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*The Influence of a Minister: Turanism in the Hungarian  
Government*

MA thesis

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## Abstract

The ideology of Hungarian Turanism, which insists on a connection between the Hungarian nation and the nations of the formerly accepted Ural-Altai language family, has in recent years experienced a revival, to the extent that the Hungarian government itself has shifted its views on the ideology. This leads one to wonder why and how the government's policy has changed. In order to answer this question, one must consider a variety of factors including memory politics, ethnosymbolism, the relevance of Turanism in Hungarian history, and the role played by the Hungarian Minister of Human Resources, Miklós Kásler. Kásler insists that Hungarian being Uralic is more of a linguistic statement than a genetic one, which leads to the question of how national identity changes based on the label given to an ethnicity on the basis of genetics or linguistics. In this thesis I analyze interviews with Kásler in connection to the aforementioned factors to answer the question of how and why Hungarian government policy in relation to Turanism has changed. One of the major findings from this thesis was the level of influence Kásler possesses and how this decisively gave him the political clout to promote a revival of Turanism through his own institute. This indicates conclude that the current political climate in Hungary allowed for an environment that gave him such influence.

## 概要

一般に公正妥当と認められたウラル・アルタイ語族諸国とハンガリーの関連を主張するハンガリー・ツラニズムという思想が、近年、ハンガリー政府自体がこの思想に対する見解を変えるほど復活している。ここから、なぜ、どのように方針転換したのだろうかという疑問が起こる。これに回答するには、記憶政治、民族象徴主義、ハンガリー史におけるツラニズムとの関連、そしてハンガリー人事大臣のカーシュラー・ミクローシュの果たした役割など、さまざまな要因を考慮する必要がある。カーシュラーは、ハンガリー語がウラル語族であることは遺伝学的と言うよりも言語学的事実であると主張しており、これは遺伝学や言語学に基づいて民族に与えられる識別子によって、国民意識がどのように変化するかという問題へとつながっている。本修士論文の目的は、カーシュラーへのインタビューを前述の要因と関連させて分析し、ツラニズムに関連するハンガリー政府の政策がどのように、そしてなぜ変化したのかという問いに答えることにある。本論文の主要な発見の一つは、カーシュラーの影響力の大きさと、それが自身の研究所を通じてツラニズムの復興を促進する政治的影響力を決定的にしたことである。このことから、現在のハンガリーの政治情勢が、彼にそのような影響力を与える環境を可能にしたと結論づけることができる。

## Összefoglalás

A magyar turanizmus ideológiája, amely ragaszkodik a magyar nemzet és a korábban elfogadott ural-altáji nyelvcsalád népei közötti kapcsolathoz, az utóbbi években újjáéledt, olyannyira, hogy maga a magyar kormány is megváltoztatta az ideológiával kapcsolatos nézeteit. Elgondolkodtató, hogy miért és hogyan változott a kormány politikája. A kérdés megválaszolásához számos tényezőt kell figyelembe venni, többek között az emlékezetpolitikát, az etnoszimbolizmust, a turanizmus jelentőségét a magyar történelemben, valamint Kásler Miklós, az emberi erőforrások miniszterének szerepét. Kásler ragaszkodik ahhoz, hogy a magyarság uráli volta inkább nyelvi, mint genetikai kapcsolat, ami elvezet ahhoz a kérdéshez, hogy a nemzeti identitás hogyan változik aszerint, hogy egy etnikumnak milyen címkét adnak genetikai vagy nyelvészeti alapon. A dolgozat a Káslerrel készített interjúkat elemzi a fent említett tényezőkkel összefüggésben, hogy választ adjon arra a kérdésre, hogyan és miért változott a magyar kormány politikája a turanizmussal kapcsolatban. A dolgozat egyik legfontosabb megállapítása az, hogy Kásler milyen befolyással rendelkezik, és hogy ez döntően milyen politikai befolyást adott neki ahhoz, hogy saját intézetén keresztül előmozdítsa a turanizmus újjáélesztését. Ebből arra lehet következtetni, hogy a jelenlegi magyarországi politikai légkör lehetővé tette azt a környezetet, amely ilyen befolyást biztosított számára.

## Уводзіны

Ідэалогія вугорскага туранізму, якая настойвае на сувязі паміж вугорскай нацыяй і народамі, якія ў мінулым адносілі да Ўральска-Алтайскай моўнай сям'і, у апошнія часы перажывае адраджэньне такіх маштабаў, што сам вугорскі ўрад зьмяняе свой погляд на гэтую ідэалогію. Гэта вядзе да пытаньняў, чаму ды як зьмянілася палітыка дзяржавы. Каб адказаць на гэтыя пытаньні, мы мусім улічваць шэраг фактараў, такіх як палітыка памяці, этнасімбалізм, актуальнасьць туранізму ў гісторыі Вугоршчыны, а таксама роля, якую зграў вугорскі міністр кадраў Міклуш Кашлар. Кашлар сьцвярджаў, што прыналежнасьць вугорскай мовы да ўральскай сям'і - гэта з'ява хутчэй лінгвістычная чым гэнэтычная, што вядзе да пытаньня, як нацыянальная сьвядомасьць зьмяняецца пад уплывам нададзеных этнічнасьці ярлыкоў адносна генэтыкі або лінгвістыкі. У гэтай дыпломнай працы будзе праведзены аналіз інтэрв'ю з Кашларам у сувязі з вышэйзгаданымі фактарамі, каб адказаць на пытаньне, як і чаму зьмянілася вугорская палітыка ў дачыненні да туранізму. Адною з найважнейшых высноў гэтай працы было ўсьведамленьне узроўня ўплыву, які меў Кашлар, і як гэты ўплыў даў яму палітычную моц для спрыяньня адраджэньню туранізму праз яго ўласныя ўстановы. Адсюль можна зрабіць вынік, што сёньнешні палітычны клімат Вугоршчыны дазволіў існаваньне асяродзя, якое дала яму такую ўладу.

### Resümee

Ungari turanismi ideoloogia rõhutab sidet Ungari riigi ja teiste kunagiste Uurali-Altai keelkonda kuuluvate rahvaste vahel. Viimastel aastatel on see idee kogenud taassüüdi sellises mastaabis, et isegi Ungari valitsus on muutnud enda seisukohta ungarlaste päritolus. See ajendab küsima, miks ja kuidas on valitsuse oma vaateid muutunud Ungari turanismi osas. Selle küsimuse vastamiseks lähtub autor erinevatest teguritest, mille hulka kuuluvad mäluoliitika, etnosümbolism, Turanismi olulisus Ungari ajaloos ja roll, mida mängis Ungari inimressursside minister Miklós Kásler selles protsessis. Kásler rõhutab, et ungari keele kuuluvus Uurali keelkonda on rohkem keeleline side kui geneetiline, mis omakorda viib küsimuseni, kuidas rahvuslik identiteet muutub vastavalt sellele, kas rahvus on sildistatud geneetilise koosluse või keeleteaduslike arusaamade baasil. See lõputöö analüüsib Kásleri intervjuusid lähtudes eelmainitud teguritest, et vastata küsimusele, kuidas Ungari valitsuse vaade Turanismi osas on muutunud. Üks põhilisi leide sellest lõputööst on Kásleri suur mõju Ungari mäluoliitikas, mida ta on edukalt kasutanud ja kuidas Turanismi taassüüdi edendamiseks läbi oma instituudi. Sellest võib järeldada, et praegune poliitiline keskkond Ungaris on talle võimaldanud sellise mõjuvõimu.

### Хураңһу

Мажар Туран үзл гисн, мажар болн урдк Зэ-Алтан келнэ ээмг авсн үндстнэ холва зүтксн, шидрэ жилмүдт сергэлт эдлв, чинэнь Мажар засг эврэн үзлин санаһан сольв. Эн юнгад, яһж засгин төршл сольсн гиж кү соньрхдг. Эн асудл хэрүцхд, күүнд нөкцилин элдв зүүл бээцэх кергтэ, тооднь санлын төршл, келн-улсин белг чинр, Туран үзл маһар туужла холвгдл, дөкэд Мажар Күүнэ Нөөцин сээд Кэшлер Миклошин үүрг. Кэшлер зүткснь Мажар келн Зээһин келн бээдг гиж келнэ зүүһин туңхглл бээдг, ген зүүһин туңхгллас улм, тегэд яһж үндснэ ижлшл сольдг гиж асудлур чиглнэ, сүүрнь үндстнэ темдг ген зү бую келн зү сүүрэс өгнэ. Тус таамг Кэшлерла сурвлж задлна, деерк дурдсн нөкцил холвад, учр яһж, юнгад Мажар засг Туран үзлд төршл сольсн. Эн таамгин чухл олдврн негн таамг гисн Кэшлер эзлсн нилчин төвшн, дөкэд яһж эн үүнд күрэлңгэрн Туран үзл сергэхд сүркэ төршлин нөкл өгв. Үүнэс, бээгч Мажар төршлин климат үүнд иим нилч өгсн орчнд зөвшэсн гиж төгскх болдг.

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## Introduction

Right across northern Europe and Asia, from the Baltic to the Pacific and from the Mediterranean to the Arctic Ocean, there stretches a vast band of peoples to whom ethnologists have assigned the name of "Uralo-Altai race", but who are more generally termed "Turanians". This group embraces the most widely scattered folk—the Ottoman Turks of Constantinople and Anatolia, the Turcomans of Central Asia and Persia, the Tatars of South Russia and Transcaucasia, the Magyars of Hungary, the Finns of Finland and the Baltic provinces, the aboriginal tribes of Siberia and even the distant Mongols and Manchus. Diverse though they are in culture, tradition, and even physical appearance, these peoples nevertheless possess certain well-marked traits in common. Their languages are all similar, and, what is of even more import, their physical and mental make-up displays undoubted affinities.<sup>1</sup>

This description, by American historian Theodore Lothrop Stoddard, is given in reference to the ideology known as Turanism. Although Stoddard's views have faded in popularity (in large part due to his advocacy of white supremacy), the idea of Turanism still remains relevant in the nations described by the idea. As a political ideology, Turanism originated from the writings of Finnish linguist and pioneer of Uralic studies Matthias Alexander Castrén, after he concluded that the Finnish people originated from Central Asia and thus were connected to disparate yet culturally

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<sup>1</sup> Stoddard, T. L. (1917). Pan-Turanism. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 11(No. 1). pp: 16

related groups such as Hungarians, Turkic peoples, and Mongols.<sup>2</sup> Turanism as a whole may have origins that are arguably older and date back to ancient Iranian sources. Nevertheless, the ideology is ultimately connected to the idea of the Hungarian nation and its continuing legacy is due to memory politics and the need for an origin story to justify the existence and development of a nation or to serve as a unifying force.

In Hungary, Turanism has a long history connected to the origins of the Hungarian people and remains a pertinent force in Hungarian society and politics, especially in contexts germane to Hungarian nationalism. Hungarian nationhood from the very beginning rests on the origin story of Hungarians being originally a nomadic confederation that arrived in the Carpathian Basin in 895 to establish their nation. However, the question of whether Hungarians are Uralic or Turkic has been an ever-present conundrum in Hungarian nationalism and statehood and this debate was especially pronounced in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in an episode known as the "Ugric-Turkic War" within Hungarian academia which ultimately resulted in the classification of the Hungarian language as Uralic. Nevertheless, opposition to this official viewpoint has resurfaced at times, and is especially relevant nowadays. Given the increasingly influential rise of pro-Turkic sentiment in Hungarian politics and society; Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has made Hungary an observer state in the Turkic Council and is actively pursuing further cooperation.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, even before his premiership, a cultural event known as the Great Kurultáj, where representatives of numerous Turkic, Uralic, Tungusic, and Mongolic nations (as well as nations perceived to have historical or cultural links to these peoples such as Japanese, Koreans, Avars, Bulgarians, and Circassians) are invited to the Hungarian village of

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<sup>2</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica. (n.d.). *Matthias Alexander Castrén*. Retrieved from Encyclopedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Matthias-Alexander-Castren> Accessed on December 15 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Sarnyai, G. (2018, September 3). *Orbán: Hungarians Are the Late Descendants of Attila*. Retrieved from Hungary Today: <https://hungarytoday.hu/orban-hungarians-are-late-descendants-of-attila/> Accessed on January 25 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Hungarian Government. (2019, October 15). *Hungary can offer Turkic Council connection to Europe*. Retrieved from Website of the Hungarian Government: <https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/news/hungary-can-offer-turkic-council-connection-to-europe> Accessed on January 25 2020.



Bugac to display horsemanship skills and celebrate the nomadic heritage of Hungarians.<sup>56</sup> The event is even supported by government officials from countries considered “Turanian” such as Kyrgyzstan, as evidenced by the event’s main organizer visiting the country to meet Kyrgyz government officials.<sup>7</sup> The necessity of discussing the resurgence of Turanism in Hungarian politics is in how the ideology is a potential key to understanding contemporary trends in Hungary, as the ideology is a cornerstone of the ideology promoted by *Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom* (Movement for a Better Hungary), one of Hungary’s major political parties, and is also supported by elements of Hungary’s ruling Fidesz party, which influences their policies regarding it and also would make one wonder why Hungarian political outlook is shifting in regards to Turanism.

The central question this research seeks to answer is how and why Hungarian government policy regarding Turanism has changed. The overall topic of the history of the Hungarian government's policy on the origin of Hungarians and why it is currently changing will be explored, in this thesis, analyzing specific examples, primarily in relation to the influence of the Hungarian Minister of Human Resources’ Turanian beliefs and the resultant consequences of such a belief. The overall history of Hungarian government policy in relation to this topic will also be explored and such a topic may be of interest from a geopolitical point of view as it can be related to the broader context of ethnic diversity and national identity influenced by memory politics and origin stories in Eurasia, in addition to serving as an explanation to aspects of Hungarian politics that have become more pronounced in recent times, such as right-wing populism. Secondary research questions include how a single minister can change the course of the Hungarian government’s policy on Hungarian national origins, why Prime Minister Viktor Orbán made Hungary’s political outlook

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<sup>5</sup> McLaughlin, D. (2016, August 18). *Hungary Letter: Steppe festival celebrates mysterious origins*. Retrieved from The Irish Times: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/hungary-letter-steppe-festival-celebrates-mysterious-origins-1.2759437> Accessed on January 25 2020.

<sup>6</sup> KURULTAJ. (n.d.). *Information*. Retrieved from KURULTAJ: <http://kurultaj.hu/english/> Accessed on January 25 2020.

<sup>7</sup> KURULTAJ. (n.d.). *Kirgiz – magyar együttműködés a hagyományőrzésben*. Retrieved from KURULTAJ: <http://kurultaj.hu/2016/06/kirgiz-magyar-egyuttmukodes-a-hagyomanyorzesben/> Accessed on January 25 2022.

more pro-Turkic, and if the difference in approach is connected to populism as a broader trend in Hungarian politics.

Two sets of primary data have been analyzed in this thesis: a literature review accompanying a historical background section and a set of interviews with the Hungarian Minister of Human Resources in relation to his role in the revival of Hungarian Turanism. The former will serve both to provide historical background on Turanism in Hungary and the sources described will be given consideration in how Turanism was historically regarded in Hungary, and comparisons to the current incarnation will be inserted as well. The latter set has been analyzed with theories connected to memory politics and nation building in mind in order to point out what the Hungarian Minister of Human Resources is possibly trying to do and why; contemporary articles relating to the Hungarian Minister of Human Resources will also be used to aid in the analysis. The texts analyzed in the historical background/literature review section has also been connected to the interviews where possible.

This work first introduces the theories in relations to memory politics and nation building to be used in subsequent sections and in the immediately succeeding section regarding the conceptualization of such ideas, due to their relevance to Hungarian Turanism and its revival in modern day Hungary. This is followed by the aforementioned historical background and literature review section, then a section on the methodology used for this thesis, the analysis of the interviews, and the conclusion. The historical background and literature review section is necessary both in order to provide a general overview of the ideology and its history as well as to serve as a source to connect to subsequent sections. The analysis section is divided into subsections that deal with the two sets of data as well as supplementary material that will be used in the analysis. And the methodology section is necessary for the sake of providing a general structure for the thesis as a whole as well as reinforce the topicality of the case and discuss potential limitations.

## 1. Conceptualization

In order to understand the topic of Hungarian Turanism and its modern incarnation as well as its reemergence in Hungarian politics, one must understand the ideas of nationhood, memory politics, and national origin narratives. In order to understand these concepts, theories in relation to them must be discussed. In this section, specific theories will be introduced and elaborated upon, to be justified in the end in their relevance to the topic of Hungarian Turanism and why such theories are the most appropriate to be used in the analysis.

### 1.1. The Concept of Nation

The definition of a nation varies between authors and also depends on the context. Nevertheless, a nation always refers to a community of people defined to be such based on a combination of shared features or traits and thus a nation can be seen as a collective of people defined by common features and traits. According to the Anglo-Czech philosopher and social anthropologist Ernest Gellner, the concept of nation is “primarily a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.”<sup>8</sup> According to Gellner, industrialization brought about nations and such entities did not exist before that; Gellner postulates that before industrialization, people used to live in small village communities and that the advent of the industrial age made villagers begin migrating to large cities. In contrast to villagers who are rooted to a community, city people are mobile and have “no roots” so to speak and become a “mobile population” extending over a wider area as this was the population factories required.<sup>9</sup> These circumstances necessitated the creation of a common identity on the part of the state itself. This also was a result of the traditional boundaries of a village being erased and people being isolated, which led to the necessity of a national identity being formed in its stead, which eventually gave rise to nationalism and arguably the ethnopolitical regime itself. Thus, according to Gellner, before industrialization, there was no nation.

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<sup>8</sup> Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp: 1

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp: 63

Although Gellner's ideas and theories are given deep consideration in the field of nationalism studies, they are not without criticism. One of the most prominent critics is Gellner's own student, Anthony D. Smith. Smith disagreed with his mentor and argued in his 1986 book, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, that nations have historical roots and are not the result of industrialization. He argued that they are based on pre-modern, cultural and ethnic communities, which he calls *ethnies*. National identity evolved from pre-modern ethnic identity. *Ethnie* is the French noun for ethnic community. According to Smith, it consists of six basic elements:<sup>10</sup>

- A collective proper name (extremely important as it was instrumental for ethnic revivals and nationalist movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, unlike class distinctions that mostly defined societal divisions in earlier eras; unifications of several groups into one nation were also influenced by this)
- A shared culture (one or more differentiating elements of common culture for the sake of unity; whereby aspects become important depending on the specific ethnic group)
- A myth of common ancestry
- Shared historical memory (important for uniting an ethnic community)
- Association with a specific homeland
- And a sense of solidarity (often achieved with one or more of the preceding conditions).

With this concept of *ethnie*, Smith challenges the view brought forth by Gellner.

The approaches of Gellner and Smith are connected to the eternal debate regarding nationhood and in understanding what nations exactly are as well as how old they are. This debate is seen as containing multiple approaches that define the concept of nation with a perennial or primordial approach and the idea of the nation being a modern construction being among the most prominent viewpoints. The perennial approach argues that nations have always existed as long as humans have lived and

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<sup>10</sup> Smith, A. D. (1986). *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Hoboken. Wiley-Blackwell. pp: 21-24

that all nations can trace their history back to evolutionary traits and that nations themselves are a natural element and fundamental to human life throughout recorded history; continuity with past nations and identities as well as the concept of a nation remaining as a collective identity are recurring themes.<sup>11</sup> The perennial approach is itself a milder form of a wider approach known as primordialism, which itself is an umbrella term to describe the belief that nations have always existed.<sup>12</sup>

The modernist approach to nationalism stipulates that the concept of nation is a novel one resulting from industrialization, capitalism, and the emergence of the modern bureaucratic state, among other factors.<sup>13</sup> The argument of the nation being a modern construction is closer to the ideas of both Gellner and Smith. The former's primary argument here is that the concept of nation is dynamic and caused by socio-economic and political processes originating from Industrialization in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe; it is new, modern, and ultimately means that the idea of national identity is a changing product of collective action, not the force that drives nation-building. The latter's argument is that while the concept of nation is relatively recent, it is still based on a pre-existing community with common traits and features. Smith himself clarified that while members of an *ethnie* may invoke primordial ties, their communities are long term creations and that the substance of their origin narratives, collective memories, values, and symbols are subject to change over the generations; nonetheless, there are *ethnies* that persist for centuries, even when the memory of their common ancestry fades.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, much of the modernist critique of primordialist-perennialist approaches to the concept of nation are related to how the alleged antiquity of a nation is actually the product of rulers and ideologists who pushed a narrative at specific historical moments.<sup>15</sup> Such an importance of memory in connection to the concept of

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<sup>11</sup> Özkirimli, U. (2010). *Theories of Nationalism A Critical Introduction*. London. Palgrave Macmillan. Second Edition. pp: 58

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp: 49, 51

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp: 72

<sup>14</sup> Grosby, S. & Leoussi, A. (2007). *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations*. pp: 327

<sup>15</sup> Özkirimli, U. (2010). *Theories of Nationalism A Critical Introduction*. London. Palgrave Macmillan. Second Edition. pp: 70

*ethnie* and the origins of nation leads to another concept related to the concept of nation: memory politics.

## **1.2. The Concept of Memory Politics**

Memory politics refers to the organization of collective memories for political purposes that influence the way history is written or remembered. This can be influenced by cultural and societal forces as well, but the ultimate goal is to create an accepted narrative in the eyes of the political elite. To this end, the idea of nation-building through the codification of an origin narrative is one such manifestation of memory politics and it can be argued that the plethora of divergent political interests in relation to forming a narrative on national origins is why the idea of nation is divided into different camps with radically different arguments regarding the origin of nation and the factors that resulted in the concept's creation.

In order to understand memory politics, it is imperative to understand the concept of collective memory. Collective memory is defined as a collection of shared experiences, memories, and knowledge possessed by a nation or another social group that have a significant impact on the group's identity. In other words, the term refers to mental representations of past events that are common to members of a social group that serve to support a group identity and their expression can take multiple forms including but not limited to oral and written narratives, monuments, and symbols.<sup>16</sup> Citing interwar French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, Peter J. Verovšek stipulates that collective memory is socially constructed as “the idea of an individual memory absolutely separate from social memory, is an abstraction almost devoid of meaning” and that as a result collective memory is always mediated through complex mechanisms of conscious manipulation by elites and unconscious absorption by members of society.<sup>17</sup> Halbwachs himself argued that it is impossible to analyze the

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<sup>16</sup> American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Collective Memory*. Retrieved from: APA Dictionary of Psychology: <https://dictionary.apa.org/> Accessed on January 27<sup>th</sup> 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Verovšek, P. (2016). Collective memory, politics, and the influence of the past: the politics of memory as a research paradigm, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 4:3, 529-543. doi: 10.1080/21565503.2016.1167094. pp: 531

memory of an individual without the relevant social memory, demonstrating the precedence of collective memory as the source of meaning within individual ones.<sup>18</sup>

Jan Assmann builds upon the work of Halbwachs by introducing the idea of cultural memory as an addendum to collective memory. Assmann referred to the work of his predecessor as one focusing on “communicative memory” due to Halbwachs’ focus on oral narratives surrounding everyday communications dominating smaller groups such as families.<sup>19</sup> Continuing from this, Assmann introduced “cultural memory” to refer to forms of collective memory with fixed reference points that are more removed from everyday life; he claims that “These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance).<sup>20</sup>” Assmann argued that cultural memory is essential for the formation of a group’s identity as it maintains and preserves the cultural meanings that are important for a particular social group’s society.<sup>21</sup>

Verovšek argues that collective memory is often used by politicians to mobilize remembrance as an instrument of politics and that in certain cases, historical analogies are used to frame and think through important issues or manipulate memory to legitimize their actions with reference to formative events in the collective consciousness of their community.<sup>22</sup> Such social frameworks not only give meaning to individual memories; they also provide the broad historical imaginary that shapes the selection and interpretation of formative events.<sup>23</sup> Aleida Assmann builds upon the aforementioned ideas of Jan Assmann on collective memory by stipulating that a

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<sup>18</sup> Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On Collective Memory*. Lewis A. Coser (Ed.). Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1992. pp. 167-169

<sup>19</sup> Assmann, J., Czaplicka, J (translator). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, Vol. 65, *Cultural History/Cultural Studies* (1995), pp. 125–133, p. 126-127.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. pp: 129

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. pp: 130-132

<sup>22</sup> Verovšek, P. (2016). Collective memory, politics, and the influence of the past: the politics of memory as a research paradigm, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 4:3, 529-543. doi: 10.1080/21565503.2016.1167094. pp: 529

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. pp: 531

social group's expressions of cultural memory can originate from manifestations of communicative memory that were institutionalized.<sup>24</sup> A. Assmann also claims that the concept of cultural memory is a form of mediated memory that "is backed up by material media, symbols, and practices which have to be grafted into the hearts and minds of individuals."<sup>25</sup> This ties into Verovšek's argument as it demonstrates the institutionalization of memory by the political elite with the aim of creating an accepted narrative and also demonstrates the importance of symbols in the context of collective memory and memory politics, as the selection and manipulation of symbols is an integral component. Ultimately, the concept of collective memory is the set of values and norms within a social group that arise from past events and consequently influence the way individuals within such groups perceive the world. Memory politics is the way political elites manipulate that collective memory for the sake of legitimizing their positions and maintaining power structures that benefit them. This leads into the question of how these political elites engage in memory politics and which elements of the past in relation to the nation they choose to invoke for the sake of pushing their preferred narrative, which directly leads into the concept of Ethnosymbolism.

### **1.3. Ethnosymbolism**

"Nationalism" as a term itself refers to patriotic feelings, principles, or efforts. It is possible to divide this between "an extreme form of patriotism marked by a feeling of superiority over other countries" or an "advocacy of political independence" for a particular country.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, one manifestation of this definition would be a cultural nationalism that advocates a regeneration of national community spirit by creating, preserving, or reinforcing a people's cultural identity when deemed inadequate to deal with external challenges; moreover the concept is concerned with the cultural community's distinctiveness that defines the essence of the nation and

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<sup>24</sup> Assmann, A. Transformations between History and Memory. *Social Research*, Vol. 75 (1), 2008, pp. 49–72, p. 52.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. pp: 55

<sup>26</sup> Oxford University Press. (2008). *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2nd Edition ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp: 545



thus cultural nationalism is generated through the intellectualization of culture and its subsequent reproduction and dissemination.<sup>27</sup> Cultural nationalism itself, through the idea that culture needs to be intellectualized and then reproduced, can be seen as a concept that promotes the formation of a nation through symbols. Which can lead one to consider it synonymous with Ethnosymbolism.

Ethnosymbolism refers to the approach in nation-building wherein the roles of symbols, myths, memories, values, and traditions are heavily emphasized in the formation and maintenance of nations and nationalism.<sup>28</sup> According to Anthony D. Smith, “For ethno-symbolist, what gives nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritage and in the ways in which a popular living past has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias.”<sup>29</sup> In this way he confirms that this approach is one where the political elite use symbols to spin a narrative based on the nation’s past in order to create their preferred narrative.

Ethnosymbolism is a continuation of Smith’s concept of *ethnie*, which he defined as “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories and one or more common elements of culture, including an association with homeland, and some degree of solidarity, at least among élites.”<sup>30</sup> Ethnosymbolism emphasizes the importance of analyzing *ethnies* and nations over a long historical period and define them as historical communities embedded in specific contexts and in the memories and myths of their members, resulting in the emergence of nations around *ethnies* with their national projects to periodic revision and reinterpretation due to the *ethnies* and nations themselves being subject to change over time.<sup>31</sup>

Regarding such national projects, such as origin narratives and collective memories,

<sup>27</sup> Nielsen, K. (1999). Cultural nationalism, neither ethnic nor civic. In R. Beiner (Ed.), *Theorizing nationalism* (pp. 119-130). Albany: State University of New York Press. pp: 119-130

<sup>28</sup> Özkirimli, U. (2010). *Theories of Nationalism A Critical Introduction*. London. Palgrave Macmillan. Second Edition. pp: 143

<sup>29</sup> Smith, A. D. (1999) *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp: 9

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. pp: 13

<sup>31</sup> Smith, A. D. (2015). Ethnosymbolism. *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism*, 1–2. doi:10.1002/9781118663202.wber. pp: 1

ethnosymbolists argue that only those symbolic elements of myth, memory, tradition, and the like that have some resonance with segments of the designated population are likely to prove able to furnish the contents of the nation's public culture, necessitating the consideration of preexisting popular traditions, values, memories, and symbols, which in turn leads to which symbols are of actual relevance to the nation and conflicts over the accuracy and authenticity of the nation's history, leading to the reinterpretation of ideas and narratives over time.<sup>32</sup>

The symbols and other elements of nation to be emphasized in order to form a narrative can include the memories of golden ages, myths of origin and ethnic election, cults of heroes and ancestors, an attachment to a current or past specific homeland in the formation and persistence of the specific nation, and the different kinds of ethnic groups and *ethnies* that form the basis of the nations.<sup>33</sup> These symbols highlight the importance of subjective elements in the understanding of ethnic groups and nations, in the weight it gives to popular cultures and practices and these in turn set limits to elite understandings and strategies in forming their preferred narrative. Even nowadays, it can be observed the political elites invoke symbols and other associated elements in order to promote a specific narrative among the general populace with the aim of increasing or maintaining their power base and legitimizing or bolstering their political interests. An example of a country where this is happening is Hungary.

#### **1.4. Relevance to Contemporary Hungarian Politics**

In the wake of Hungary's transition from Communism to Capitalism in the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of Hungary, Hungarian societal issues were exacerbated with widespread unemployment and income inequality, among other hardships, resulting in the popularity of radical political parties, particularly on the political far right in Hungary.<sup>34</sup> Another result is

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<sup>32</sup> Smith, A. D. (2015). Ethnosymbolism. *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism*, 1–2. doi-10.1002/9781118663202.wber. pp: 1-2

<sup>33</sup> Özkirimli, U. (2010). *Theories of Nationalism A Critical Introduction*. London. Palgrave Macmillan. Second Edition. pp: 143

<sup>34</sup> Kenes, B. (2020, August, 3). *Jobbik: A Turanist Trojan Horse in Europe?* Retrieved from European Center for Populism Studies <https://www.populismstudies.org/jobbik-a-turanist-trojan-horse-in-europe/> Accessed on January 25 2022.

the resurgence of the ideology known as Hungarian Turanism. This ideology is related to the ethnogenesis of the Hungarian nation and can be considered an ethnosymbolist approach to Hungary, as it emphasizes the importance of certain symbols and myths as well as hypothesized connections to other nations for the sake of forming a specific narrative. The ideology had its heyday in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and its modern day resurgence can be considered a manifestation of memory politics, as argued by Verovšek, because it is used by Hungarian politicians who seek to challenge the currently accepted narrative on the national origins of the Hungarian nation. Moreover, the origin of Hungarians can be viewed through multiple lenses in defining the concept of *nation*. While elements of the perennialist and primordialist approaches could be detected within Hungarian society, particularly in the idea that the Hungarian nation is unique, especially given its geographic position and vast differences with Indo-European neighbors, in the context of Hungarian memory politics it is nevertheless the ethnosymbolist arguments that remain most prominent, as the concept Hungarian Turanism is connected to both the idea within popular memory that the Hungarian nation's *ethnie* is more Turkic than Uralic (or simultaneously) both as well as the idea that the modern viewpoint of Uralic nationhood is relatively recent and artificial. The Turanian idea itself is also relatively recent and connected to the rise of Hungarian nationalism, thus feeding into the ethnosymbolist approach that ideas regarding the nation can change over time. The politicization of Turanism by the Hungarian government and the change in government policy can consequently be seen as an egregious manifestation of memory politics, as the Hungarian government seeks to change the narrative in order to push an agenda regarding the origins of the nation in order to further connections with the East for the sake of strengthening Hungary. To this end the emphasis on Turanism emphasizes the uniqueness of Hungary to emphasize the nation from perennialist viewpoint, seeks to subvert the dominant and currently accepted narrative regarding the nation's historical homeland and origins and seeks to change what it views as an artificial imposition.

As mentioned, Hungarian Turanism relies heavily upon symbols. The rise of political movements supporting it thus promote specific rhetoric that emphasize Hungary's

connections to Turkic nations for the sake of promoting their narrative. This in turn leads one to question why the ideology recently re-emerged and why it in particular was chosen. When considering the recent socio-political developments in Hungary, it can be observed that there is a deep aversion towards EU policies as well US foreign policy, which many Hungarians view as contrary to their interests, especially in the light of globalism, liberalism, and anti-traditionalism, which many Hungarians consider to be features of modern Western societies.<sup>35</sup> From this, one can consider the resurgence of Hungarian Turanism to be a reactionary pushback, one that is promoted by the political elite for the sake of legitimizing their authority and also because it allows them to further their political interest of maintaining their power. The ideology also allows for symbolism that justifies moving Hungary in a new direction in foreign policy aimed to reassert the country on the international stage.

### **1.5. Aim of Thesis**

It can be argued that the idea of nationhood is one prominent manifestation of memory politics as it is ultimately a product of a politicization of a community's collective memory. As a result, memory politics is pertinent as an important instrument to define how and what communities remember, with the nation being the most common political group that individuals identify themselves as a part of. Moreover, the concept of collective memory plays into these arguments as it ultimately influences the narratives of origin in relation to nation; ethnosymbolism is one approach in relation to this that specifically emphasizes symbols and other associated elements. All of this is ultimately an attempt to spin a narrative and thus questions arise regarding why a change in narrative was necessitated and how the government's policy is changing and has changed over the years. In order to understand the reasons for such a manifestation, as well as the relevance of commonly cited historical analogies and topics in the collective memory of Hungary in connection to Turanism, it is necessary to examine the history of this phenomenon as well as the relevant literature and other evidence.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

The goal of this thesis in subsequent sections is to use these concepts to analyze specifically the Hungarian context of Turanism resurging and explain how and why, with references to the background of Turanism to be explored in a later section as well. It also aims to prove that the trigger for the resurgence of Hungarian Turanism was Hungarian dissatisfaction with the EU and the West as a whole and a consequent desire to reassert Hungary's position on the international stage by emphasizing Hungary's position as a bridge between the East and the West. This can in turn be connected to the interest of political actors in Hungary's elite wanting to stay in power.

## 2. Methodology

While Hungary has traditionally adhered to the generally accepted view that the nation and its language is Uralic in origin and has carried out policies with this viewpoint in mind, the recent rise of right wing politics has started to change this outlook which leads to the question and how and why the Hungarian government's policy changed. In order to answer the primary research question of how and why the Hungarian government's policies and outlook changed, it is necessary to not only consider the overall history of Hungarian government policy in relation to this topic, but also to look at the rhetoric of Hungarian politicians whose actions are germane to the shift in Hungary's orientation regarding Turanism. It is necessary to look into primary sources that were created at a time relevant to the topic in its heyday and/or provide original information. In the context of memory politics in relation to nation building and the origins of the Hungarian nation, sources relating to Turanism written during the height of its popularity as well as modern sources that are pertinent to its resurgence will be important, for they will provide an insight into how attitudes have changed over time and possibly why.

### 2.1. Selection of Case

Such a topic is pertinent given current trends in Hungarian politics due to the fact that in recent years pro-Turkic sentiments have been increasing among the Hungarian right wing and nationalists which can be seen in their reactionary responses to suggestions of Hungarian being of the Uralic language family, such as when Finnish linguist Johanna Laakso pointed out how Viktor Orbán's own words used to describe Hungarian as "related to Turkic languages" were almost all Uralic in origin.<sup>36</sup> Hungary's historical relations with both the East and the West also reflect previous trends within Hungarian politics influenced by the nation's geographic position, genetic origins, and cultural influenced gained as a result of centuries of interactions with many cultures and nations from both the East and West. Such trends and the

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<sup>36</sup> Laakso, J. (2018, September 10). "OOPS, IT WENT VIRAL" – JOHANNA LAAKSO'S ANALYSIS OF ORBÁN'S CLAIM OF TURKIC ORIGIN OF HUNGARIAN. Retrieved from HUNGARIAN SPECTRUM: <https://hungarianspectrum.org/2018/09/10/oops-it-went-viral-johanna-laaksos-analysis-of-orbans-claim-of-turkic-origin-of-hungarian/> Accessed on January 23 2020.

consideration of how and why they change is especially topical nowadays, as it is relevant to Hungarian Foreign Policy given Hungary's attempts to simultaneously court both European nations (such as the Visegrád 4 Group) and nations outside of Europe or on its fringes that supposedly have a cultural or genetic connection to Hungary (the Turkic nations arguably being the most notable example as Orbán has made Hungary an observer state in the Turkic Council and is actively pursuing further cooperation;<sup>37</sup> South Korea is another noteworthy example).<sup>38</sup> The rise of nationalism in Hungarian politics and the way Turanism and associated thinking is rebounding as a result also leads one to question if it is related to how and why the Hungarian government's policies in relation to Turanism changed; there is even the possibility of the change ultimately being a new approach by the government that is ultimately connected to right wing populism for this reason. Moreover, research into the overall topic of Hungarian Turanism particularly in relation to its contemporary incarnation in Hungary, has remained extremely scarce, especially in English.<sup>39</sup> As a result this thesis will seek to look into the topic and its current impact in Hungary to provide an additional sample of literature.

## 2.2. Research Design and Choice of Method

The overview and commentary on selected articles and books to be provided in the immediately subsequent literature review, which also provide a historical background on the concept of Turanism and its influence in Hungarian politics, can be justified on the criteria that they are explicitly connected to the topic and serve as primary sources either by being written in a relevant period, providing data relating to said period, or both. The majority of these texts in the upcoming section being works by Hungarian authors were chosen because they would have been more likely to have had firsthand

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<sup>37</sup> Hungarian Government. (2019, October 15). *Hungary can offer Turkic Council connection to Europe*. Retrieved from Website of the Hungarian Government: <https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/news/hungary-can-offer-turkic-council-connection-to-europe> Accessed on January 25 2020.

<sup>38</sup> MTI-Hungary Today. (2021, November 4). *Orbán Highlights Potential in V4-South Korea Cooperation*. <https://hungarytoday.hu/orban-highlights-potential-in-v4-south-korea-cooperation/> Retrieved from Hungary Today. Accessed on January 18 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Kowalczyk, M. (2017). Hungarian Turanism. From the Birth of the Ideology to Modernity – an Outline of the Problem. *Historia i Polityka*. 49. doi:10.12775/HiP.2017.011. pp:50

exposure to Turanism and its tenets as well as the activities associated with it. Moreover, the information provided in said books can be connected to Hungarian nation-building by conceptualizing Turanism and memory politics by demonstrating how the manipulation of historical facts within these works was essential for the ideology's development, especially in connection to the Hungarian nation in a primordialist or ethnosymbolist interpretation. These texts, alongside interviews with relevant figures, are publicly available primary sources and thus appropriate for analysis.

Recent articles relating to the Hungarian government's actions in the context of Turanism as well as interviews with key figures in the promotion of Turanism, particularly Miklós Kásler, are also potentially important as recent government actions and the words of key individuals can potentially indicate the reason for major changes. Such interviews, in connection with the information to be provided in the subsequent section regarding the topic's historical background, can be interpreted with memory politics and theories related to nation in mind. Three interviews with Kásler pertaining to his work on Hungarian national origins have been analyzed in this study. They are:

- *Új időszámítás jön a kutatásban* (A new era in research comes), with Balázs Ágoston of the Hungarian right-wing weekly newspaper *Demokrata*. In this interview Kásler explicitly mentions the idea of a new narrative and discusses the mission of the Magyarorsággkutató Intézet.
- *Generációk tanulták az iskolában, hogy finnugor eredetűek vagyunk – Kásler Miklós a Mandinernek* (Generations have been taught in school that we are of Finno-Ugric origin - Miklós Kásler to the Mandiner), with the moderate right weekly newspaper *Mandiner* (the name of the specific interviewer was not provided) on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2018. Kásler discusses the rationale for his belief that a new narrative is necessary and elaborates upon his research with the aim of justifying his activities.



• *Szétválík a magán- és az állami egészségügy Kásler Miklós: Létrehozzuk a Magyarorsággkutató Intézetet* (The Separation of Private and Public Health Care; Miklós Kásler: We will establish the Magyarorsággkutató Intézet), conducted by Éva Haiman and Ferenc Kis, which took place on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018, for the conservative newspaper *Magyar Idők*. This interview primarily focuses on Kásler's work in the Hungarian healthcare sector but also mentions his research into Hungarian national origins.

This approach has been chosen on the grounds that Kásler's influence is a driving force in the resurgence of Turanism in Hungary, especially given how his institute was granted a budget increase in 2020.<sup>40</sup> Consequently it can be said that analyzing his rhetoric is an essential element in answering the question of how and why a minister can change the course of the Hungarian government's policy on Hungarian national origins as well as why Orbán made Hungary's political outlook more pro-Turkic.

### 2.3. Methods

The overall method is a thematic content analysis. This entails the analysis of interviews in the context of memory politics and nation building. The result allows one to ask why certain actions were conducted or why certain things were said and how it relates to the specific historical narrative the political elite wants to promote and how they will need to go about promoting said belief. Patterns within the interviews will potentially reveal a subtext that indicate reasons for change.

The focus of the literature review are the historical texts providing background on Turanism while focusing on certain themes and keywords common to the texts. These will be analyzed with theories relating to memory politics and nation-building and then followed by a brief overview on contemporary Hungarian politics, which will be connected to the themes explored in the literature where necessary. The

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<sup>40</sup> Czinkóczi S. (2020, July 31). *A kormány 700 milliós többletforrást tett félre a Magyarorsággkutató Intézetnek*. Retrieved from 444.hu: <https://444.hu/2020/07/30/a-kormany-700-millios-tobbletforrast-tett-felre-a-magyarsagkutato-intezetnek> Accessed on January 27 2022.

interviews with Miklós Kásler will be summarized with important sections pertinent to key themes including Hungarian Turanism, memory politics and nation building, and the research question of how and why Hungarian government policy changed and then followed by subsections analyzing the interviews from the perspective of each theme. The findings are interpreted altogether in connection to other articles regarding Kásler from a third party perspective to answer the sub-questions of the thesis.

The specific categories to be used in analyzing the interviews will be Hungary's connections to other nations within the overall theme of Hungary as a bridge between the East and West, and Ethnosymbolism in relation to memory politics. These categories are germane to the topic as they tie into the underlying themes within Hungarian Turanism and are thus appropriate for a thematic content analysis. The results should fulfill the objective of the thesis in proving the significance of political interests in driving the change in policy within the Hungarian government.

#### **2.4. Research Limitations**

It can be pointed out that such an approach to the topic suffers from three potential setbacks. Firstly, the analysis may be inchoate due to the paucity of data and the lack of firsthand research. However, while the author has attempted to contact Miklós Kásler and the *Magyarságkutató Intézet* more than once, the lack of any response necessitates the usage of such seemingly deficient materials. Secondly, the thesis will mainly analyze situations from the Hungarian perspective and mostly rely on Hungarian sources, which may lead one to question the neutrality of the analysis. However, in addition to the reasons provided in an earlier paragraph, since the topic is primarily concerned with Hungary and the aim of the thesis is to seek to explain the overall topic from the view of nation-building and memory politics as well as how and why the political elite is framing the accepted narrative, it is justifiable for the sake of local proximity to the topic and brevity. Thirdly, the available interviews are sourced from newspapers with Kásler and thus may have potential liabilities in the newspapers' political orientations possibly influencing how certain questions were asked and which answers were given. Another potential drawback is that since these are interviews that were not collected by the author of this thesis himself, certain

answers will most likely be lacking as the relevant questions will not have been asked. Furthermore, all of the interviews are from 2018, as the author could not find more recent examples.

Despite the aforementioned potential limitations in the research, it is the position of the author that the results will still be valid. As mentioned earlier in this section, research into the topic of Hungarian Turanism as a whole and especially its modern incarnation remains sparse.<sup>41</sup> As a result, it is the opinion of the author that this research will still produce something of value as the field as a whole remains relatively unexplored. Moreover, the data to be analyzed and interpreted is both authentic and of relevance to the topic, and despite the lack of a firsthand interview with Miklós Kásler, results gathered from a textual analysis of his other interviews should be enough to produce similar results.

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<sup>41</sup> Kowalczyk, M. (2017). Hungarian Turanism. From the Birth of the Ideology to Modernity – an Outline of the Problem. *Historia i Polityka*. 49. doi:10.12775/HiP.2017.011. pp:50

### 3. Historical Developments of Turanism

In the preceding conceptualization section, concepts related to nation-building and memory politics were introduced and discussed and connected to Hungary in the end. Now the specific background to Hungarian Turanism will be introduced and discussed.

The goal of this section is threefold: to introduce and discuss relevant works of literature while providing background on Hungarian Turanism; to identify common themes and keywords pertinent to the overall topic; to provide a brief overview on contemporary Hungarian politics, which will be connected to the themes explored in the literature where necessary as well as introduce the key figure whose words will be analyzed in the subsequent analysis section.

Regarding the origins of Hungarians, the inherent challenge to Hungarian Turanism is that the idea that Hungarians are Uralic has been made the mainstream approach and has been entrenched as such for centuries. The origins of research into Hungarians started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 gave Hungarians a massive level of autonomy within the Habsburg Empire that galvanized Hungarian academia and also empowered Hungary as a state and nation, as ethnic Hungarians were in control for the first time in centuries. Before this, Hungary had no real political elite that emphasized the importance of Hungarians as a nation or the Hungarian language as Latin and German were the *linguae francae* used by the upper classes.<sup>42</sup> As a result, Hungary started to utilize memory politics and research into Hungarian origins began in order to justify the nation's development and unity, especially given the multiethnic nature of the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>43</sup> The idea of Hungarian uniqueness due to the language's massive differences from that of neighboring nations (all of which are Indo-European), as well as the move to Magyarize the territory, can be seen as attempts to create a narrative that Hungarians were always around, and the Turanian literature can be seen as attempts to turn the *ethnie* that had been living in the territory into a developed Hungarian nation. After

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<sup>42</sup> Lendvai, P. (2003). *The Hungarians*. Princeton University Press Princeton, New Jersey. pp: 4-5

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 306-308

World War I and the traumatic defeat of Austria-Hungary, resulting in the Treaty of Trianon and the loss of 72% of its territory, Hungary once again saw a wave of research into the origins of Hungarians in order to cope with this series of unfortunate events, and to seek new allies with the aim of restoring national pride. This resulted in the intensification of research into Hungarian origins, resulting in the literature to be discussed below in order to help the political elite shape a narrative to allow them to foster a sense of kinship with other nations in order to restore Hungary's dignity.

Given the above background, it would be auspicious to have the resultant literature examined in the form of a literature review. In order to do so in the general framework of a literature review, key terms and concepts will have to be identified within multiple existing pieces of literature as well as major relationships, trends, patterns, and differences between the sources.<sup>44</sup> The literature includes doctoral dissertations, excerpts from digital libraries, texts from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and spiritual magazines. By identifying key terms and concepts within these texts, it will allow one to figure out the overall themes related to the Hungarian government policy in relation to the origins of Hungarian nationhood as well as the history of the Hungarian government's approach to this topic. These themes and concepts are then be connected to modern developments.

### **3.1. Turanism**

One word that appears in multiple sources as a key term is Turanism, which is to be expected, as it is the name of the overarching ideology. The term appears in all of the reviewed texts at least once and in some way is connected to the main topic of the text as either the overarching focus or pertinent to the topic's background. Alajos Paikert, founder of the *Turáni Társaság* (Turanian Society) in 1910 and the bimonthly newspaper *Turán* explains in *A Turáni Eszme* (1922) that the "Turanian Idea" is the idea that nations and territories of "Turanian" origin should be developed and enriched for the sake of spiritual and material progress and the overall prosperity of

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<sup>44</sup> QUT. (n.d.). *Writing a Literature Review*. Retrieved from QUT site: <https://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au/write/litreview.jsp>

humanity.<sup>45</sup> Writing for the spiritual magazine *Kagylókürt*, László Szendrei elaborates in his 2008 article that the word Turan refers to a largely geographic concept of Persian origin used in reference to regions inhabited by steppe nomads, most notably mentioned in the epic *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings) by the Persian poet Ferdowsi, which details an ancient conflict that, according to Szendrei, has parallels with the “Curse of Turán” in Hungarian culture that in turn emphasizes the seemingly eternal cycle of suffering in Hungarian national history.<sup>46</sup> Szendrei even quotes Paikert’s original definition on Turanian ideology and emphasizes it as one of the “most important” ways the ideology is defined.<sup>47</sup> The same definition is quoted in other texts as well, highlighting the influence of Paikert’s definition.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, both Paikert’s emphasis on the importance of collaborating with other nations considered Turanian is mentioned to have influenced the establishment of Hungarian cultural and political relationships with such nations, such as Japan, which shows that the influence of Turanism on the ideas of Hungarian origins held political influence in the ideology’s heyday.<sup>49</sup> Such developments lead into another aspect common to much of the available literature in relation to Hungarian Turanism: an emphasis on the Eastern origins of the Hungarian nation and a need to maintain or regain national pride based on this origin.

### 3.2. Hungary as a Bridge Between the East and the West

*A Turáni Eszme* (1922) emphasizes that Turanian peoples, especially Hungarian and other “Western Turanians” such as Bulgarians, Estonians, Turks, and Finns, should

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<sup>45</sup> Paikert, A. (1922). *A Turáni Eszme*. Forrás: A Turáni Társaság Kiadványa: [https://mtda.hu/books/paikert\\_alajos\\_a\\_turani\\_eszme.pdf](https://mtda.hu/books/paikert_alajos_a_turani_eszme.pdf) Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 5

<sup>46</sup> Szendrei, L. (2008). *A turanizmus*. Retrieved from Kagylókürt: <http://www.kagylokurt.hu/2503/kulturortenet/muvelodestortenet/a-turanizmus.html> Accessed on January 25 2020

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Kincses-Nagy, É. (n.d.). *Őstörténet és nemzettudat, 1919-1931 7. fejezet - Kincses Nagy Éva: A turáni gondolat*. Retrieved from Digitális Tankönyvtár: <https://regi.tankonyvtar.hu/en/tartalom/tkt/ostortenet-nemzettudat/ch07.html> Accessed on January 25 2020.

<sup>49</sup> Farkas, I. (n.d.). *A Magyar–Nippon Társaság*. Retrieved from [http://real.mtak.hu/34745/1/Farkas\\_Magyar\\_Nippon\\_Tarsasag\\_u.pdf](http://real.mtak.hu/34745/1/Farkas_Magyar_Nippon_Tarsasag_u.pdf) Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 90

become the “connecting link” between the West and the East and that the Hungarian people especially should be the forerunners of mediating between East and West.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, in that particular text there is an underlying tone of condescension, as it is mentioned that Hungarians need to be the “educators” for the “backwards and hitherto closed East.”<sup>51</sup> Such an assertion can be seen as a way for Hungarians to reemphasize their national pride, as the text was written shortly after the devastation of World War I, wherein the Treaty of Trianon destroyed the Kingdom of Hungary and stripped the state of 72% of its territory and population, thus the idea that Hungarians need to be a bridge between the East and West and also spread their notions to the former could be seen as a way to regain pride. This notion is supported by a text from the Hungarian Digital Library *Őstörténet és nemzettudat* (Ancient history and the national consciousness) by Éva Nagy-Kicses, wherein it is stated that in the 1920s and 30s it was believed that Hungary will recover from the humiliation of Trianon at the expense of Indo-Europeans and:

“[...] that after the heyday of Germanism and Slavism, Turanism will flourish. The great and difficult but glorious task of becoming the spiritual and economic leaders of the six hundred million Turanians awaits us, the Hungarians, this huge awakening power, the Western representatives [...].”<sup>52</sup>

Such rhetoric indicates that while Hungarians acknowledged their origins as an “Eastern” nation and took pride in this, they also saw themselves as at least influenced by the “West” and thus obligated to spread that influence to other Turanian nations,

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<sup>50</sup> Paikert, A. (1922). *A Turáni Eszme*. Forrás: A Turáni Társaság Kiadványa: [https://mtda.hu/books/paikert\\_alajos\\_a\\_turani\\_eszme.pdf](https://mtda.hu/books/paikert_alajos_a_turani_eszme.pdf) Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 12

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Kicses-Nagy, É. (n.d.). *Őstörténet és nemzettudat, 1919-1931 7. fejezet - Kicses Nagy Éva: A turáni gondolat*. Retrieved from Digitális Tankönyvtár: <https://regi.tankonyvtar.hu/en/tartalom/tkt/ostortenet-nemzettudat/ch07.html> Accessed on January 25 2020.

evidently a way to compensate for the trauma of Trianon. László Szendrei's 2008 article on Turanism has similar undertones, as the author begins by explaining that he wrote the article because a close friend of his requested that he look into the Curse of Turan (*Turáni átok* in Hungarian; a popular folk belief that Hungary has been under a curse for many centuries and that this is the cause of the nation's many historic catastrophes and even personal troubles among Hungarians), and thus came across a definition of Turanism that described it as a "chauvinistic race theory based on the delusion of ancient Hungarian-Turanian kinship."<sup>53</sup> Szendrei referred to the definition as "erroneous and malicious" and established as a result of the Socialist era that has "seemingly shattered the morality of the Hungarian people" and thus before delving into the concept of Turanism writes "Dear Reader, after reading the article, you will surely be able to decide for yourself whether the above definition holds true or not."<sup>54</sup> The article also quoted an excerpt from the introduction of the magazine *Turán* from 1913 as both a definition and to seemingly emphasize the pride Hungarians should have in their Eastern origins:

Hungarian to the East! National, scientific and economic fields are to the east! Scientific basis, thorough knowledge of economic advancement, economic goals, but also scientific aid. Because the national enrichment based on national science and the raising of our prestige by creating and developing a real export industry in the East will be the basis of our strength, independence and power. [...] The common goal is the study of the related Turanian peoples, the establishment of connections with these nations, the leading role of the Hungarian in the Turanian family in the scientific and economic fields.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Szendrei, L. (2008). *A turanizmus*. Retrieved from Kagylókürt: <http://www.kagylokurt.hu/2503/kulturortenet/muvelestortenet/a-turanizmus.html> Accessed on January 25 2020

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Teleki P. (1913) *Turán*. Forrás: A Turáni Társaság Kiadványa.



### 3.3. Connections to Other Nations

As mentioned earlier, Turanism was mentioned as a point to bolster cultural and political relations with Japan. Paikert lauds Japan as a modernized Turanian nation and refers to the country as a “great nation” and declares that Japanese progress and expansionism shouldn't be feared for according to Paikert “Japan has always reconciled its own interests with those of humanity.”<sup>56</sup> According to Ildikó Farkas, such views resulted in the creation of the *Magyar–Nippon Társaság* (Hungarian-Nippon Society) (1924-1945) as the main organizer of this socio-cultural relationship between Japan and Hungary.<sup>57</sup> Although Hungary and Japan had weak political relations as a result of the Habsburg Monarchy’s collapse and it wasn't until 1938 (with the mutual establishment of embassies) that formal diplomatic relations were established, this society managed to act as the main conduit between the two states and the establishment of official relations merely strengthened what was considered an already existent informal relationship.<sup>58</sup> Farkas states that the society was formed as a joint effort by both Hungarian prisoners-of-war in Japan who experienced Japanese culture first-hand as well as by Hungarian specialists on oriental studies; even the Japanese people who visited Hungary played a role in the society’s establishment.<sup>59</sup> Paikert himself also encouraged the formation of the society and there were multiple members of the *Magyar–Nippon Társaság* who were also members of the *Turáni Társaság*.<sup>60</sup> Although the society managed to achieve its goals of establishing cultural relations with Japan, promoting scientific research between the two countries, and organizing educational and promotional lectures, these activities eventually gave way to political developments; Hungary showing a long-time interest in Japan, as well as Japan’s status as a Great Power, was used to justify

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<sup>56</sup> Paikert, A. (1922). *A Turáni Eszme*. Forrás: A Turáni Társaság Kiadványa: [https://mtda.hu/books/paikert\\_alajos\\_a\\_turani\\_eszme.pdf](https://mtda.hu/books/paikert_alajos_a_turani_eszme.pdf) Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 10

<sup>57</sup> Farkas, I. (n.d.). *A Magyar–Nippon Társaság*. Retrieved from [http://real.mtak.hu/34745/1/Farkas\\_Magyar\\_Nippon\\_Tarsasag\\_u.pdf](http://real.mtak.hu/34745/1/Farkas_Magyar_Nippon_Tarsasag_u.pdf) Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 87

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. pp: 87-88

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. pp: 88-89

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. pp: 90

closer political relations and this resulted in the *Magyar-Nippon Társaság*'s activities gaining a more political undertone.<sup>6162</sup> This had the effect of associating Turanism in connection to Hungarian-Japanese diplomacy with the Axis powers as Japan and Hungary's joint signing of the Tripartite Pact was seen as a result of Turanism and consequently tainted its reputation after war while making Hungarian-Japanese relations increasingly difficult.<sup>63</sup> Post-war Hungarian-Japanese relations are explored in *A magyar-japán diplomáciai kapcsolatok két évtizede: 1944–1964* (The Hungarian-Japanese diplomatic relations in two decades: 1944-1964), a doctoral thesis by Péter Wintermantel. While diplomatic relations were reestablished in 1959 as a result of the normalization of Soviet-Japanese relations, Turanism was banned or discouraged in both countries, and as a result Hungarian-Japanese relations were reoriented to an economic focus and trade during the Cold War.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, the scale of cultural exchange between the two nations had declined to a low level outside of Japanese delegations visiting Hungary after visiting the Soviet Union on diplomatic trips; ambassadors would only be exchanged in 1964 and only then did the opportunity for deepening bilateral relations once again arise.<sup>65</sup> While the legacy of Turanism on Hungary's relations with Japan is somewhat seen in a negative light and had the effect of cooling relations after World War II, it cannot be denied that the period of Turanism-influenced Japanese-Hungarian cooperation was massively influential, to the extent that much of the then-published research is still considered reliable to this day due to the extent of cooperation; Farkas concludes that today's

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. pp: 90-91

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. pp: 105-107

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. pp: 107-108

<sup>64</sup> Wintermantel, P. (2014). *A magyar-japán diplomáciai kapcsolatok két évtizede: 1944–1964*. Retrieved from Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar: <https://edit.elte.hu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10831/22291/tezis.pdf;jsessionid=9E7670FF1FD4743945E142C11D65E146?sequence=2> Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 3, 5

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. pp: 7

researchers will be responsible for continuing this research without ideological currents.<sup>66</sup>

The above section describing Japanese-Hungarian connections can be seen as part of a wider phenomenon in which the Japanese and Hungarian languages were seen as related in the context of strengthening the idea of Turanism. This idea has had a perennial presence within the concept of Turanism and was until recently widely accepted to varying degrees as the now obsolete Ural-Altaic language family, a linguistic connection that was even proposed by Matthias Alexander Castrén, from whom Turanism as a political ideology arose.<sup>67</sup><sup>68</sup> Moreover, the language family itself was even referred to as “Turanian” by German Orientalist and philologist Friedrich Max Müller in his 1855 work *The Languages of the Seat of War in the East*, wherein he explicitly used the term in reference to Tungusic, Mongolic, Turkic, and Uralic languages, which he even described as "nomadic languages" connected to a "vast Turanian wilderness" and spoken throughout Eurasia.<sup>69</sup> Such developments influenced academics in Hungary to look into further connections between Hungarian culture and language and those of nations in the East in the name of Turanism. These in turn resulted in pertinent publications to this end, arguably the most prominent of these being the works of Ármin Vámbéry who started the “Ugric-Turkic War” within Hungarian academia with the publication of his *Magyar és török-tatár szóegyezések* (*Hungarian and Turkish-Tatar word matches*). Apart from his famous declaration which will be quoted later in this chapter, wherein he insinuated that Hungarian was equally Uralic and Turkic, Vámbéry additionally described the history of the Turkic peoples’ geographic expansion and provided comparisons between Hungarian, Mansi, and Turkish to illustrate how the former possesses lexical, phonological, and

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<sup>66</sup> Farkas, I. (n.d.). *A Magyar–Nippon Társaság*. Retrieved from [http://real.mtak.hu/34745/1/Farkas\\_Magyar\\_Nippon\\_Tarsasag\\_u.pdf](http://real.mtak.hu/34745/1/Farkas_Magyar_Nippon_Tarsasag_u.pdf) Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 109

<sup>67</sup> Trask, R. L. (2000). *The Dictionary of Historical and Comparative Linguistics*. Psychology Press. pp: 357

<sup>68</sup> Castrén, M. A. (1839). *Dissertatio Academica de affinitate declinationum in lingua Fennica, Esthonica et Lapponica*, Helsingforsiae.

<sup>69</sup> Müller, F. M. (1855). *The languages of the seat of war in the East. With a survey of the three families of language, Semitic, Arian and Turanian*. Williams and Norgate, London. pp: 86-87

grammatical similarities to both Uralic and Turkic languages, concluding that it can be observed that while Hungarian undeniably has Uralic origins (with numbers being used for comparison to illustrate this point and phonetics being pointed out as closer to that of Uralic languages due to the lack of sounds characteristic of Turkic languages as well as grammatical features present in Hungarian such as the participle and the subject form, which show no trace in Turkish, while in Mansi and other Uralic languages they are consistently present), he also points out that there is a large Turkic influence on Hungarian lexicon pertaining to basic everyday vocabulary (the examples he points out are mostly farm animals, plant and fruit names, and even family members), which he takes as proof that languages can merge; Vámbéry later mentions English as a comparative example in that it is originally Germanic but has absorbed a large amount of lexical and grammatical influences from Romance languages.<sup>70</sup> This kind of effort to connect Hungarian to Turkic languages through lexical similarities is repeated over a century later by Hungarian linguist Lajos Kazár in his 1980 treatise *Japanese-Uralic language comparison: locating Japanese origins with the help of Samoyed, Finnish, Hungarian, etc.; an attempt*, wherein he uses lexical comparisons, with a particular focus on phonological similarities and possible consonant changes and shifts in definition of seemingly similar words over the centuries in an attempt to demonstrate a connection between Japanese and Uralic languages.<sup>71</sup> Kazár also gives a detailed description on past attempts to connect Hungarian to not only Japanese but to other languages traditionally seen as “Turanian” as well as attempts by Castrén to connect these disparate languages.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, Kazár describes Japanese in a way similar to how Vámbéry described Hungarian by proposing that it may be a “hybrid language” and writing:

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<sup>70</sup> Vámbéry, Á. (1869). *Magyar és török-tatár szóegyeztések*. Nyelvtudományi közlemények VIII. pp. 114-120.

<sup>71</sup> Kazár L. (1980). *Japanese-Uralic language comparison: locating Japanese origins with the help of Samoyed, Finnish, Hungarian, etc.; an attempt*. Lajos Kazár-Tsurusaki Books Hamburg. pp. 9-11

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 1

Japanese may or may not be a hybrid language. We do not yet know. But there is a chance that it is an important continuer of a Eurasia language of old whose other remnants we can recover not in the vicinity of Japan, but much farther away. It has! been repeatedly found in ethnology and general cultural history that peoples which once constituted cultural entities, when driven apart, often better preserve their former cultural traits in their separate, peripheral distribution than the parts remaining close to the old centers where sometimes violent political changes alter language and mode of life altogether.<sup>73</sup>

This sort of proposal, which he attempts to support throughout his thesis with phonological and lexical comparisons, shows that the Turanian idea still has a presence and such attempts to prove ethno-linguistic connections between nations are a manifestation of the idea. Nevertheless, throughout his work, Kazár's attempts to connect Japanese to Uralic languages are unconventional compared to Vámbéry's attempts to prove Hungarian is equally Uralic and Turkic. An example being his usage of the Japanese term 色 (iro; color), which he attempts to connect to the Hungarian term vér (blood), and explains that the Hungarian term is connected to words with a connotation in relation to color such as véres (bloody, blood-stained) as well as archaic Japanese words such as いろせ (irose; blood brothers from the same mother) in order to illustrate a connection.<sup>74</sup> However, both Kazár and Vámbéry attempt to use unconventional interpretations of linguistics and lexical coincidences to argue their points, and this can ultimately be considered an approach with an abstract connection to memory politics and the primordialist view of nation-building, as both works attempt to interpret pre-existing traits of several nations' languages as

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. pp. 3

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 56

connected in order to justify a connection, which could then be used to rationalize Turanism.

### 3.4. Later Developments

By examining the way Turanism is explored in these texts, one can identify major relationships, trends, and patterns, and then consequently analyze the way Hungarian government policy has changed over the years as well as common ways Turanism was explored. One major pattern is that Turanism was seen as an ideology and an academic pursuit, and thus eventually became political despite starting out as an ethnological/geographical concept. One prominent trend in the texts is the ubiquitous connection of Turanism to the 1920s, despite the concept being much older. As mentioned earlier, this can be seen as a result of Hungary's traumatic defeat in World War I. The apparent resurgence in Turanism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century may be a possible indicator of the Hungarian nation experiencing a different trauma and thus necessitating a way to reestablish its integrity. Nevertheless, after analyzing the given literature, one must consider if there exist any gaps that require further study. This issue in particular is addressed by László Kósa states in a text from the Hungarian Digital Library *Őstörténet és magyar néprajzi kutatás a két világháború között* (Ancient history and Hungarian ethnographic research in the Interwar period), wherein it is stated that contemporary research that took place in the 1920s and 30s in relation to ethnology (and ultimately in connection to Turanism), was lacking due to the primitive nature of the field at the time.<sup>75</sup> Kósa emphasizes that the field arose out of Romantic aspirations and thus the methods used at time were flawed and did not conduct proper material gathering or analysis, for instance; Kósa writes that “with the exception of music (in reference to the outstanding research in folk music by Zoltán Kodály), no attempt has been made to establish an approximate historical chronology.”<sup>76</sup> As a result, it should not come as a surprise that some flaws could

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<sup>75</sup> Kósa, L. (n.d.). *Őstörténet és nemzettudat, 1919-1931 9. fejezet - Kósa László: Őstörténet és magyar néprajzi kutatás a két világháború között*. Forrás: Digitális Könyvtár : <https://regi.tankonyvtar.hu/en/tartalom/tkt/ostortenet-nemzettudat/ch09.html> Accessed on January 25 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

even be seen in the other texts analyzed in this review. For instance, the linguistic analyses by Vámbéry and Kazár, while based on actual evidence and comparisons, are still filled with mistakes including historical facts now known to be false and outdated theories regarding the position of Japanese; these can be attributed to the errors found in older works that inspired such literature, as Müller's work *The Languages of the Seat of War in the East* contained mistakes including the idea that all languages of Eurasia not classified as "Arian" or "Semitic" must be classified as "Turanian" with the exception of the Chinese languages, and the influence of Müller may have resulted to repeated errors in later works.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, even though *A Turáni Eszme* is arguably the most influential text reviewed in conceptualizing Hungarian Turanism, it contains errors ranging from factual errors (such as the description of the Chinese flag's colors being inaccurate) to blatant historical mistakes (the idea that Slavs in Eastern Germany in Lusatia were never oppressed by the German Empire).<sup>78,79</sup> Possibly for this reason, neither Paikert nor his text come up on the site of the *Magyarságkutató Intézet*. Such flaws are also hardly unique to Paikert, as Kincses-Nagy indicates in her text that several contemporary Hungarian Turanists, attempting to justify connections to Turan, argued from a more nationalistic viewpoint:

Europe refers to a dark land in Sanskrit. The fall of the Turanian peoples was caused by listening to the West, looking to the West. Europe is ungrateful, forgetting what it owes to the Hungarians. Western culture is decadent, Turanian culture is much older, and even every element of European culture is ultimately of Turanian origin.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Müller, F. M. (1855). *The languages of the seat of war in the East. With a survey of the three families of language, Semitic, Arian and Turanian*. Williams and Norgate, London. pp: 86

<sup>78</sup> Paikert, A. (1922). *A Turáni Eszme*. Forrás: A Turáni Társaság Kiadványa: [https://mtda.hu/books/paikert\\_alajos\\_a\\_turani\\_eszme.pdf](https://mtda.hu/books/paikert_alajos_a_turani_eszme.pdf) Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 10

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. pp: 11

<sup>80</sup> Kincses-Nagy, É. (n.d.). *Őstörténet és nemzettudat, 1919-1931 7. fejezet - Kincses Nagy Éva: A turáni gondolat*. Retrieved from Digitális Tankönyvtár:

Despite these contemporary flaws, *A Turáni Eszme* was still based on historical precedents mentioned in other historical and linguistic sources as mentioned in Szendrei's article and thus contained reliable facts as well and can therefore still be understood as authoritative and reliable to an extent; the fact that it resulted in the creation of societies specifically for the intensification of specific research into Turanian nations and the publication of research that still holds relevance is an achievement that one cannot ignore.<sup>81</sup>

Additionally, in 1895 Ármin Vámbéry introduced new views that built upon those he initially introduced in his *Magyar és török-tatár szóegyezések (Hungarian and Turkish-Tatar word matches)* and published further studies about the ethnogenesis of Hungarians; he decided to expand his hypothesis from Turkic to Ural-Altaiic, suggesting that Hungarians are related to many peoples belonging to a large Ural-Altaiic language family due to ethnogenesis of Hungarians being a long-term process of spanning a thousand years (400–1.400 C.E.), spanning from the remnants of the Hunnic Empire to the Mongol Invasion of Hungary in the Middle Ages.<sup>82</sup> Vámbéry's rebranding of his belief from Turkic to Ural-Altaiic galvanized the Turanian movement by allowing Hungarian Turanists to not only advocate for closer connections with Turkic peoples but also with Uralic peoples as well as Mongolic, Tungusic, Koreanic, and Japonic peoples. A consequence of this was Turanian organizations receiving increased support from the Hungarian government in 1915, when the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria (the latter perceived by Turanists as being of Turkic origin) decided to join World War I on the side of the Central Powers.<sup>83</sup> This made Turanism politically useful in promoting an attitude against Pan-Slavism as

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<https://regi.tankonyvtar.hu/en/tartalom/tkt/ostortenet-nemzettudat/ch07.html> Accessed on January 25 2020.

<sup>81</sup> Szendrei, L. (2008). *A turanizmus*. Retrieved from Kgylóktört: <http://www.kagylokurt.hu/2503/kulturortenet/muvelodestortenet/a-turanizmus.html> Accessed on January 25 2020

<sup>82</sup> Kowalczyk, M. (2017). Hungarian Turanism. From the Birth of the Ideology to Modernity – an Outline of the Problem. *Historia i Polityka*. 49. doi:10.12775/HiP.2017.011. pp:52

<sup>83</sup> Kessler, J. (1967). *Turanism and Pan-Turanism in Hungary- 1890–1945*. (Ph.D. thesis). Berkeley-University of California.



Hungary's enemies Serbia and Russia suffered immense losses and the Central Powers planned to create independent states for Turanian peoples inhabiting Russia, including but not limited to Crimean Tatars, Finns, and Azerbaijanis; Turanists were also useful for promoting a political rapprochement between Hungary and Ottoman Turkey.<sup>84</sup> While support for Turanism remained after Hungary's defeat in World War I and remained influential throughout World War II, Hungary's defeat in the latter world war resulted in the disbanding of all Turanist organizations and resulted in a political climate making it impossible to discuss or promote Hungarian Turanism through any official movement until the fall of Communism in 1989.<sup>85</sup>

While *A Turáni Eszme* and other texts pertaining to Turanism remain influential and it cannot be denied that the text was relevant to Hungarian government policy at the time and the ideas it contains still remain germane to an extent, as seen in the establishment of such an institution as the *Magyarságkutató Intézet*, the ideology it preached has become tainted by wider events at the time and as a result, it can be argued that there is now a need for new research. Kósa touches upon this issue towards the end of his article, wherein he comments on the academic climate in the 1920s and 30s:

There were no significant interactions between ethnography and contemporary social sciences. In fact, there were no institutional interdisciplinary relations, and in this respect all sides were obviously flawed, and the contemporary scientific organization was also to be condemned for it.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Kowalczyk, M. (2017). Hungarian Turanism. From the Birth of the Ideology to Modernity – an Outline of the Problem. *Historia i Polityka*. 49. doi:10.12775/HiP.2017.011. pp:55

<sup>86</sup> Kósa, L. (n.d.). *Őstörténet és nemzettudat, 1919-1931 9. fejezet - Kósa László: Őstörténet és magyar néprajzi kutatás a két világháború között*. Forrás: Digitális Könyvtár : <https://regi.tankonyvtar.hu/en/tartalom/tkt/ostortenet-nemzettudat/ch09.html> Accessed on January 25 2020.

Furthermore, despite the undeniable influence of *A Turáni Eszme* and other contemporary texts on the establishment of Turanism as a force within Hungarian society and politics, the modern need for new research, combined with the context of Turanism's revival in Hungary within a different political reality means that modern Turanism in Hungary has significant differences from the way it manifested in the 1920s.

An example of such differences is highlighted in the 2016 book *Keletre, magyar! A magyar turanizmus története* (To the East, Hungarian! The history of Hungarian Turanism) by Balázs Ablonczy (the title also bears similarities to the section of László Szendrei's 2008 article on Turanism quoted earlier). In this publication, Ablonczy describes an overview of the "East" and its influence in Hungarian culture and history, with a particular focus on Turanism.

Ablonczy begins by recounting the history of Turanism to show how early Turanian ideas displayed a marked sympathy for the Persians (an allusion to the term's Iranian origins), which was increasingly replaced after 1848 by new affinities for Turks, especially among advocates of Hungarian independence (possibly due to Turkey's support for Hungarian revolutionaries who fled the country after the Austrian suppression of the Hungarian Revolution and the settlement of Hungarian refugees in the Ottoman Empire).<sup>87</sup> Ablonczy concludes that Turanism emerged when various threads were woven together, including debates on the origins of the Hungarians and their language, the program of Hungarian expansion in Southeast Europe and the Middle East, the fashion for the Orient, the awakening of "Turanian" people, various scholarly developments (such as the emergence of Oriental Studies further west), and the discourse on originality, authenticity and ancientness.<sup>88</sup> He points out that the term Turan has been understood in different ways throughout Hungarian history and politics, pointing out ten ways the term has been understood:<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Lendvai, P. (2003). *The Hungarians*. Princeton University Press Princeton, New Jersey. pp: 238, 252

<sup>88</sup> Ablonczy, B. (2016). *Keletre, magyar! A magyar turanizmus története*. Budapest: Jaffa, 2016. pp. 46

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. 15-16

1. The search for the ancestral Hungarian homeland in the East.
2. The search for kindred nations of the Hungarian people and the exploration of Hungary's eastern connections.
3. To draw political conclusions regarding which nations and state to align with and with whom not to align with.
4. To gain cultural and economic influence and promote a kind of Hungarian imperialism
  - a) in the Balkans;
  - b) in the Middle East and Asia Minor, and in Southern Russia and Ukraine;
  - c) in the whole of Asia.
5. A redefinition of Hungary's political role
  - a) in so far as Hungary mediates the values of the East to the West;
  - b) in so far as Hungary performs the same task in the opposite direction;
  - c) in so far as Hungary establishes and spearheads new alliances and power networks.
6. Disseminating scientific knowledge about Asia - as a host and a producer.
7. An attempt to create a national style of arts and crafts using the "Turanian" motifs of related peoples.
8. The domestic adaptation of the literary-artistic orientalism of the European countries and their colonies.
9. The lobbying activities in Hungary for the Orient.
10. A reorganization of Hungarian society as a whole on a "Turanian basis" (e.g., liberation from the tutelage of the historical churches, re-popularization of Hungarian Eastern heritage and its inclusion in school curricula).

These approaches to Turanism are mostly shared by both modern day Hungarian Turanists and historical ones, though it can be observed that some, (points 4, 8, and 10 in particular) are mainly confined to the Turanist movements of the past while the first three points are arguably more powerful in modern Turanism. Ferenc Laczó points out in his 2017 review of Ablonczy's work that the latter pointed out how Turanism in

the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century had a larger emphasis on Uralic peoples and Hungary's connection to them as research into Finno-Ugric topics and Hungarian similarities to Estonian and Finnish culture peaked in the interwar period when (contrary to the popular wisdom and political trends of today) the Finno-Ugric idea was still very much part of the Turanian package and radical Finno-Ugricists played key roles in Turanist organizations in Hungary.<sup>90</sup> Laczó's review further brings attention to Ablonczy's explanation that the orientation of Hungarian Turanists in rejecting the Uralic connection to Hungary was a result of Turanists being given relatively lenient treatment by Hungarian Communist authorities (despite the disbanding of their organizations), resulting in certain elements of the ideology being preserved within the era of the People's Republic of Hungary while others were further radicalized. In particular, the Finno-Ugric linguistic connection being accepted by most of society led to the rise of non-conformists starting to denounce it from the position of political opposition and "national science."<sup>91</sup> Ablonczy argues that this is how the current opposition between Finno-Ugricists and the propagators of a "nationally conscious Eastern idea" in the context of Turanism emerged. It can be argued that this in turn resulted in the rise of pro-Turkic elements within Hungarian society and especially within politics as part of a manifestation of a wider anti-establishment trend. This, alongside Hungary's geopolitical position allowing the country to switch allegiances between the East and the West at a relatively frequent pace can be seen as the primary catalyst for the Hungarian government's recent actions in order to manipulate the narrative in relation to Hungarian origins with Turanism used as a vehicle, thus making the ideology's revival a form of memory politics.<sup>92</sup>

### **3.5. Contemporary Hungarian Politics and the Influence of Turanism**

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<sup>90</sup> Laczó, F. (2017). *The Hungarian Historical Review, Vol. 6, No. 1, Medieval Economic History* (2017), Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. pp. 252

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. pp. 253

<sup>92</sup> Remix News. (2018, September 25). *Hungary stuck between Christianity and Turanism*. Remix. Retrieved from: <https://rmx.news/commentary/hungary-stuck-between-christianity-and-turanism/> Accessed on December 14 2021.

Given the increasingly influential rise of pro-Turkic sentiment in Hungarian politics and society and the consequent questioning of the currently accepted ethno-linguistic position on Hungarian nationhood as Uralic in academia, the topic of Turanism is experiencing a revival. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has made Hungary an observer state within the Turkic Council and is actively pursuing further cooperation.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, such connections or attempts to establish them can also be observed at a political level, with an example being an appeal by the Free Idel-Ural organization (representing several Uralic and Turkic minority nations in the Volga region of Russia including Erzyans, Mokshans, and Chuvash) to the Hungarian far-right party Jobbik in hopes of securing aid at the political or cultural level on the basis of ethno-linguistic and historical kinship as well as the Jobbik Party's open support for Turanism.<sup>95</sup>

Jobbik was officially founded as a political party in 2003 as an evolved stage of the student organization *Jobboldali Ifjúsági Közösség – Jobbik* (Right-Wing Youth Association) which was established in 1999, and several other right wing organizations. The party is notable for its significance in Hungarian politics as well as its position as the second largest Hungarian political party.<sup>96</sup> The party is also notable for its promotion of Turanism in its rhetoric. Jobbik has been known for organizing or supporting socio-cultural programs in relation to Turanism, such as the Great Kurultáj, and framing their planned foreign policy for Hungary with Turanian

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<sup>93</sup> Sarnyai, G. (2018, September 3). *Orbán: Hungarians Are the Late Descendants of Attila*. Retrieved from Hungary Today: <https://hungarytoday.hu/orban-hungarians-are-late-descendants-of-attila/> Accessed on January 25 2020.

<sup>94</sup> Hungarian Government. (2019, October 15). *Hungary can offer Turkic Council connection to Europe*. Retrieved from Website of the Hungarian Government: <https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/news/hungary-can-offer-turkic-council-connection-to-europe> Accessed on January 25 2020.

<sup>95</sup> Goble, P. (2018, November 13). *Hungary's Jobbik Party Could Turn Out To Be Moscow's Worst Enemy – OpEd*. Eurasia Review. Retrieved from: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/13112018-hungarys-jobbik-party-could-turn-out-to-be-moscows-worst-enemy-oped/> Accessed on February 3 2020.

<sup>96</sup> THE FOUNDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN. (2018, April 8). *General Elections in Hungary - Results*. THE FOUNDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN Retrieved from: <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/oe/oe-1765-en.pdf> Accessed on January 25 2022.

influences in mind.<sup>97</sup> An example of this can be seen in former party leader Gábor Vona's declaration of support for Turkey in 2013, wherein he announced that Hungarians consider Turks as their brothers and sisters.<sup>98</sup> Vona has also visited Turkey himself in order to deliver lectures promoting Hungarian-Turkish kinship, common ancestors, and a need for cooperation; he even suggested that the mission of Turanism could be to build bridges between the West and the East, between Islam and Christianity.<sup>99</sup> Additionally, Jobbik's politicians not only readily claim Turanian associations when discussing Hungarian origins and ethnogenesis, they also utilize Turanistic images and symbols for their own benefit, going as far as promising to constitutionally protect ancient national symbols that have been oft-attacked: The Holy Crown of Hungary, Hungary's historic flags, and the Turul-bird emblem.<sup>100</sup>

Such developments can be interpreted as a continuation of historical Turanist sympathies in Hungary and the desire of Turanists to facilitate cultural exchange and cooperation between all "Turanian" nations; the Turkic connection to Hungarian identity in particular can hardly be considered new, as László Szendrei emphasized that "Turan" first gained prominence in Hungarian literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a synonym for Ural-Altaic and that the term first became known throughout Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century as a result of the Ottoman Turkish text *Şedzre-i türki* (Turkish Family Tree) from 1663 being translated into multiple European languages.<sup>101</sup> This allows one to question why the Turanian notion and in particular a connection to Turkic peoples has become prominent once more in Hungarian society. Orbán's increased

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<sup>97</sup> Kenes, B. (2020, August, 3). *Jobbik: A Turanist Trojan Horse in Europe?* Retrieved from European Center for Populism Studies <https://www.populismstudies.org/jobbik-a-turanist-trojan-horse-in-europe/> Accessed on January 25 2022.

<sup>98</sup> Anadolu Agency. (2013, February 4). "As descendants of Turks, we value this visit" says Hungarian party leader. Retrieved from Anadolu Agency: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/as-descendants-of-turks-we-value-this-visit-says-hungarian-party-leader/278337> Accessed on January 25 2022.

<sup>99</sup> Kenes, B. (2020, August, 3). *Jobbik: A Turanist Trojan Horse in Europe?* Retrieved from European Center for Populism Studies <https://www.populismstudies.org/jobbik-a-turanist-trojan-horse-in-europe/> Accessed on January 25 2022.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Szendrei, L. (2008). *A turanizmus*. Retrieved from Kagylókürt: <http://www.kagylokurt.hu/2503/kulturortenet/muvelodestortenet/a-turanizmus.html> Accessed on January 25 2020

focus on Turkic states, particularly Turkey, could be interpreted as a desire to connect his state with a “regional power” in the same way the Turanists in the Kingdom of Hungary wished to associate with Japan, a state they considered an emerging power. Alajos Paikert declared that the goal of Hungarian Turanists was to “study the geography, history, art, ethnography, anthropology of the Turanian peoples; to get to know their customs, traditions, religious, ethical and character perceptions, talents and ambitions. We want to develop the latter and bring it into line with the purified Western civilization. We want to get to know them, directly, in friendly, fraternal, formal and social contact.”<sup>102</sup> Thus, one could ask if the motivations for the Hungarian government’s policy is the same as that of Paikert’s era and if the recent developments are merely moves to realize it. On the other hand, it can also be speculated whether the resurgence of Hungarian Turanism is an attempt by Hungary to reassert itself on the international scene through the attainment of allies, as Gábor Vona’s rationalization for the importance of Hungarian-Turkish relations in 2013 was that Turkey is considered a world power from many perspectives and that he believes Hungary and Turkey would both benefit from increased cooperation.<sup>103</sup> This can be speculated upon regarding the rise of Jobbik (which as mentioned earlier often promotes historical and cultural connections with Eastern nations) and the “Eastern opening” of the ruling Hungarian political party Fidesz after 2010, as both parties and their actions, it can be argued, played on Turanian notions.<sup>104</sup>

### **3.6. The Magyarságkutató Intézet**

The establishment of the *Magyarságkutató Intézet* (Hungarian Research Institute) is connected to the overall topic of the history of the Hungarian government's policy on the origin of Hungarians and why it is currently changing. Such a connection is

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<sup>102</sup> Paikert, A. (1922). *A Turáni Eszme*. Forrás: A Turáni Társaság Kiadványa: [https://mtda.hu/books/paikert\\_alajos\\_a\\_turani\\_eszme.pdf](https://mtda.hu/books/paikert_alajos_a_turani_eszme.pdf) Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 13

<sup>103</sup> Anadolu Agency. (2013, February 4). "As descendants of Turks, we value this visit" says Hungarian party leader. Retrieved from Anadolu Agency: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/as-descendants-of-turks-we-value-this-visit-says-hungarian-party-leader/278337> Accessed on January 25 2022.

<sup>104</sup> Laczó, F. (2017) *The Hungarian Historical Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Medieval Economic History (2017), Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. pp. 253

ultimately a manifestation of wider trends in Hungarian politics due to the fact that in recent years pro-Turkic sentiments have been increasing among the Hungarian right wing and nationalists which can be seen in their reactionary responses to suggestions of Hungarian being of the Uralic language family, such as when Finnish linguist Johanna Laakso pointed out how Viktor Orbán's own words used to describe Hungarian as "related to Turkic languages" were almost all Uralic in origin.<sup>105</sup> The overall history of Hungarian government policy in relation to this topic as well as a potential revival of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century linguistic debate known as the "Ugric-Turkic War" that ultimately ended in the classification of Hungarian as part of the Uralic language family are also possible factors in the establishment and activities of the *Magyarságkutató Intézet*. The institute is directly subordinate to the Hungarian Ministry of Human Resources and was established on January 1st, 2019.<sup>106</sup> According to its own homepage, it was established to carry out research in the name of exploring the history and origins of the Hungarian nation that hasn't been possible so far.<sup>107</sup> The Minister of Human Resources, through this institute, allegedly has enough power to influence societal attitudes and government policy regarding the origin of Hungarians in relation to Hungary's increasingly pro-Turkic stance.

Such an institution can be considered a revival or continuation of the old belief of Hungarian Turanism that emphasized the Turkic origins of Hungarians. Such a belief, originally galvanized by the works of Ármín Vámbéry, a Hungarian traveler and academic who promoted Turkology and emphasized Hungarian-Turkic connections, was the guiding philosophy of the ethno-linguistic debate in the late 19th and early 20th centuries known as the "Ugric-Turkic War" that saw Hungarian linguists and

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<sup>105</sup> Laakso, J. (2018, September 10). "OOPS, IT WENT VIRAL"—JOHANNA LAAKSO'S ANALYSIS OF ORBÁN'S CLAIM OF TURKIC ORIGIN OF HUNGARIAN. Retrieved from HUNGARIAN SPECTRUM: <https://hungarianspectrum.org/2018/09/10/oops-it-went-viral-johanna-laaksos-analysis-of-orbans-claim-of-turkic-origin-of-hungarian/> Accessed on January 23 2020.

<sup>106</sup> Magyarságkutató Intézet. (n.d.). *A Magyarságkutató Intézet (MKI)*. Retrieved from Magyarságkutató Intézet : <https://mki.gov.hu/hu/magyarsagkutato-intezet> Accessed on January 24 2020.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.



ethnologists debating the origins of the Magyar nation.<sup>108</sup><sup>109</sup> The *casus belli* of the aforementioned intellectual debate (that is still discussed by Hungarian Turanists to justify their worldview) was Vámbéry's declaration on page 120 of his *Hungarian and Turkish-Tatar Word Comparison*:

“[...] the Hungarian language is Ugric in its origin, but because of the nation's later contacts and historical transformation it is equally Ugric and Turkic in character.”<sup>110</sup>

In addition to the works of figures such as Vámbéry, other existing literature such as the works explored within this section, demonstrate how influential this idea that Hungarians are more closely connected to “Turanian” peoples was. Within the scope of this thesis, the most relevant contemporary figure connected to the modern resurgence in this idea is the Hungarian Minister of Human Resources, Miklós Kásler.

Miklós Kásler is a Hungarian oncologist and professor who was born in Budapest in 1950 and grew up in Sárvár. He first rose to prominence as director of the National Oncological Institute in 1994. Since then, he has become a polarizing figure within Hungary, and while he is credited with the centralization of cancer treatment and the development of methodologies, he is also widely held responsible for the current poor state of the profession.<sup>111</sup> Kásler is also known for being a right-wing conservative with excellent political connections, which he is often seen as utilizing for the sake of furthering his career.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, while Kásler is credited by many with the consistent centralization of oncological care by creating a network for cancer

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<sup>108</sup> Chisholm, H., Ed. (1911). *Vámbéry, Ármin*. Encyclopædia Britannica. 27 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 876. Retrieved from: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911\\_Encyclop%C3%A6dia\\_Britannica/V%C3%A1mb%C3%A9ry,\\_%C3%81rmin](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/V%C3%A1mb%C3%A9ry,_%C3%81rmin) Accessed on January 24 2020.

<sup>109</sup> Vámbéry, Á. (1869). *Magyar és török-tatár szóegyeztések*. Nyelvtudományi közlemények VIII.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 120

<sup>111</sup> Fülöp, Zs. (2018, April 26). *A megkerülhetetlen - Portré Kásler Miklósról, az Országos Onkológiai Intézet főigazgatójáról*. Magyar Narancs. Retrieved from: <https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/a-megkerulhetetlen-100810> Accessed on December 10, 2021.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

detection consisting of small hospitals throughout Hungary, he is also criticized for the opaqueness of the data he handles.<sup>113</sup> It must also be noted that Kásler intertwines his religious beliefs with science and this may be pertinent to the way he conducts his research. This is illustrated in his own words:

“Each result of science proves that there is a spiritual existence in the world where everything can be traced back to.”<sup>114</sup>

Such a quote indicates that Kásler’s esoteric connection to the topic is reminiscent of Hungarian Turanists of the previous century.

### **3.7. Conclusion of Literature Review**

Overall, this chapter has given the reader an understanding that Hungarian Turanism has had a long presence and significant socio-political influence. It started as a result of research into Hungarian origins in the wake of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise and intensified after Hungary’s devastating defeat in World War I. After World War II the ideology was marginalized in the People’s Republic of Hungary but after the fall of Communism, Turanist organizations resurged and nowadays there are more overt political movements in support of it. The contexts pertaining to this influence remain pertinent and are directly relevant to the efforts of Miklós Kásler and the Hungarian government in attempting to revive the ideology, and interviews with Kásler should further illustrate this.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> 777. (2018, February 6<sup>th</sup>). “Isten léte mellett szól minden” – Vallja az Országos Onkológiai Intézet Főigazgatója. 777. Retrieved from <https://777blog.hu/2018/02/06/isten-lete-mellett-szol-minden-vallja-az-oroszagos-onkologiai-intezet-foigazgatoja/> Accessed on December 10th, 2021.

#### 4. Analysis of Interviews

In the following section, interviews have been analyzed in the context of memory politics and ethnosymbolism in relation to themes connected to Hungarian Turanism and its historical background by way of a thematic content analysis, with the aim of searching for subjects with broader patterns of meaning. Specifically, interviews with Miklós Kásler, the Hungarian Minister of Human Resources and founder of the *Magyarságkutató Intézet*, will be subject to analysis, as his appointment to the former position directly resulted in the creation of the latter, thus making him in large part directly responsible for making Hungarian Turanism a mainstream topic in Hungary once more. Moreover, one can question whether his work, both as an oncologist, and as a historian (as Kásler considers himself one, which likely contributed to this establishment of the *Magyarságkutató Intézet* following his appointment to Minister of Human Resources in April 2018), are influenced by his personal beliefs and character.<sup>115116</sup> Kásler has stated that there is a need to conduct research into Hungarian history (particularly Hungarian prehistory and the relations and possibility of continuity between Hungarians and Huns) because, in his own words:

“To counteract the strongly globalist view of history coming from the West, it is necessary to present the history of Hungarians with national sentiment and approach, and to strengthen patriotic feelings.”<sup>117</sup>

For this reason, the interviews with Kásler are important as one can extrapolate upon them to speculate on the causes for the recent change in Hungarian government policy as well as attitudes within Hungarian society in relation to his. Kásler’s words are also in line with the rhetoric of Hungarian politicians who criticize the West and what

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<sup>115</sup> Tarcza, O. (2018, April 27). *Ónodi elköszönt, Kásler lesz a miniszter (Bővítve)*. Medical Online. Retrieved from: [http://medicalonline.hu/cikk/onodi\\_elkoszont\\_\\_kasler\\_lesz\\_a\\_miniszter](http://medicalonline.hu/cikk/onodi_elkoszont__kasler_lesz_a_miniszter) Accessed on December 11 2021.

<sup>116</sup> Fülöp, Zs. (2018, April 26). *A megkerülhetetlen - Portré Kásler Miklósról, az Országos Onkológiai Intézet főigazgatójáról*. Magyar Narancs. Retrieved from: <https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/a-megkerulhetetlen-100810> Accessed on December 10, 2021.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

they perceive as its associated ideologies such as globalism and liberalism in favor of a patriotic program that would be more in favor of solely Hungarian interests.<sup>118</sup>

With this background in mind, interviews with Miklós Kásler in his capacity as founder of the *Magyarságkutató Intézet* will be analyzed in the context of memory politics and ethnosymbolism as well as Hungary's role as a bridge between the East and West. This will be followed by a discussion. Interviews with the Hungarian right-wing weekly newspaper *Demokrata*, the moderate right weekly newspaper *Mandiner*, and with the conservative newspaper *Magyar Idők* will be examined with specific categories in mind.

#### **4.1. Memory Politics and Ethnosymbolism**

Memory politics and ethnosymbolism were defined earlier in this thesis, in the conceptualization section. The former refers to the organization of collective memories, potentially influenced by societal and cultural forces, for political purposes that influence the way history is written or remembered, with the ultimate goal of creating an accepted narrative in the eyes of the political elite. The latter refers to an approach in nation-building wherein the roles of symbols, myths, memories, values, and traditions play an essential role in the formation and maintenance of national identity and thus the crux of it is the emphasis and manipulation of symbols invoking a nation's past by the political elite with the goal of creating their preferred narrative.

From the interview with *Demokrata*, it can be observed that Miklós Kásler is well aware of the concept of memory politics, explicitly pointing out how it was used in the past by those who ruled Hungary, and that he is also aware of the potential for narratives to change. Extrapolating from this, it can be said that Kásler has as one of his goals in the *Magyarságkutató Intézet* the creation of a new narrative from the current ruling elite. His interview with *Mandiner* further explores the idea of a popular narrative. In other words, Kásler is trying to redefine the popularly understood narrative regarding the *ethnie* that eventually gave rise to the modern

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<sup>118</sup> Kenes, B. (2020, August, 3). *Jobbik: A Turanist Trojan Horse in Europe?* Retrieved from European Center for Populism Studies <https://www.populismstudies.org/jobik-a-turanist-trojan-horse-in-europe/> Accessed on January 25 2022.

Hungarian nation here. He makes it clear that he wishes to change the Uralic narrative by stating that:

“Many generations have been taught at school that we are of Finno-Ugric origin, but recently it has been proven that this kinship is linguistic and not ethnic.”<sup>119</sup>

In his interview with *Demokrata*, Kásler starts by explaining that the primary goal of his institution is to combine all the separate approaches relating to the Origins of the Hungarians within differing disciplines in order to evaluate it on scientific grounds.<sup>120</sup> From this it can be imagined that what he has in mind is a reevaluation of Hungarian history in order to present and justify a new perspective. Kásler continues by declaring that the government has decided that his institute will mainly focus on pre-Honfoglalás Hungarian history and interdisciplinary research on this era, Hungary in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, pre 15<sup>th</sup> Century steppe communities, the Hungarian Middle Ages, written and narrative archival research in Hungary and abroad, ethnographic research on religious history and folk music, education and training, the publication of English and Hungarian language journals, the place of early Hungarian history in the Hungarian identity in the 21st century, research on the Hungarian language, and the management and supervision of the development of a medium-term Hungarian language strategy.<sup>121</sup>

Continuing on from this, Kásler goes on to discuss the position of the Hungarian language in terms of conventional wisdom and goes on to state his own opinion on Hungarian ethnogenesis:

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<sup>119</sup> Mandiner. (2018, February, 28). *Generációk tanulták az iskolában, hogy finnugor eredetűek vagyunk – Kásler Miklós a Mandinernek*. Mandiner. Retrieved from: [https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20180228\\_generaciok\\_tanultak\\_az\\_iskolaban\\_hogy\\_finnugor eredetuek\\_vagyunk\\_kasler\\_miklos\\_a\\_mandinernek](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20180228_generaciok_tanultak_az_iskolaban_hogy_finnugor eredetuek_vagyunk_kasler_miklos_a_mandinernek) Accessed on December 12 2021.

<sup>120</sup> Ágoston, B. (2018, December 30). *Új időszámítás jön a kutatásban*. Demokrata. Retrieved from <https://demokrata.hu/magyarorszag/uj-idoszamitas-jon-a-kutatasban-2-111950/> Accessed on December 12, 2021.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

There is an extremely strong social interest in the origins, language, culture and history of Hungarians. The reason for this is that for decades inaccurate information has been reaching the people. Everyone is aware of this. One hundred and fifty years ago, there was an unfortunate debate about the origins of the Hungarian language, the famous Turkic-Finno-Ugric debate. And other possibilities have not even been considered... At the same time, there are scientific results that either strengthen or weaken each of these hypotheses in some way. For more than a hundred years it has been said that since our language is Finno-Ugric, our origins are Finno-Ugric. However, over time this has changed, and since the early 1980s the Finno-Ugric origin has no longer been insisted upon. Note that the theory of language is also only a hypothesis. But who we are is not discussed. Certain sections of science thought that there was no need to bother about it, because nobody cared anyway, we are a people with many roots. The latter statement is true. But we need to know. There are a lot of questions that need to be answered. Especially if we can do so.<sup>122</sup>

From this it can be observed that Kásler casts doubt upon the currently accepted position of Hungarian as part of the Uralic language family; he outright admits that there will be research conducted to change the narrative and this plays into memory politics; the allusion to the Hungarian people being “a people with many roots” also plays into the concept of *ethnie*, with Kásler’s desire to look more deeply into it playing into memory politics again. His invocation of the Turkic-Finno-Ugric language debate and his stated goal of focusing on certain fields of Hungarian history, is an expression of ethnosymbolism as the emphasis on certain specific elements of the past which are meant to symbolize a call back to a golden age with special

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

attention paid to ancestors and the different kinds of ethnic groups that form the basis of the Hungarian nation.<sup>123</sup>

Within his interview with *Demokrata*, Kásler explains that Hungarian historiography was for a long time defined by rulers of Hungary who did not have the nation's interests in mind, pointing out that since 1849 there were hardly any decades in Hungarian history where historical research could be conducted independently of political ideologies, stating that academics were consistently executed or otherwise persecuted for expressing viewpoints contrary to the ones promoted by the ruling political elite and that Hungary is now free and thus a plethora of opinions can be expressed as long as they are supported.<sup>124</sup> He also gives the example of Hungarian prime minister István Tisza to show how the narrative can change, mentioning that previously it was taught that he was responsible for Hungary's entry into World War I when now the opposite is known to be true. Such statements demonstrate that Kásler is aware of how the narrative can shift, and possibly demonstrates his awareness of memory politics, as he states that the political elite in Hungary's past shaped a certain narrative that ran contrary to the nation's interests and that now it is necessary to revise the narrative in favor of a new one. He then ends by discussing the funding of his institute and his plans to cooperate with international scholars on historical research, pointing out that there is a need to respond to claims by scholars from other nations as well in order to justify the position of Hungary, in particular explaining that there are Romanian historians who believe Szent István, the first King of Hungary, was a Romanian, and that people must be able to counter this claim.<sup>125</sup>

Such a need to counter claims contrary to Hungary's interests can also be seen as a manifestation of ethnosymbolism as the need to invoke the past to manipulate national memories for the sake of pushing a referred narrative is visible. In his interview with

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<sup>123</sup> Özkirimli, U. (2010). *Theories of Nationalism A Critical Introduction*. London. Palgrave Macmillan. Second Edition. pp: 143

<sup>124</sup> Ágoston, B. (2018, December 30). *Új időszámítás jön a kutatásban*. *Demokrata*. Retrieved from <https://demokrata.hu/magyarorszag/uj-idoszamitas-jon-a-kutatasban-2-111950/> Accessed on December 12, 2021.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

*Mandiner*, Kásler discusses the power of narratives in relation to the origin of the Hungarians by discussing the widely-accepted view of the nation being of Uralic origin and explaining why he rejects this viewpoint. His interview here, however, delves deeper into genetics and Eurasian influences, which makes Kásler’s rhetoric in line with that of Hungarian Turanism, and his arguments could be seen as an emphasis on Hungary’s position as a “bridge” between the East and the West.<sup>126</sup>

#### **4.2. Hungary as a Bridge Between the East and West**

In all of the interviews, the word “Turan” is not mentioned at all. Considering the rhetoric of the Hungarian government and the role of Kásler, it can be seen as egregious how he avoids mentioning the ideology when describing his ideas and aims. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the spirit of the ideology is still present in his rhetoric. As noted in the preceding literature review and historical background section, Turanism was defined in *A Turáni Eszme* (1922) as the notion that nations and territories of “Turanian” origin should be developed and enriched for the sake of spiritual and material progress and the overall prosperity of humanity and texts related to the ideology generally contained an emphasis on the Eastern origins of the Hungarian nation and a need to maintain or regain national pride based on this origin.<sup>127</sup> As a result, Hungary’s position as a nation geopolitically and culturally in between East and West was a core tenet of Turanism and one should therefore consider this subtext when looking at what Kásler says in his interviews.

In his interview with *Mandiner*, Kásler begins by responding to the question on who Hungarians are and from which group of people they descend from by describing the results of genetic research he had conducted himself, which is a form of advocacy in line with Alajos Paikert’s stated goal of Hungarian Turanists which was to “study the geography, history, art, ethnography, anthropology of the Turanian peoples.”<sup>128</sup><sup>129</sup> He

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<sup>126</sup> Remix News. (2018, September 25). *Hungary stuck between Christianity and Turanism*. Remix. Retrieved from: <https://rmx.news/commentary/hungary-stuck-between-christianity-and-turanism/> Accessed on December 14 2021.

<sup>127</sup> Paikert, A. (1922). *A Turáni Eszme*. Forrás: A Turáni Társaság Kiadványa: [https://mtda.hu/books/paikert\\_alajos\\_a\\_turani\\_eszme.pdf](https://mtda.hu/books/paikert_alajos_a_turani_eszme.pdf) Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 5

<sup>128</sup> Mandiner. (2018, February, 28). *Generációk tanulták az iskolában, hogy finnugor eredetűek vagyunk – Kásler Miklós a Mandinernek*. Mandiner. Retrieved from:



continues by explaining that he had examined the DNA of a body belonging to a member of the Árpád Dynasty, the ruling family of the Kingdom of Hungary when it was first established, and concluded that this ruling family was of Eurasian, not Uralic origin, and that this conclusion sparked outrage and criticism against him from experts who responded by saying Kásler's findings were nonsense, as Uralic also falls within the realm of Eurasian<sup>130</sup>. His response is that the Uralic theory refers to linguistic affinity while his research focuses on genetic connections; he doesn't rule out that Uralic is included within the label of Eurasian, but emphasizes that Uralic peoples are typically of the N1b haplogroup and that the DNA he analyzed corresponded to the R1a gene sequence that's more common throughout Eurasia, with a particular cluster in the vicinity of Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, the Caspian Sea region, India, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Persia, Serbia and Romania.<sup>131</sup>

Kásler continues by explaining that he was able to determine with certainty the haplogroup of the body he examined, which belonged to Béla III of the Árpád Dynasty, by explaining how Y chromosome connections were analyzed.<sup>132</sup> From this we can see an attempt to use new discoveries to influence the accepted narrative. Moreover, even though the body examined belonged to one ruling member of the Kingdom of Hungary's royalty, Kásler implies that this alone indicates that Hungarians are not a predominantly Uralic nation; the R1a gene sequence he alludes, he describes as being present in 30% of the Hungarian population and describes how when the Magyars arrived in the Carpathian Basin they came as ten heterogeneous tribes that then conquered and assimilated an already diverse population of Avars, Franks, Slavs, and Bulgars and how this population was supplemented by Germans,

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[https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20180228\\_generaciok\\_tanultak\\_az\\_iskolaban\\_hogy\\_finnugor eredetuek\\_vagyunk\\_kasler\\_miklos\\_a\\_mandinernek](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20180228_generaciok_tanultak_az_iskolaban_hogy_finnugor eredetuek_vagyunk_kasler_miklos_a_mandinernek) Accessed on December 12 2021.

<sup>129</sup> Paikert, A. (1922). *A Turáni Eszme*. Forrás: A Turáni Társaság Kiadványa: [https://mtda.hu/books/paikert\\_alajos\\_a\\_turani\\_eszme.pdf](https://mtda.hu/books/paikert_alajos_a_turani_eszme.pdf) Accessed on January 25 2020. pp: 13

<sup>130</sup> Mandiner. (2018, February, 28). *Generációk tanulták az iskolában, hogy finnugor eredetűek vagyunk – Kásler Miklós a Mandinernek*. Mandiner. Retrieved from: [https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20180228\\_generaciok\\_tanultak\\_az\\_iskolaban\\_hogy\\_finnugor eredetuek\\_vagyunk\\_kasler\\_miklos\\_a\\_mandinernek](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20180228_generaciok_tanultak_az_iskolaban_hogy_finnugor eredetuek_vagyunk_kasler_miklos_a_mandinernek) Accessed on December 12 2021.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

South Slavs and others who entered the kingdom over the centuries. Kásler concludes that Hungarians are the result of multiple ethnicities converging and yet still rejects the notion of the nation being Uralic, going by the gene sequence of Béla III to imply a more Eurasian heritage.<sup>133</sup>

Kásler's insistence on a Eurasian origin for the Árpád Dynasty can be seen as a contemporary manifestation of "national science" espoused by non-conformists who seek to denounce the widely accepted Finno-Ugric linguistic connection that was described earlier in this thesis in the historical background and literature review section<sup>134</sup>. Kásler insists that Hungarian being Uralic is more of a linguistic statement than a genetic one, which leads to the question of how national identity changes based on the label given to an ethnicity on the basis of genetics or linguistics. This may play into the desire of the Hungarian elite to justify the country's position as a "bridge" between the East and the West that can be exploited on either end depending on what the current Hungarian government desires. Going by this, one can question if the current resurgence of Turanism, augmented by Kásler's activities and rhetoric, is merely a convenient end to the Hungarian government's desire to both maintain power and advance national interests. This in turn leads into questions of why Prime Minister Viktor Orbán made Hungary's political outlook more pro-Turkic, how Kásler alone has such political clout in changing government policy, and if any of these activities is connected to populism.

### 4.3. Discussion

#### 4.3.3. The Influence of Miklós Kásler

The interview with *Magyar Idők* slightly differs from the two other interviews in that the primary focus is more to do with Kásler's work in the healthcare sector in his capacity as Minister of Human Resources. The majority of the interview discusses his work in relation to the Hungarian healthcare system and his proposal to separate the

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Laczó, F. (2017) *The Hungarian Historical Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Medieval Economic History (2017), Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. pp. 253

public and private sectors within this system.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, Kásler still briefly alludes to his role in researching Hungarian origins when he points out that his proposal to establish the *Magyarságkutató Intézet* “would put an end to the old Turkic-Finnougric debate on hypothetical origins or linguistic affiliations and shed light on the scientifically established reality.”<sup>136</sup> Evidently, his rhetoric regarding the issue is not so different from the views he expressed in the two other interviews.

Regardless, the information provided within this interview can still be of use, as it provides more information on Miklós Kásler himself. While he only briefly discusses Hungarian national origin studies, he still expresses a belief that Hungarian civilization has always been characterized by diversity and this is similar to what he said in his interview with *Mandiner*, wherein he explained the genetic diversity of Hungarians and the contributions of many peoples in Hungarian ethnogenesis.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, when he answers a question regarding the topic of Hungarian origins becoming a mainstream topic once more, he declares:

We hope that the *Magyarságkutató Intézet*, whose proposal will soon be submitted to the government, will help us in this. Today, historians, archaeologists, linguists, ethnographers, anthropologists and other disciplines are talking to each other. What one discipline proves, the other ignores. Research should be carried out in one institution, with defined objectives, and the results synthesized to the highest standards of scientific rigor.<sup>138</sup>

This is quite similar to one of his responses in his interview with *Demokrata*, wherein Kásler explained that he seeks to unite expertise connected to not “only linguistics,

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<sup>135</sup> Haiman É., Kis F. (2018, October 11). *SZÉTVÁLIK A MAGÁN- ÉS AZ ÁLLAMI EGÉSZSÉGÜGY*. Retrieved from Magyar Idők: <https://www.magyaridok.hu/belfold/szetvalik-a-magan-es-az-allami-egeszsegugy-3564611/> Accessed on January 28 2022.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Haiman É., Kis F. (2018, October 11). *SZÉTVÁLIK A MAGÁN- ÉS AZ ÁLLAMI EGÉSZSÉGÜGY*. Retrieved from Magyar Idők: <https://www.magyaridok.hu/belfold/szetvalik-a-magan-es-az-allami-egeszsegugy-3564611/> Accessed on January 28 2022.

but also archaeology, anthropology, folk art, musicology, most recently archaeogenetics” as “representatives of each have had their say and ignored the others.”<sup>139</sup>

Otherwise, the interview with *Magyar Idők* makes no direct reference to his work in relation to Hungarian national origins. That being said, aspects of Kásler's own leadership style and personal influence in other sectors can be observed in the interview. For instance, it is made clear that he was the one who announced the draft of Hungary's new national curriculum, and this shows that he has some influence in sectors outside of his official position. Moreover, while he dodges the question on whether prefers a strong, centralized leadership or not, it is still mentioned by the interviewer that Kásler's ministry has a strong leadership approach, though he denies that there are any frictions as a result and prioritizes expediency.<sup>140</sup>

From the above, it can be observed that Kásler wields substantial influence within the Hungarian government and has a leadership style that allows him to push his preferred objectives. Going from this one can conclude that the reason a single minister can change the course of the Hungarian government's policy on Hungarian national origins is because this minister has enough influence and the will to enforce his viewpoints. In his interview with *Demokrata*, Kásler justified his actions by declaring that:

Anyone who says that the question of the origins of Hungarians is closed is like Francis Fukuyama, who, in 1992, proclaimed the end of history, starting from the advent of liberal democracy. This too proved to be a hypothesis, and within

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<sup>139</sup> Ágoston, B. (2018, December 30). *Új időszámítás jön a kutatásban*. *Demokrata*. Retrieved from <https://demokrata.hu/magyarorszag/uj-idoszamitas-jon-a-kutatasban-2-111950/> Accessed on December 12, 2021.

<sup>140</sup> Haiman É., Kis F. (2018, October 11). *SZÉTVÁLIK A MAGÁN- ÉS AZ ÁLLAMI EGÉSZSÉGÜGY*. Retrieved from *Magyar Idők*: <https://www.magyaridok.hu/belfold/szetvalik-a-magan-es-az-allami-egeszsegugy-3564611/> Accessed on January 28 2022.

ten years it turned out that none of it was true. No science can be static and finite.<sup>141</sup>

Such a declaration also shows that he is willing to use his personal belief in how science should be conducted to guide his scientific pursuits. He also countered the notion that Hungarian prehistory and the origins of the Hungarian language are well established by now by bringing up examples from mathematics, which demonstrates itself as dynamic and also points out that he as an oncologist observed that what he taught specialists five years ago differs from what is taught today. He emphasizes that in his profession four or five doctors are required to have consultations to make the correct diagnosis and plan a therapy and that he believes the same approach needs to be applied to history and seeks to amalgamate different disciplines to do so. This can be seen as an imposition of his own expertise on another field, because as mentioned earlier, Kásler seeks to unite expertise connected to not “only linguistics, but also archaeology, anthropology, folk art, musicology, most recently archaeogenetics” for the sake of promoting a new narrative as in his own words “representatives of each have had their say and ignored the others.”<sup>142</sup> Accordingly, his research into the genetic history of the Árpád Dynasty can be seen as both an attempt to establish new facts in the name of the new narrative he seeks to legitimize, or an attempt to defy the previous narrative by pointing out that the political elite of the past interpreted what they saw as undeniable facts for their own narrative.<sup>143</sup>

In the interpretation of this author, it can be observed that Miklós Kásler’s mindset and personal ambition is the driving force in the foundation of the *Magyarságtudató intézet* and as a result it can be imagined that the institute’s stated goals live up to its rhetoric and actions, and that the creation of a new narrative via the discovery of the

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<sup>141</sup> Ágoston, B. (2018, December 30). *Új időszámítás jön a kutatásban*. Demokrata. Retrieved from <https://demokrata.hu/magyarorszag/uj-idoszamitas-jon-a-kutatasban-2-111950/> Accessed on December 12, 2021.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Mandiner. (2018, February, 28). *Generációk tanulták az iskolában, hogy finnugor eredetűek vagyunk – Kásler Miklós a Mandinernek*. Mandiner. Retrieved from: [https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20180228\\_generaciok\\_tanultak\\_az\\_iskolaban\\_hogy\\_finnugor eredetuek\\_vagyunk\\_kasler\\_miklos\\_a\\_mandinernek](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20180228_generaciok_tanultak_az_iskolaban_hogy_finnugor eredetuek_vagyunk_kasler_miklos_a_mandinernek) Accessed on December 12 2021.

perceived new evidence or reconsideration of facts previously considered conventionally established in the context of Hungarian historiography could be seen as secondary goals or even byproducts, even if both this and the institute's ultimate objectives are still connected to a desire to redefine the popular narrative through the use of memory politics as part of a continuation of a nation building process.

#### 4.3.2. Criticism

It can be noted that the interviews Kásler gave were all with right wing or right leaning newspapers. This is most likely because of the current orientation of the Hungarian government. The liberal and anti-government news site *444.hu* published an article on the *Magyarságkutató Intézet* describing in a seemingly disapproving tone how the institute received a budget increase.<sup>144</sup> This may indicate that Kásler's activities face some opposition. Additionally, the minister's activities have been scrutinized by the anti-government news site *Válasz*, which notes how he used his influence to interfere with a planned major international exhibition called *Kings and Saints - The Age of the Árpáds* by insisting that the *Magyarságkutató Intézet* be involved and the resulting dismissal of the curators without justification to be replaced with people from Kásler's institute and the reworking of the catalogue is described as "an unusually harsh step even by today's standards."<sup>145</sup> Kásler's interference in such preparations not only highlights his influence but also begets the question of why he is allowed such influence. The reason for this could possibly be connected to wider trends in Hungarian politics.

#### 4.3.3. Connections to Contemporary Hungarian Politics

It must be noted that another reason Kásler was able to promote his viewpoints is that other factors were in favor of such viewpoints. In other words, the resurgence of Hungarian Turanism was not Kásler's doing alone but part of a wider trend within

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<sup>144</sup> Czinkóczi S. (2020, July 31). *A kormány 700 milliós többletforrást tett félre a Magyarságkutató Intézetnek*. Retrieved from 444.hu: <https://444.hu/2020/07/30/a-kormany-700-millios-tobbletforrast-tett-felre-a-magyarsagkutato-intezetnek> Accessed on January 27 2022.

<sup>145</sup> Borbás B. (January 11, 2022). *Szinte az összes tudós felállt, miután a Kásler-féle intézet „einstandolta” az év történelmi kiállítását*. Retrieved from *Válasz*. <https://www.valaszonline.hu/2022/01/11/kiralyok-es-szentek-kiallitas-szekesfehervar-magyarsagkutato-nemzeti-muzeum-hatter/> Accessed on January 27 2022.

Hungarian politics. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the resurgence of Hungarian Turanism is closely connected to the dissatisfaction of the Hungarian populace with Hungary's membership in the EU, and this has been exploited by politicians who seek to challenge the status quo.<sup>146</sup> Such a desire to challenge the status quo could include challenging established ethno-linguistic viewpoints and politically, Hungary's increasingly Pro-Turkic orientation could be seen as an attempt to increase Hungarian influence abroad while obtaining economic benefits.<sup>147</sup> This would also explain why unlike Hungarian Turanism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century who gave more attention to other Uralic nations as well as Japan, contemporary Hungarian Turanists give far more attention to Turkic states and Turkey in particular, as Turkey is seen as a rising power while closer relations with the Uralic nations and Japan are not seen as particularly beneficial.<sup>148</sup> The relative paucity in Japan being mentioned in current Turanist rhetoric and the aversive tone towards relations with Uralic peoples compared to past Turanist literature seemingly confirms this.

Given these factors, it is logical to conclude that the discontent in Hungarian society in recent years has resulted in an openness towards alternative theories and solutions, and this would make the resurgence in Hungarian Turanism connected to populism, as right wing political parties and the Hungarian government are promoting it to maintain their power base. The resurgence in Turanism, being picked up by the government of Viktor Orbán, is the catalyst for Hungary establishing closer relations with the Turkic World as it is a convenient way for the ruling political to legitimize their power by appealing to the discontent of a populace disillusioned by the West while also serving national interests. This in turn necessitates the creation of a new narrative to further solidify the government's position, which in turn allowed Miklós Kásler to push his personal views and obtain government support in establishing the

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<sup>146</sup> Kenes, B. (2020, August, 3). *Jobbik: A Turanist Trojan Horse in Europe?* Retrieved from European Center for Populism Studies <https://www.populismstudies.org/jobik-a-turanist-trojan-horse-in-europe/> Accessed on January 25 2022.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Hungarian Government. (2019, October 15). *Hungary can offer Turkic Council connection to Europe*. Retrieved from Website of the Hungarian Government: <https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/news/hungary-can-offer-turkic-council-connection-to-europe> Accessed on January 25 2020.

*Magyarságkutató Intézet.* These are the reasons Hungarian government policy regarding Turanism changed.



## VI. Conclusion

After analyzing Hungarian Turanism and connecting it to the wider context of memory politics, ethnosymbolism, and contemporary Hungarian politics, it can now be understood why the ideology has made a comeback as the goal is connected to a desire to create a new narrative that's more palpable to the political elites. Even though Miklós Kásler is merely one person, the indulgent attitude of the Hungarian government at large towards the activities of his institution reveal a subtext that the government is largely in line with his point of view and goals to redefine discourse regarding the origins of Hungarians. Miklós Kásler is important because he shows how the policies of government changed and he is directly responsible for augmenting an environment that has made Hungarian Turanism a mainstream topic in Hungary once more. Research into the origin of Hungarians became important as a result due to his appointment to Minister of Human Resources. His personal involvement in this matter may also indicate that he sees himself as the central figure, with the symbolism of him being an oncologist and a politician trying to "cure" Hungary, and this may be why he never responded to the author's requests for a direct interview, as he may have believed in the possibility that he would be misrepresented.

The fact that Kásler's viewpoints can be seen promoted in popular newspapers with official support such as *Origo*, with articles repeating most of his viewpoints, supplemented by statements that the Habsburgs disliked the idea of research into Hungarian origins and a reference to the Finno-Ugric theory of origin as "dogma," indicates that the government at least has given him tacit support.<sup>149</sup> However, all of this leads to another question: what does the resurgence of Hungarian Turanism and the associated change in Hungarian government policy regarding it mean for Hungary as a whole?

Within the context of contemporary politics, while one can speculate that the resurgence of Hungarian Turanism will influence Hungary's foreign policy with an

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<sup>149</sup> Elter, T. (2018, February, 23). *Tudománytörténeti tévedés lehet a magyarság finnugor eredete*. Origo. Retrieved from: <https://www.origo.hu/tudomany/20180222-a-legujabb-genetikai-kutatasok-nem-tamasztjak-ala-a-nyelvezeti-alapu-finnugor-teoriat.html> Accessed on December 14, 2021.

orientation towards states and nations considered more “Turanian,” thus far the actions of the Hungarian government and other politicians have provided mixed messages. An earlier mentioned example of Turanism potentially influencing modern Hungarian politics was the appeal by the Free Idel-Ural organization, formed in the name of Uralic and Turkic minority nations in the Volga region of Russia, to the Hungarian far-right party Jobbik in hopes of securing aid at the political or cultural level on the basis of ethno-linguistic and historical kinship due to the party’s self-professed support for Turanism.<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, Jobbik ultimately dashed the hopes of Free Idel-Ural by refusing to discuss the organization's appeal and denying interviews with associated journalists, despite lobbying for the rights of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine and the party’s own rhetoric promoting Turanism and kinship with nations regarded as related to Hungarians.<sup>151</sup>

A contrasting example would be Hungary’s relations at the inter-state level with Turkic states. The earlier mentioned example of Viktor Orbán actively pursuing further cooperation with Turkic states shows how the Prime Minister seeks to pursue closer relationships with Turkic states. The Turkish government openly praising Hungary for supporting Turkey’s relations with the EU shows that Hungary is more successful on this front.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, Orbán’s proposal that Hungary acts as a conduit between Central Europe and the Turkic World by hosting a joint international conference between the Turkic Council and the Visegrád country group (V4) in the first half of 2022 may show that he seeks to increase the prominence of the country by having it act as a bridge between the East and West, a fundamental tenet of Hungarian Turanism; Orbán also emphasized that Hungarians and Turkic peoples share a

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<sup>150</sup> Goble, P. (2018, November 13). *Hungary’s Jobbik Party Could Turn Out To Be Moscow’s Worst Enemy – OpEd*. Eurasia Review. Retrieved from: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/13112018-hungarys-jobbik-party-could-turn-out-to-be-moscows-worst-enemy-oped/> Accessed on February 3 2020.

<sup>151</sup> Goble, P. (2018, November 27). *Hungary’s Jobbik Party Shows Itself to Be Putinist, Not Hungarian Nationalist*. Window on Eurasia. Retrieved from: <http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2018/11/hungarys-jobbik-party-shows-itself-to.html> Accessed on February 3 2020.

<sup>152</sup> Turan, R. I. (2021, February 25). *Hungary hailed for supporting Turkey-EU positive agenda*. Anadolu Agency. Retrieved from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/hungary-hailed-for-supporting-turkey-eu-positive-agenda/2157060> Accessed on December 14 2021.

historical and cultural heritage reaching back many long centuries and that the Hungarian people are proud of this heritage, and were also proud when their opponents in Europe mocked them as barbarian Huns and Attila's people, another facet of Turanism.<sup>153</sup>

The above contrast demonstrates how Hungarian Turanism in modern day Hungary is increasingly Pro-Turkic and indifferent towards the Uralic peoples, as the treatment of two organizations representing Turkic peoples was markedly different based on the Uralic element being present or not. Nevertheless, it can also be argued that other parties are involved, as the reaction of Jobbik may indicate that it was influenced by Russia, thus bringing into question the rhetoric of Miklós Kásler that modern day research into Turanism and its consequent resurgence and increasing influence on Hungarian society is meant to be free of foreign influence; the apathy of Jobbik towards Free Idel-Ural at the very least indicate that at the political level there are still foreign elements influencing Hungarian Turanism.<sup>154</sup> Moreover, the concept of Hungarian Turanism's revival, while accepted among the political elite and certain parts of academia, may be at odds with Hungary's historical heritage as the country traditionally portrays itself as the defender of Christian values in Europe; given that the predominant religion in the majority of Turanian nations nowadays given focus by the Hungarian government (Turkic nations) is Islam, it is questionable as to how Orbán is able to consolidate this with his anti-Islam immigration policies since 2015.<sup>155</sup> Nevertheless, Hungarian Turanism is still a manifestation of Hungary attempting to position itself as a bridge between the East and the West for its own benefit as well as Orbán's desire to justify his regime's power by reemphasizing the

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<sup>153</sup> Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister (n.d.). *Hungary to initiate joint summit of Turkic Council and V4*. Official site of the Hungarian Prime Minister. Retrieved from: <https://miniszterelnok.hu/hungary-to-initiate-joint-summit-of-turkic-council-and-v4/> Accessed on December 14 2021.

<sup>154</sup> Goble, P. (2018, November 27). *Hungary's Jobbik Party Shows Itself to Be Putinist, Not Hungarian Nationalist*. Window on Eurasia. Retrieved from: <http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2018/11/hungarys-jobbik-party-shows-itself-to.html> Accessed on February 3 2020.

<sup>155</sup> Remix News. (2018, September 25). *Hungary stuck between Christianity and Turanism*. Remix. Retrieved from: <https://rmx.news/commentary/hungary-stuck-between-christianity-and-turanism/> Accessed on December 14 2021.

uniqueness of the Hungarian nation and seeking allies away from the West that is ideologically opposed to his government and the values he desires to promote.<sup>156</sup> In this way it is possible to conclude that the revival of Hungarian Turanism is an expression of Balázs Ablonczy's fifth point in defining the way Turanism has been interpreted in Hungary, as a redefinition of Hungary's political role as a mediator of the values of the East to the West and the justification of forming alliances.<sup>157</sup> Consequently, the revival of Turanism can be seen as a side effect of factor in modern day right-wing populism in Hungarian society, as a call to return to tradition and emphasize Hungary's importance. All of these factors also demonstrate an ethnosymbolist element within the resurgence of Hungarian Turanism as traditional values in Hungarian society related to Christianity are being supplemented or challenged depending on the audience with different symbols with the goal of creating a new narrative. And the *Magyarságkutató Intézet's* work is ultimately connected to this goal.

As Kásler himself stated, if the Fukuyama thesis regarding the height of American hegemony in modern times was proven false in a mere decade, the narrative regarding the origin of the Hungarians itself could easily change in the coming years with a new understanding of genetics and the uncovering of previously unknown or overlooked historical evidence to prove his position and that of his institution from both records and archaeology. With the continued work of the *Magyarságkutató Intézet*, only time will tell whether the accepted narrative will be completely upended by a revival of Turanism or if the ideology will remain on the margins. Ultimately, when considering the question as to how the Hungarian government's policies changed and why, it can be said that it's ultimately a case of history repeating due to the uncertainties of Hungarian society necessitating such a revival, spurred on by an impression that the narrative given to Hungarian after the heyday of Turanism was manipulated, thus justifying the re-evaluation of such narratives for the sake of changing the narrative.

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ablonczy, B. (2016). *Keletre, magyar! A magyar turanizmus története*. Budapest: Jaffa, 2016. pp. 15-16

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