes, I refer to them as center-left and center-right parties because that is how they label themselves (www.strana-smer.sk; www.fidesz.hu). Furthermore, their respective European political communities, the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the European People's Party (EPP), categorize them as social democrats and Christian democrats as well (www.pes.eu; www.epp.eu). However, what the *Gazeta Wyborcza* alludes to, and what my research reveals, is how their employment of this accommodative strategy compromises these centrist reputations.

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SMER's coalition with the radical SNS and nationalist HZDS exemplifies this shift well. For example, SMER's 2006 election manifesto makes no mention of any language policy or any anti-Hungarian platform (www.strana-smer.sk). Now the party can add a controversial language law and a series of troubling diplomatic rows with Hungary to its resume. Stanley (2011) stresses this point: "the Fico government initially manifested an honest interest to maintain good bilateral relations with Hungary; however, Fico failed to dissociate himself from… the SNS, firstly for the sake of stability in the coalition and secondly as a result of his own party's more pronounced nationalist line" (p. 259). Moreover, the coalition tarnished SMER's reputation in such a way that the PES (the EP's bloc for labour, social democrats, and socialist parties of Europe) suspended its membership ("SMER suspended," 2006). SMER may have gained votes for short-term ends, but it did so at the expense of its reputation and reliability as a center-left party.

Fidesz has undergone this shift before. Orbán manipulated the Hungarian minority issue in the late 1990s as a way to organize and consolidate his party when István Csurka's MIÉP party was the most threatening force to his right (Waterbury, 2010). Fidesz met this challenge by "transforming itself from a 'neoliberal conservative' party focused on individualism and free market policies to a 'traditional conservative' party more skeptical of economic reforms and committed to the principles of family, nation, religion, and culture" (2010, p. 75). In a 2007 interview, Orbán corroborated this shift by describing it as a "benefit" to society. He continued: "there's no need to criticize the fact that right and left-wing parties are trying to integrate radical voters, even though these parties' policies are otherwise centrist" (cited in Krekó, 2010). However, this strategy becomes a problem when the size of the radical electorate increases, as was the

case in Hungary in 2010, and still today. Fidesz is therefore compelled to incorporate far more nationalist and populist voters, blurring the lines between moderate platforms and radical ones. Furthermore, Jobbik is much more popular than MIÉP ever was, which makes it a stronger, more electorally credible competitor.

Conclusion

Analyzing radical right political impact on contemporary European democracies is a relatively new field of study. Moreover, comparative research on this party family's effect on Eastern European democracies is "in its infancy" (Mudde, 2007, p. 277). However, monitoring and assessing competition between governing parties and radical right parties offers a method to finding answers to the question of impact. Through my study of radical right influence in Slovakia and Hungary, I add to the small but growing number of works addressing this research gap.

In particular, Meguid's PSO theory provides a useful starting point with which to measure and analyze competition and policy positions among unequals. It also opens up space in which niche parties, such as the SNS and Jobbik, can influence and shape the nature of the game. Mudde (2007) emphasizes that in multi-party systems "small parties can weigh heavily on national policies and social values" (p. 2), whether as junior coalition members or in semi-permanent opposition. My study brings truth to this statement, and warns of potentially harmful consequences as well.

Though these laws may have very little impact on the greater populations of both countries, the underlying principle of their existence raises concern and merits attention. Furthermore, radical right participation is also about perception in that it reflects attitudes and tensions within the party system and society. With regard to some political

repercussions, these parties sensationalize sensitive issues and draw the attention of political leaders away from more pressing matters, such as economic recovery and improving government transparency. Moreover, the 2009 and 2010 laws institutionalize interpretations of citizenship based on an ethnic principle rather than civic, therefore catering to the perception that certain groups are less equal than others. As for societal repercussions, these laws indeed directly affect how citizens in both Slovakia and Hungary interact with one another. Politicizing the Hungarian minority in such ways breeds resentment and encourages group distinction based on ethnic 'otherness,' thus reducing channels for constructive intercultural dialogue (Gyárfášová, 2008). Because these legal initiatives come from nominally social democratic and Christian democratic governing parties, they distort the public's confidence in fair and moderate governance. In these ways, the flipside of Meguid's theory shows how accommodation with the radical right undermines the quality and trustworthiness of democracy by negatively altering the relationship between citizens and the state.

Of course, legal measures institutionalizing dual citizenship and public boundaries for official language use are not unique to the Slovak and Hungarian governments. Other national governments in Europe have similar legal mechanisms, but with little political backlash. Yet the focal point of these two laws, the Hungarian minority, has become a mutual platform on which politicians of all stripes and colors in Slovakia and Hungary incite political tension. This tension has to do with symbolism, historical grievances, and intentions. The 2010 Hungarian law, for example, is a provocative political statement about past injustices, while the 2009 law is about legitimizing Slovakia's existence and independence against the backdrop of this history. For either government not to react to

the other's laws would, in a way, be perceived as abandoning certain aspects of their national narrative. These laws, then, also foreground the need for these same political elites to reconcile their countries' shared histories. Taking such steps undercuts the likelihood of future diplomatic disputes and counteracts illiberal influence from the radical right. Elite behavior caused this low moment in Slovak-Hungarian relations, but it also holds the power to prevent such moments as well.

Looking at these two laws raises many points of concern. As a final statement on the matter, however, it is important to note that these conflicts occur in two EU member-states. Therefore these laws and disputes also signal the health and quality of democracy in this region. Finally, these circumstances serve as a reminder that, given the right conditions, dormant tensions of an illiberal nature can quickly and easily reemerge in countries considered success stories of post-communism.

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