



Corvinus University of Budapest  
Department of Political Sciences  
Institute of International, Political and Regional Studies

RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND  
GENDER IDEOLOGY: CASE STUDY OF HUNGARY'S FIDESZ AND  
POLAND'S PiS

CEERES Master's Thesis

Wacharaporn Taweeman

Student ID: 2585648T

Supervisors:

Dr. Várnagy Réka (Corvinus University of Budapest)

Professor Louis Wierenga (University of Tartu)

August 2022

Budapest, Hungary

Field of Studies:

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of:

Master of Arts in Political Science (MA) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary

International Master's (IntM) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: University of Glasgow, UK

Master of Arts in Social Sciences (MA) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: University of Tartu, Estonia

Word count of the thesis: 26486 words

Authorship Declaration: I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

*Wacharaporn Taweeman*

16/08/2022

Budapest, Hungary

## **Non-exclusive license to reproduce thesis and make thesis public**

I, Wacharaporn Taweesanan, (date of birth: 15 August 1997) herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive license) to the work created by me: “*Right-wing Populism and Gender Ideology: Case Study of Hungary’s Fidesz and Poland’s PiS*”, supervisors: Dr. Réka Várnagy and Professor Louis Wierenga.

- reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright;
- to make the work specified in p. 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright;
- I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in p. 1;
- I certify that granting the non-exclusive license does not infringe other persons’ intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

*Wacharaporn Taweesanan*

16/08/2022

Budapest, Hungary

## **Acknowledgement**

First and most importantly, I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Várnagy Réka and Professor Louis Wierenga, for their support and guidance throughout the writing of this thesis. I would like to thank Professor Louis Wierenga and his class on Extreme Right-Wing Movements and Populism at the University of Tartu, which inspired me to write about this topic. I also would like to thank Professor Várnagy Réka for her support in helping me to develop my research topic and turning it into this thesis that I have been most satisfied and proud of.

I would like to thank my family for believing in me and supporting me throughout my journey in the CEERES program. A special thanks to Yuliia Parkhomenko and Gulzada Mitalova for the magical friendship we shared from Glasgow to Budapest and the greatest moral support in the most difficult times. I would like to thank you for every encouraging word that significantly contributed to this thesis and for making this journey truly amazing.

I especially would like to thank Lukas Georg and his family for being very supportive during the time I have lived far from home. When I want to give up, your words of encouragement bring me right back to where I need to be - this wouldn't have been possible without you.

## **Abstract**

The thesis explores the anti-gender discourse of right-wing populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe (i.e., Fidesz and PiS). Unlike populist parties in Western Europe that take the 'gender turn' approach by shifting toward a liberal stance regarding gender issues, Fidesz and PiS attack gender and sexuality rhetorically and legislatively. They exploit the demonization of gender ideology to achieve more public visibility. The thesis opts for analyzing the anti-gender discourse of Fidesz and PiS as they represent a strong pan-European articulation of opposition to the political strategy of progressive gender politics and reflect a dominant trend of right-wing populist parties ascending to power all across Central and Eastern Europe. To answer the research question "How do right-wing populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe frame their political discourse on gender ideology?", the thesis firstly employs the conceptual frameworks of 'right-wing populism' to observe whether right-wing populist parties primarily frame the discourse on gender ideology through their ideological core features. It also engages in the conceptual framework of 'gender as symbolic glue,' which explains how the term 'gender' is instrumentalized by right-wing populist forces to contribute to their illiberal transformation, as both cases serve the most distinctive illiberal regime in the CEE region. The parties' anti-gender discourse from party programs, political speeches and EP plenary debates is investigated through qualitative content analysis (QCA). The results reveal that the parties frame their anti-gender discourse based on three main ideological features; populism, nativism and illiberalism; and the adoption of positive-self and negative-other representation as well as the politics of fear. The thesis contributes to scholarly debates on right-wing populism and gender politics in Europe and serves as an indicator of anti-gender trends potentially occurring in the region.

**Keywords:** right-wing populism, gender ideology, anti-gender discourse, nationalism, nativism, illiberalism, conservatism

## Table of contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Research Objective.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Research Questions.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Thesis outline.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Literature review.....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 The ‘Gender Turn’ of Right-wing Populist Parties in Western Europe.....	5
1.2 East-West Differences in Attitudes toward Gender Ideology.....	9
1.3 Anti-Gender Politics in The Rise of Right-wing Populist Parties in Eastern Europe.....	12
1.3.1 Anti-Gender Politics in Eastern Europe.....	12
1.3.2 Anti-gender Mobilizational Discourse of Right-wing Populist Parties in Hungary and Poland .....	15
<b>Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 The Right-wing Populism Framework.....	20
2.1.1 The Ideational Approach to Populism: Populism as Thin-centered Ideology..	21
2.1.2 Populist Typology: Right-wing Populism.....	23
2.2 Right-wing Populism and Gender: Gender as Symbolic Glue .....	24
An Overview of Fidesz and PiS’ Anti-gender Politics Through the Conceptual Framework of Gender as Symbolic Glue .....	26
<b>Chapter 3 Methodological Framework.....</b>	<b>28</b>
3.1 Case Selection.....	28
3.1.1 A Brief History of Fidesz.....	29
3.1.2 A Brief History of PiS.....	29
3.1.3 The Choice of Fidesz and PiS.....	30
3.2 The Choice of Qualitative Content Analysis.....	33
3.3 Sources .....	36
3.4 Research Limitations and Potential Contributions.....	38
<b>Chapter 4. The Analysis of Fidesz and PiS’ Anti-gender Discourse.....</b>	<b>40</b>
4.1 Research Findings.....	40
4.2 The Comparison between Fidesz and PiS .....	41
4.2.1 Populism and the Construction of Enemies.....	41
Gender Ideology as the Contemporary Polarization of Societies to the Left and Right of Politics.....	42
4.2.2 Nativism and The Survival of Nation and Civilization.....	46
The National Survival and a Way to Eternity .....	46
(1) Christianity and Pan-European Identity.....	47

(2) <i>Traditional Family Model</i> .....	50
The Battle against Islamization.....	54
4.2.3 Illiberalism and Gender: the Instrumental Use of Gender toward Illiberal Regime.....	55
<b>Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion</b> .....	<b>60</b>
5.1 Results' discussion.....	60
5.2 Conclusions.....	63
<b>References</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>76</b>
Viktor Orbán's political speeches.....	76
PiS' party programmes.....	77
Plenary debates of the European Parliament.....	77

**List of Tables**

**Table 1.** Code system of the analysis of Fidesz’s discourse.....35  
**Table 2.** Code system of the analysis of PiS’ discourse.....35

## Introduction

During the migration crisis, many scholars identified the phenomenon of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe shifting toward a liberal stance regarding gender issues and claiming to defend gender equality and women's and LGBT rights. The Janus-faced approach toward gender issues is widely adopted by the right-wing populist parties in Western Europe (Akkermans, 2015). They tend to “defend gender equality and freedom of choice” to reiterate cultural and religious objections to Muslim immigration while “emphasizing their conservative views towards gender issues mainly related to family relations” (Akkermans, 2015, p. 56). It is a puzzling phenomenon since it conflicts with right-wing parties' agendas, which primarily promote conservative values and discriminate against sexual minorities. This phenomenon has been investigated and called ‘femonationalism’ by Farris (2017, p. 4), describing femonationalism as “the attempts of European right-wing parties, among others, to co-opt feminist ideals into anti-immigrant and anti-Islam campaigns,” mainly by instrumentalizing the notion of gender equality to mobilize against Islam. Correspondingly, Akkermans (2015) reveals that many right-wing populist parties in Western Europe have displayed less conservative profiles on gender issues and underlined the defense of gender equality and sometimes LGBT rights against Islamic practices. The parties shift their conservative stances, at least rhetorically, to liberal and democratic contexts of Western European countries.

While the contemporary mobilization of feminist ideas by right-wing populist parties is gradually present in Western Europe, the parties in Central and Eastern European countries have shown the opposite approach to ‘gender ideology’. The concept of ‘gender ideology’ has been alternatively utilized as a key rhetorical tool to attack progressive social actors who support comprehensive sexuality education, LGBT rights, abortion rights, etc. The intensified anti-gender discourse reflects a broader trend in Eastern Europe with right-wing populist parties potentially rejecting to adapt to the reconstitution of gender in contemporary society as promoted in its Western counterparts. They strongly assert traditional values through the combination of different kinds of narratives (e.g. conservatism and nationalism) to attack gender matters (Vida, 2019). The rise of right-wing populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe and their anti-gender discourse have recently marked a significant social change in terms of gender dimension. Many countries in the CEE region had formerly been undergoing a transition and developing their policies to foster an enabling environment for human rights and for gender issues, especially gender equality, in order to meet the requirements of the European Union. However, right-wing populist parties have demonized ‘gender ideology’, consequently contributing to the rapid development of anti-gender movements and campaigns in countries. They introduce communications and policies actively reinforcing gender stereotyping while downplaying the importance of gender equality, and adopting regressive

gender laws (e.g. homophobic and transphobic laws). Gender ideology then has become a forceful rhetorical tool for many right-wing populist parties in the CEE countries to provoke a conservative backlash in the region, particularly Hungary's Fidesz and Poland's PiS. They serve a stronger pan-European articulation of opposition to the political strategy of progressive gender politics, in comparison with right-wing populist parties in Western Europe (Desperak, 2021). Fidesz and PiS have been actively involved in the struggle against 'gender ideology' in recent years, and have successfully disseminated the misleading concept of gender ideology in the dominant national discourse. Considering both as distinctive case studies, the research aims to investigate parties' performance and positions toward gender ideology through their discourse, particularly from the year 2014 - 2019, during which the anti-gender discourse had widely been delivered by Fidesz and PiS (Grzebalska, 2015; Kováts and Pető, 2017; Gwiazda, 2021). The research primarily focuses on how Fidesz and PiS frame their political discourse on gender ideology. By employing qualitative content analysis (QCA), it identifies themes which parties utilize to generate the anti-gender discourse with the goal of achieving increasing public visibility. Through the framework of right-wing populism, it subsequently interprets the result, whether both parties frame the anti-gender discourse in a manner that corresponds to their core ideological components.

The research thus contributes to scholarly debates on right-wing populism and gender politics. Many scholars assert that the specific national context and history of each country constitute the main factors differently influencing the gendering of right-wing populist parties in terms of their ideologies and policy agendas (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2015; Akkerman 2015; Meret and Siim 2013). The research employs a cross-national comparative study of right-wing populist parties' anti-gender discourse in Hungary and Poland as they represent the dominant trend of right-wing populist parties ascending to power all across Central and Eastern Europe. Learning themes or patterns which Fidesz and PiS contribute to parties' discourse, it also reveals how conservative backlash against gender ideology is developing in both countries. As they are considered successful actors in mobilizing regressive gender norms in the region, the parties know how to project their discourse and agenda resulting in gaining support from various audiences and in strengthening anti-gender movements in countries. Secondly, the research also contributes to the conceptual framework of gender as symbolic glue, one of the most prominent studies of right-wing populism and anti-gender movements (Kováts and Põim, 2015; Grzebalska, Kováts and Pető, 2017; Grzebalska and Pető, 2018). As a result of the analysis of the position and role of conservative and far right parties in the anti-gender mobilization in Europe, the 'gender as symbolic glue' framework explains how right-wing populist parties adopt the false notion of gender ideology in undermining an array of opponents ranging from gender enemy figures to (neo)liberal representatives. The research adopts the conceptual framework primarily in order

to enhance the understanding of parties' approach towards gender ideology. The framework also corresponds to the right-wing populism framework in reiterating the illiberal feature of parties as it views gender ideology as parties' modus operandi of the illiberal transformation (Grzebalska and Petó, 2018). The analysis of this research, at the same time, aims to check the relevance of the framework across time. The study of Fidesz and PiS' anti-gender discourse might serve as an indication of a wider regional trend where the national conservative backlash has been invoked by the rise of right-wing populist parties, particularly ones participating in governments.

### **Research Objective**

It is worth noting that the starting point of the research is the perception of differences in right-wing populist parties' positions toward gender ideology in Western and Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, the research primarily aims to understand the nature of right-wing populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe on the subject of gender ideology, as most scholars conduct studies to explain the party family's stance toward common topics (e.g. economics, social stratification, immigration). It seeks to identify the themes of the parties' anti-gender discourse in order to reveal their core values and positions on gender issues. Moreover, Fidesz and PiS successfully articulate their anti-gender discourse in a national, cultural and political arena and become a challenge for progressive politics. Hence, the study of two distinguished cases aims to reveal how parties instrumentalize anti-gender discourse in contributing to their illiberal regimes as well.

### **Research Questions**

The dissertation addresses the main question: "How do right-wing populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe frame their political discourse on gender ideology?". To answer the main research question, the analysis is guided by the following questions: "What concepts or themes do right-wing populist parties adopt in contributing to their anti-gender discourse?" and "Is right-wing populist parties' anti-gender discourse primarily framed through their ideological features?".

### **Thesis Outline**

The dissertation begins with literature review in Chapter 1, which explains what previous scholars have already found regarding right-wing populism and anti-gender discourse. It covers the studies of the different stances of right-wing populist parties in Western and Eastern Europe, as it is the starting point of the dissertation. For a comprehensive understanding, I narrow the focus to literature on anti-gender politics in the rise of right-wing populist parties in Eastern Europe and on the anti-gender discourse in Hungary and Poland.

Chapter 2 is a theoretical framework explaining the conceptual frameworks that I employ to shape how I investigate the data and anticipate the analysis results. Two theoretical frameworks are chosen; the right-wing populism framework and the conceptual framework of gender as symbolic glue. Chapter 3 is a methodological framework that provides information on the case selection and qualitative content analysis choices, as well as the data collection process. I also include the limitations found in the dissertation and the potential contribution to them. The most significant part is Chapter 4, the analysis of Fidesz and PiS' anti-gender discourse. It first provides an overview of the findings, then the analysis results by comparing the anti-gender discourse between two cases on the basis of two chosen conceptual frameworks introduced in Chapter 2. Lastly, Chapter 5 follows with discussion and conclusion. I elaborate on some distinctive points that derive from the analysis between the two cases, including the conclusion of the dissertation in terms of process and content and how it can contribute to further research.

## Chapter 1. Literature Review

This literature review aims at exploring what previous scholars have found in the investigation of right-wing populist parties and their anti-gender discourse, particularly in the context of Eastern European countries. The research focuses on the cases of Fidesz and PiS as they represent typical examples of right-wing populist parties<sup>1</sup> that have recently invoked the rhetoric of ‘gender ideology’ as a national threat and successfully introduced their anti-gender discourse at national and international levels. However, it is worth noting that this research emerged after the observation of right-wing populist parties’ different approaches toward the concept of ‘gender ideology’ in Eastern and Western Europe. Many right-wing populist parties in Western Europe have adopted the ‘gender turn’, that is, taking a more liberal stance regarding gender issues, particularly the defense of women and LGBT rights against Muslims and their practices. On the contrary, right-wing populist parties in Eastern Europe have promoted and attempted to reinforce traditional gender norms. Considering this difference as a starting point of the research, the literature review first looks at the previous studies and explanations of this phenomenon taking place in Western Europe. In particular, Farris (2017) has defined it as a phenomenon called ‘femonationalism’ when right-wing populist parties instrumentalize women’s and LGBT rights to achieve their political objectives. Secondly, it looks at the part of the scholarship that analyzed why right-wing populist parties in Eastern and Western Europe employ different approaches toward the concept of ‘gender ideology’. It then looks at the literature which focuses on anti-gender politics in the rise of right-wing populist parties, particularly how the right-wing populist parties develop anti-gender politics throughout the CEE region, and how they advocate their regressive gender norms until they become powerful actors in the region. It finally covers the literature, carrying out the study of anti-gender mobilizational discourse in Hungary and Poland. It demonstrates how the parties establish discursive and political hegemony of their anti-gender discourse and agenda in the name of defending ‘the nation’ against (neo)liberal political actors or ‘a corrupt elite’.

### 1.1 The ‘gender turn’ of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe

During the migration crisis, many right-wing populist parties introduced their ‘new strategy’ of liberalizing their gender attitudes, resulting in the mobilization against the violation of women’s and sexual minorities’ rights, particularly targeting Muslim practices. Indeed, one can contend that the instrumentalization of women’s, and occasionally LGBT rights, is for the purpose of achieving a higher number of female constituencies (Mayer, 2012; Akkerman and

---

<sup>1</sup> Fidesz and PiS are considered reformed populist parties due to outside forces and have adopted a radical-right agenda (Minkenberg, 2017). The terms ‘right-wing populist party’, ‘nationalist-populist party’, and ‘(populist) radical right party’, which describe Fidesz and PiS cases and their ideological nature, are explained more in Chapter 2 (2.1.2 Populist Typology: Right-wing Populism).

Hagelund, 2007; Towns, Karlsson and Eyre, 2014). However, the majority of the scholars agree that the inclusion of gender equality and sexual emancipation in the agenda and discourse of right-wing populist parties in fact serves as an exploitation of feminist themes to operate their anti-immigration or anti-Islam campaigns. Farris (2017) identifies this attempt of Western European right-wing parties to stigmatize Islam and Muslim men under the banner of gender equality as ‘femonationalism’. Indeed, Islamophobia is deeply rooted in right-wing parties’ worldviews, considering ‘nationalism’ as one of their founding ideologies (Mudde, 2009). The mobilization against Islam was increasingly intensified, especially after the 9/11 attacks and later the Bussel attacks. Since then, radical-right populist parties have singled out Islam as a main national threat, particularly in Western countries (Akkerman, 2015). The parties have initially operated the anti-Islam stance through gender and family campaigns since the mid-1990s, and, at the same time, the anti-immigrant politics focusing on Muslim migrants have become highly gendered (de Lange and Mügge, 2015). The concept of femonationalism is employed in many studies of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe. Farris (2017) provides three approaches to understand ‘femonationalism’ comprehensively, not simply as a phenomenon, but as a convergence, ideological formation, and neoliberal political economy.

Farris (2017) first explains femonationalism as convergence - that is, the encounter of different actors between the non-emancipatory forces of Islamophobia and the emancipatory struggle against sexism and patriarchy. The tension subsequently does not cause any loss of their relative autonomy; therefore, it generates the identity of hegemony. The encounter is classified as either “instrumentalization” or “collusion” (Farris, 2017, p. 6). The former appear in the debates of “sexual nationalism” and “enlightened fundamentalism”, which emphasize the conceptualization of the employment of women’s and LGBT rights to activate anti-immigration and anti-Islam agendas in Western Europe (Farris, 2017, p. 6). The latter introduces the ‘homonationalism’ concept. Homonationalism explains the phenomenon of right-wing forces claiming LGBT rights in order to justify their xenophobic stance, particularly against Muslims. Understanding the ‘femonationalism’ that has resulted from the convergence requires investigating what ideological matrices drive the parties to target anti-Islam politics. However, the concept of populism explicitly fails to identify the core ideological matrix. Therefore, the attack of Muslims and non-western migrants as the enemies of the nation among right-wing populist parties in Western Europe is centered upon the construction of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’.

It is still at odds considering the fact that Muslim and non-western migrants women are not portrayed as enemies. Farris (2017) discloses the shared conviction that integrates the actors to the stance of supporting gender equality and opposing Muslim practices among the establishment of new alliances. It is the belief that gender relations in the West are more

civilized and must be taught to Muslim women who are the ‘victims’ of the ‘oppressor’ (i.e., Muslim men). This subsequently generates the key narratives of ‘Western supremacy’, which is in line with Colella’s (2021) study of the instrumental use of gender equality in the nationalist discourse of the Fratelli d’Italia party. Colella (2021, p. 277) detects the central theme of the party’s discourse, which is “the new rescuing narrative”, claiming the need of Western society to defend Black and women of color, specifically Muslim, who are portrayed as victims of their culture. The party focuses on ‘gender-based violences’ as a central issue in racialized terms to vilify male migrants, and additionally includes the agenda to protect white women, who are symbolized as a national border under the colonial narrative. The defense of feminized national borders against intruders (i.e., non-western men or the ‘other’) serves the goals of preserving pure culture and emphasizes the greatness of national race, economy and politics. The notion of convergence also reveals the tactical intentions behind right-wing populist parties to advance the anti-Islam campaign. The ‘interest-convergence theory’ put forward by Bell (1980) helps scholars unravel this matter. The theory stipulates that the superior racial group will support the marginalized racial group’s movements to fight for equal rights only if they benefit from the process. Employing this strategy, right-wing populist parties significantly receive various gains, whether it be the expected higher number of electoral votes and the spread of strong anti-Muslim sentiments in Western European societies (Perugini and Gordon, 2015).

Secondly, Farris (2017) qualifies femonationalism as an ideological formation through three theoretical perspectives. The perception of ideological formation first allows the scholars to scrutinize the philosophy grounded in femonationalism, that is, the aforementioned supremacy of the West over the rest. It can be gauged more extensively under the term ‘modularity’, which encompasses what already exists and what is new in the process of formation. Regarding this, the binary ‘oppressor’ and ‘victim’ suitably depict the position of Muslim men as oppressors and women as victims. According to the contemporary European imaginary, ‘white men (claiming to be) saving brown women from brown men’ (Morris and Spivak, 2010). However, in the 1990s, the narrative of “bad migrants” in Western Europe was used to mainly refer to Eastern European men, who were characterized as people who committed serious crimes, such as sex trafficking, while women from the region were perceived as victims of cultural backwardness (Farris, 2017, p. 11). Secondly, femonationalism through discursive regularity constitutes a part of the core of the ideological formation. It points to the significance of the discursive media apparatus, which contributes to the success of femonationalism in Western Europe. Considering right-wing populist parties’ main features, Wodak (2015) states that right-wing politicians extensively use the media, whether traditional or modern media such as Facebook, Twitter, and so forth. In the period of contemporary media democracies, their strategies successfully reach the people’s

evolving media consumption. Furthermore, by reiterating the Islamic violent crimes and terrorist attacks (e.g., the 9/11 attacks, the Brussels attacks, and the New Year's Eve sexual assaults in Germany), the media subsequently constructs narratives of liberation for Muslim women as it strongly links Islam and violence. Islam is then symbolized by violence and terrorism. The last perspective of the conceptualization of femonationalism as an ideological formation is the economic interest, which derives from the concept of 'ideological state apparatuses' (Althusser, 1970). The ideological state apparatuses (e.g., the family, the media, religion) take part in operating the reproduction of the environment that facilitates oppressed labor power. Regarding this, the xenophobic mobilization of gender equality as an ideological state apparatus drives the chain of material production and reproduction. This aspect will be explored more in the conceptualization of femonationalism as a neoliberal political economy. Taking into account the political-economic dimensions, Farris (2017) lastly conceptualizes femonationalism as a neoliberal political economy. Unlike many scholars who claim the role of neoliberalism as the contextual ground or the 'theater' that facilitates the encounter between LGBT and different nationalist forces (Bilge, 2012; Mepschen and Duyvendak, 2012), Farris (2017, p.14) argues that neoliberalism is, in fact, the component of this convergence itself. Accordingly, she states:

Neoliberalism is a political-economic formation that "institutionalizes" the femonationalist ideology as part of the functioning of the state apparatuses in order to (re)organize the productive and particularly the socially reproductive sphere.

Hence, as part of neoliberal institutionalization, the civic integration programs were developed to grant European residency to third-country nationals with the requirement that migrants are obligated to take part in the national language and society courses to understand the main cultural tenets of European states. The respect for gender equality and women's rights is one of the primary requirements that everyone must meet for the settlement, particularly in light of the neoliberal institutionalization of femonationalism. At the state level, the nationalist forces thus adopt the narrative of 'victim and oppressor' to highlight the threat posed by Muslim male migrants as misogynists who are unable to reconcile with the state's policy on immigration, particularly the aforementioned respect for gender equality and women's rights. Accordingly, in Akkerman's (2015) study of the views of populist radical-right parties on gender issues in Western Europe, she reveals that in the policy domains of migration and integration, Western European right-wing populist parties rhetorically emphasize the status of women, such as the right of immigrant women, protection from violence, and their freedom of choice, which mainly target Islam practices, and occasionally LGBT rights and tolerance for homosexuality. At the economic level, many Western European countries have consistently faced labor shortages as a result of the 2007-11 economic crisis on labor, particularly in the areas of care and domestic work. Many

right-wing populist parties recognized an opportunity to direct non-western migrant women, both Muslim and non-Muslim, into care and domestic, as well as social and reproductive sectors (Farris, 2017). The employment and activity rates of the care and domestic economy grew over years, implying an increase in the recruitment of non-western migrant women. Indeed, they instantly occupy the role of main providers of the social reproduction sector of children's and elderly care. On the contrary, non-western migrant men in economic sectors were deployed as a part of crisis-management plans and instead were depicted as "cultural and social threats" and "welfare system parasites" (Farris, 2017, p. 16). Due to migrant women's strategic role, especially during the period of the Western European crises of social reproduction, nationalist forces (i.e., right-wing populists) successfully instrumentalized the notion of gender equality and the emancipation of women, particularly Muslim women.

The investigation of the phenomenon of femonationalism through the different lenses of conceptualization reveals how 'gender issues' have become salient across right-wing populist parties in Western Europe and, more importantly, provides a better understanding of the tactical intentions behind the advancement of the parties' anti-Islam campaigns. The next section looks at the different attitudes towards gender ideology, given that it is unusual for parties from the same family to take opposing approaches. It explores different factors that characterize and divide right-wing populist parties into Western European populist parties which embrace feminist views to a certain extent and Eastern European populist parties that firmly oppose any feminist mobilization. It is worth mentioning that special attention is given to scrutinizing the context of Eastern Europe as this research focuses on the analysis of the anti-gender discourse of Eastern European right-wing populist parties.

## **1.2 East-West differences in attitudes toward gender ideology**

Many scholars conduct studies regarding right-wing populist parties and gender ideology, revealing many right-wing populist parties in mobilizing anti-gender ideology campaigns, particularly in Eastern Europe with their slogan of 'the defense of the traditional family' (Žuk and Žuk, 2019). This slogan refers to the main purpose of preventing the influence of 'gender ideology' developed by the West and usually addresses the demand to liberalize the laws which advantage particular sexual minorities, such as LGBT communities and feminists.

To understand the aggressive stance toward gender ideology among right-wing populist parties in Eastern Europe, it is important to acknowledge that "gender ideology represents what is against Catholic teaching on the ontological difference and complementarity of the sexes" (Carnac, 2014; Kováts, 2017, p.179). This notion of gender ideology is in line with Žuk and Žuk's (2019) study of the anti-gender discourse of the Catholic Church and the nationalist right in Poland. The authors explain that the process of constructing Polish national identities is based on Catholic values, which consequently leads to a strong

anti-gender stance in the country. Unsurprisingly, Poland's right-wing populist and national-conservative governing party (i.e., PiS) commits to a strong adherence to Catholicism and explicitly asserts their position against gender ideology, such as a ban on abortion and adoption by same-sex couples. Similarly, Kováts' (2017) study of anti-gender movements in the European context also reveals the role of the Catholic Church in the production and mobilization of the anti-gender discourse and the role of the conservative and far-right parties in shaping the discourse and mobilizations (Kováts and Põim, 2015). This reiterates the role of the Church in the Eastern European region that influences different arrays of political forces. However, Kováts (2017), at the same time, states that three main factors: 1) the national circumstances 2) the strategy of the Roman Catholic Church and 3) the conservative backlash, should be taken into account when interpreting each national stance toward gender ideology. Firstly, the national circumstances emphasize mainly the various political landscapes and gender and LGBT policies in each country. Accordingly, Graff (2014) also develops the idea of a historical East-West divide for the national anti-gender movements. The East-West divide explains that Western European countries consist of strong women's rights and LGBT movements and strong democracies, which possibly facilitates the anti-gender movements to shift toward neoliberal attitudes. In contrast, Eastern European countries are considered to be lagging and have a rather weak historical basis for democracy. Consequently, anti-gender movements are still on the rise across the region. Secondly, the strategy of the Roman Catholic Church provides an understanding of the role of the Roman Catholic Church as an actor in shaping the discourse and in the mobilization as already mentioned. Lastly, the perspective of conservative backlash proposes that gender equality and LGBT rights are on the decline all over the developed world, resulting in 'an increase in rabid attacks against these sexual minorities' (Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2015).

Regarding different types of anti-gender forces, the comparison between anti-gender movements and far-right parties reveals that they share a similar approach in applying the sense of antagonism to the concept of gender ideology to create the division of 'Us' and 'Them'. This approach efficiently delegitimizes the opponents both in societal and political spheres as they are accused of not sharing the common national identity and political beliefs. However, it is worth mentioning that far-right parties do not always use anti-gender rhetoric and agendas in all countries and contexts (Kováts, 2017). Hence, parties' attitudes toward gender ideology must be examined, particularly on a case-by-case basis.

Another approach is raised by feminist scholars in categorizing right-wing populist parties as national and neoliberal populist parties. The former is known for their central ideologies of nationalism and xenophobia and usually propose radical policies to solve immigration and integration issues. The latter is formed mainly for economic liberal purposes with their

statement of defending ordinary people against the corrupt elites. De Lange and Mügge (2015) employ this approach to investigate ‘which views between the modern or modern-traditional views that right-wing populist parties adhere to’, according to the two types of populist parties in Belgium and the Netherlands. Although the analysis does not reveal the distinction between national and neoliberal populist parties in adopting particular views regarding gender-related issues, they state that gender issues are not a new subject in right-wing populist parties’ perception and have always changed over time.

Many scholars also conduct research on the key factors influencing different views on gender ideology among right-wing populist parties in West and East Europe. Doná’s (2021) study of Lega Nord’s ideological transformation, specifically regarding gender issues, reveals that right-wing populist party is more likely to adopt a liberal stance regarding gender issues, if the opposition in the country is less tolerant toward feminist discourse and policy. She thus concludes that the national context and history of each country play a major role in influencing the parties’ position toward gender ideology and their policy agendas. In line with de Lange and Mügge’s (2015) study, right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands ‘acted as defenders of liberal values such as gender equality’ as liberal values and gender equality are mainly disseminated in the dominant national discourse (Akkerman and Hagelund, 2007). They additionally emphasize that the diverse stances regarding gender ideology among right-wing populist parties in a Western context are the outcomes of ‘the country-specific genealogy and transformation of party ideology’ and of ‘contextual factors such as the 9/11attacks’.

However, Beyer (2021) points out that the process of parties identifying in-and outgroups of the parties should not be neglected as well. For instance, the Western right-wing populist parties define Muslim citizens and immigrants as ‘other’. Consequently, their narratives mainly aim to advance the anti-Islam campaign. They believe that Islamic values are incompatible with Western society due to their alleged intolerance toward sexual minorities (DeHanas and Shterin, 2018). In this way, the Eastern right-wing populist parties identify homosexuals as ‘other’, which is considered to be explicitly incompatible with their strong Christian values, which constitute the basis of national identity (Beyer, 2021). This can be seen in discourse or national law against feminist campaigns and explains why Eastern right-wing populist parties do not adopt positive attitudes toward gender ideology.

Overall, I concur that the above-mentioned factors - the Church’s influence on the national-state, national political background, particularly the strength the democratic institutions, which facilitates in the dissemination of liberal values in the national narratives, and context factors, which mainly refers to the narrative of Islamization as a national threat in this case - result in different stances toward gender ideology among right-wing populist

parties in Europe. Thus, the construction of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ is employed differently to produce and justify the parties’ narratives attacking national threats.

The next section specifically looks at the literature explaining the connection between the rise of right-wing populist parties in Eastern Europe and anti-gender politics, particularly the backlash against progressive gender norms. It yields insight into how anti-gender campaigns have recently become a trend across the region.

### **1.3 Anti-gender politics in the rise of right-wing populist parties in Eastern Europe**

This section firstly explores the literature explaining the ongoing phenomenon of anti-gender politics in Eastern Europe, where scholars have recently witnessed the attack on gender and sexuality rhetorically and legislatively (Beyer, 2021). It looks into the causes of these actions by right-wing forces, which started from the perception of the Vatican’s accusation of gender ideology as ‘ideological colonization’ by Western attempts, and how the parties successfully mobilize the issue in their agenda and detach from its religious origins (Bracke & Paternotte, 2016; Kováts, 2022). It then discusses how right-wing populist parties disseminate anti-gender discourse in Hungary and Poland, leading the wave of anti-European and anti-democratic development in those countries and turning them into prominent anti-gender regimes.

#### **1.3.1 Anti-gender politics in Eastern Europe**

After the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights in the UN rights systems at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which marked a significant turning point for the gender equality agenda at the global level, anti-gender campaigns were immediately introduced by Popes and intellectuals associated with the Vatican as a counter-strategy toward those progressive norms which they claimed to be imposed by the West (Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017; Kováts, 2022). The widespread ‘gender ideology’ or the ‘ideological colonization’ referred to by Pope Francis has developed into a global conspiracy. They claim that gender ideology can destroy human civilization (Bracke & Paternotte, 2016; Kováts, 2022). Consequently, various political actors, from anti-feminist and LGBT social movements to political parties, have employed and asserted the discourse in support of their agenda. One can contend that the social movements play a significant role in mobilizing anti-gender campaigns and are capable of bringing the challenge to the public’s attention. This assumption is seemingly valid in Western countries, but not in the case of Eastern Europe, where the movements have been traditionally weak. Instead, anti-gender politics grew strongly in Eastern Europe due to the role of right-wing populist ruling parties in promoting and reinforcing regressive gender norms, both rhetorically and legislatively (Beyer, 2021). For instance, the Hungarian governing party Fidesz terminated Gender Studies

programs in higher education in 2018. Poland's PiS, a Catholic Church-influenced government party imposed a near-total ban on abortion. Yet, there is still a debate regarding the nexus between right-wing populism and gender which some scholars argue that 'gender plays no central role in the context of right-wing populism' (Abi-Hassan, 2017). However, this cannot be applied to Eastern European right-wing populist parties because they are now the main drivers of anti-gender campaigns (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2018). For instance, in his opening speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC Texas 2022), Orbán (2022) addresses culture wars in the West led by liberals who attempt to impose liberal ideas through morally sensitive issues such as 'migration, gender, and the clash of civilization', to separate Western civilization from its Christian roots.<sup>2</sup> He considers gender ideology an integral part of the ongoing culture war in the country, as it mainly targets traditional families and children and accuses the progressives of challenging Judeo-Christian teachings. It demonstrates how gender issues widely emerge in a right-wing populist context. According to Kováts (2022), right-wing populist parties successfully disseminate anti-gender rhetoric in the national discourse by reframing 'gender ideology' as a threat 'to children, the nation, and human civilization', rather than labeling it as a danger to the religious sense. Following Krizsan and Roggeband's (2019) study of gendering democratic backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe, the authors define the struggle against gender and sexual orientation equality in Central and Eastern Europe as a cultural backlash, which constitutes another form of de-democratization. In particular, when the regime shifts toward illiberalism and authoritarianism, the nationalist governments perceive 'gender ideology and the promotion of 'gender mainstreaming policy' as foreign values imposed by outsiders (e.g., the European Union) which threaten national values, identity, and state sovereignty. They firmly assert traditional values through the combination of conservatism and nationalism to attack gender issues (Vida, 2019).

Another approach claims the success of right-wing populist parties in contributing to anti-gender politics as a result of the 'conservative backlash' referred to by Kováts (2017), or the global backlash against gender equality and sexual rights in particular (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2018). Accordingly, the Heinrich Böll Foundation states (2015, p. 7):

“The concept of 'backlash' refers to perceived setbacks and deteriorations in the relations between (and among) men and women. Its proponents assume that gender equality and LGBT rights are on the decline all over the developed world, or that there is at least a significant increase in rabid attacks against them”

This provides an opportunity for right-wing forces to advocate their opposition to progressive gender norms and become powerful actors, ultimately leading to the period of 'Global Right', referring to when the right is on the rise everywhere (Kováts 2017; Paternotte and Kuhar,

---

<sup>2</sup> Opening of CPAC Texas 2022 (2022.08.04)

2018). The method of externalization of threats is employed and works efficiently in scapegoating the EU and the West, and facilitating the self-victimization strategy for the promotion of anti-gender campaigns.

Interestingly, some scholars explain that the rise of right-wing populist parties and anti-gender politics, or the 'gender war' in Central and Eastern Europe is linked to the collapse of Communism (Szelewa, 2020). Notably, after the privatization during the transformation from a planned to a market economy, it divided the populace into two groups: the elites who benefited from these changes and the 'transformation losers', who are considered to lack entrepreneurial skills and the capability to adjust to new situations. Regarding the economic transition, it firstly affects gender relations, particularly women's roles, as they were inevitably forced to maintain the 'hegemonic gender roles' in a situation when their husbands were involuntarily unemployed and unexpectedly lost their sources of income, which led men to the crisis of masculinity (Fodor, 2006). The women thus strictly performed those responsibilities with an expectation that the capitalist future would grant them new freedom that they lost during the Communist regime. At the same time, the Catholic Church claimed itself to be the defender fighting against the Communist system and reinforced particular laws which were incompatible with their religious values, such as the ban on abortion. Considering Communism as a State Patriarchy, women perceived all the state policies, even ones supporting women's autonomy and the principle of gender equality, as a part of Communist propaganda (Gal and Kligman, 2000). However, it did not take too long for women to lose interest in the feminist ideas introduced by the West, they wanted to 'go back to normal' (Szelewa, 2020). The new women's maternity narrative was then highlighted through nationalist ideology, stating that women's first and foremost responsibility is to produce babies for the nation (Einhorn, 1993). The struggle against progressive feminist movements took place. Consequently, 'feminism' became a dirty word widely in the region (Szelewa, 2020).

However, the wave of anti-feminism and its nationalist sentiment steadily disappeared from the political sphere due to the states' willingness to join European integration. The countries must operate state policies meeting the fundamental requirements of the European Union, specifically the principle of gender equality and anti-discrimination legislation. As a result of the 2004 EU integration, many workers from the CEE region migrated to Western countries. The unemployment rate rapidly decreased. At the same time, the heated debate around nationalist identities and anti-feminist sentiments became silent in political and public spheres as well. Until the new political forces (i.e., right-wing populist parties) appeared on the scene, they represented the group of people who were forgotten during the economic transition and asserted their position to attack the established and corrupt political elites and to defend the pure national identity from external influences such as Western individualism

and liberal values (Korolczuk and Graff, 2018). Regarding gender-related issues, the parties promote the conservative gender roles, especially the role of women as mothers, and their childbearing responsibilities, coupled with the narratives of demographic crisis. Hence, the distinctive narrative of ‘dying nation’ is disseminated to encourage family-building and boost the birth rates (Jaskułowski, Majewski, and Surmiak, 2017; Mishtal, 2012; Wodak, 2015). In addition to exaggerating the fear of losing the nation, the parties identify their gendered enemies, primarily Westerners or the European Union. In particular, the EU enthusiastically promotes gender equality and women’s empowerment at global, regional, and national levels. The parties acknowledge the EU’s attempt to reconcile family and work life, which aims to facilitate women’s active engagement in the economy. They heavily criticize the EU’s proposal and accuse it of undermining traditional family roles as it encourages women to prioritize professional roles over their family lives. They also link the EU’s strategic goal of enhancing women’s employment participation to the Communist regimes, which also massively mobilized women’s paid employment. The European Union is subsequently regarded as a ‘totalitarian institution’ and has become the main opposition to this party family (Szelewa, 2020). The demonization of the EU frequently appears in parties’ anti-gender discourse and is also associated with other left-wing circles, who intrinsically constitute the right-wing forces’ enemies. Right-wing populist parties currently employ the conspiratory explanation in advancing their anti-gender campaigns, such as the attempt to create common enemies by utilizing gender as ‘symbolic glue’. It will be elaborated more in the following chapter.

### **1.3.2 Anti-gender Mobilizational Discourse of Right-wing Populist Parties in Hungary and Poland**

#### ***Hungary***

‘Gender ideology’ was officially introduced to the political agenda in Hungary for the first time in 2010 by the socialist government with the aim of amending the preschool education’s curriculum by asserting the fight against gender stereotypes and discrimination as well as gender inequality (Pető and Kováts, 2017). However, unsurprisingly, not long after the Orbán regime stepped into power, they removed the amendment from the curriculum. In 2012, Fidesz government amended the Fundamental Law of Hungary by including the protection of the fetus from the moment of conception with the reference to the right to life (Vida, 2019). A new Family Protection Act also reified the heteronormative conception of marriage in the same year (Vida, 2019). The government has consistently issued anti-gender regulations over the years, claiming that gender ideology is a threat to national values. Until 2018, two Master’s degree programs in Gender Studies at Eötvös Loránd University were banned, followed by the order to replace the gender studies program at the Central European

University with 'Economics of Family Policy and Public Policies for Human Development' (Vida, 2019). In addition to accusing the studies of being an ideological threat, the state also claimed that "they do not wish to spend public funds on education in this area" (Barát, 2020, p. 26).

Once Fidesz became a government, anti-gender discourse appeared in the public sphere as well. According to Sata (2021), Fidesz's anti-gender discourse is based on the construction of 'Us' and 'Them'. The discursive othering allows the party to define and conceptualize its enemy, and, at the same time, legitimize their political actions or agendas introduced to fight against 'Them' (Sata, 2021). In line with the study of Barát (2020), the author states that the most distinctive feature of the right-wing populist party's discourse is the social struggle between 'Us' and 'Them', which serve as 'two empty signifiers' embedded in the conflict which cannot be reconciled. They effectively trigger fears when mobilizing the discourse in a particular context. Sata (2021) reveals the patterns of anti-gender discourse in Hungary, focusing on Fidesz's discourse in the years between 2010-2014 and 2014-2019. It is found that discourse in the two periods shares a common feature, that is, the mobilization of discourse by means of existential crises. While Fidesz asserted the financial crisis in the former period, the latter was characterized by the European migrant crisis. However, the party recognized the 'demographic crisis' in both periods. Accordingly, during the financial crisis, coupled with the demographic decline, the party encouraged young Hungarians to build families through financial incentives for families. The role of women as wives and mothers is subsequently central to the party's vision. The social teachings of Christianity were frequently referred to in their discourse. The party adopts Christianity as the source of moral values to claim and legitimize their narrative in fighting against economic hardship and strengthening the role of the traditional family to tackle the demographic crisis.

Anti-gender discourse has developed densely from 2014 onwards (Pető and Kováts, 2017). Fidesz's enemies have shifted from economic figures (i.e., neoliberal international capital) to Muslim migrants and liberal political actors (Sata, 2021). Since the discourse focuses exclusively on the migration crisis, the argumentation of defending the nation is frequently used by the party. Islam and Muslims are portrayed as a threat to Hungarian and European culture and civilization. Consequently, Christianity is employed in different ways, compared to the anti-gender discourse from the first period, when it was initially utilized to justify the government's arguments for promoting traditional values. Christianity, thus, has been symbolized in contrast with Islam. In this sense, Fidesz views Christianity as a faith and an identity. While Christianity as a religion is opted to illustrate the incompatibility between the social teachings of Christianity and Islam, Christian identity is asserted as a foundation of European civilization, which is currently exposed to the Islamic invasion. This narrative is developed in parallel with the anti-European discourse (Sata, 2021). Following the EU's

Estrela report on sexual and reproductive health and rights and the Lunacek report on the EU Roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in 2014, the party has specifically attacked the European Union and its liberal ideology (Petö and Kováts, 2017). Similarly, Barát (2020) identifies three main ‘others’ in the anti-gender discourse in the Hungarian context, consisting of ‘Soros network’, ‘Brussels’, and the ‘migrants’. Accordingly, the party strengthens its family-centric stance, especially after the EU’s immigration policy in addressing the European demographic dilemma. Fidesz promotes the policy of ‘procreation’ over ‘immigration’ encouraging national reproduction instead of replacement migration (Sata, 2021). The discourse becomes more radical as they ignore the economic factors, which they used to perceive as a burden for people to have more children, and instead blame the decline of the population on women (Sata, 2021). In particular, women are only perceived as having a limited role in the nation’s biological reproduction. Fidesz creates the discourse by integrating the mobilization of fears and crises, right-wing populist ideological features, religion and masculine attitudes into advancing its anti-gender politics.

### ***Poland***

The anti-gender discourse and campaigns in Poland are characterized by two main factors: the Catholic Church and the Communist heritage (Gwiazda, 2021). Although gender relations during the Communist era were progressive considering its policies advocating women’s empowerment (e.g. obtaining education, participating in paid employment, and access to abortion), the Catholic Church and the new government instead perceived those regulations and practices as a hindrance to the new system that required to be eliminated immediately. Subsequently, in post-1989, they reinforced the abortion ban and asserted the traditional gender roles, particularly emphasizing women’s roles as wives and mothers, instead of the professional ones. PiS stepped into power in 2015. Positioned as a socially conservative party, PiS primarily promotes traditional family models and traditional gender roles in accordance with Catholic values (Gwiazda, 2021). Claiming to violate the ‘natural order of things’, the party also implemented fund withdrawal plans for in-vitro fertilization, initiatives combating domestic violence, and the restriction on emergency contraception (Korolczuk, 2016; Wierzcholska, 2018). It can be said that the Catholic Church is powerful in Polish politics. The Catholic Church is not merely a religious institution that teaches, rebukes, and leads moral values in society, it is an influential political figure who supports political parties and partially defines state policy as well (Gwiazda, 2021). Accordingly, PiS is highly influenced by the Church; they avoid implementing policies that may challenge the core tenets of Catholic social teachings. At the same time, the Catholic Church raises the issues of reproductive rights and domestic abuse (Gwiazda, 2021). These issues are subsequently at the

center of the government's attention. In line with the study of Korolczuk (2020), during the period between 2016–2018, the most politicized topics regarding gender-related issues were sex education, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the access to abortion, whereas, in 2019, it shifted to the concern about LGBT rights.

PiS' anti-gender discourse is based on the construction of in-and-out groups, like Fidesz and other right-wing populist parties (Korolczuk, 2020). In addition to identifying the enemies in the antagonistic sense as intrinsically embedded in populism, it allows the party to justify its discourse by accusing the opposition. According to Gwiazda (2021), 'true Poles' refer to people who support traditional Polish values and Law and Justice, whereas outgroups are defined as anti-PiS parties, communists, former Prime Minister Tusk, Russia, Germany, immigrants and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups. Similarly, Grudzinska (2021) explains how the feminist and LGBT groups are in the right position for the PiS to be blamed as enemies and threats due to the lack of substantive immigrant communities in Poland. As mentioned earlier, PiS strongly advocates the preservation of traditional family models and gender roles as they are associated with Catholic principles. Hence, the anti-European discourse appears through the portrayal of the EU as a threat and a foreign institution attempting to impose harmful gender ideology on Polish culture and civilization. Accusing the EU of violating other Member States' beliefs and encouraging the Islamization of Europe, the party refers to the narrative of 'Eastern European messianism' asserting the formation of Eastern European opposition fighting against the liberal modernization introduced by the European Union as it poses moral and cultural threats to Europe and Christianity (Žuk and Žuk, 2019).

PiS' position against gender ideology is embedded in its views on the term 'gender', which is based on biological sex. Hence, the programs, that violate their stance and advocate the gender view determined by the social construct, are prohibited, including state bans on sex education in schools, gender studies programs, the recognition of the legal status of transgender people and pride parades, instead introducing LGBT-free zones (Gwiazda, 2021). Regarding gender equality, the policy for reconciling women's roles at work and in family life is occasionally mentioned. However, the party preferably promotes women as 'mothers' as it serves Polish culture, in which hierarchies are embedded in family structure and the relationship between men and women, in accordance with Catholic social teachings (Grudzinska, 2021). Moreover, eliminating hierarchies is considered the center of liberal projects (Grudzinska, 2021). Although PiS portrays itself as a pro-woman party, they only implement policies that facilitate and encourage positive changes for women as mothers, such as the Family 500+ program, which offers family and child benefits. Lastly, PiS as a governing party, unfortunately, provides more chances for political and radical anti-gender

organizations (e.g., ultra-conservative organizations) to influence and intensify anti-gender politics in Poland (Korolczuk, 2020).

In summary, the mobilization against gender ideology by right-wing populist parties is not a new phenomenon and tends to gain salience over time. As gender ideology is directly associated with human rights and women's rights, it consistently receives considerable attention in academic literature and the political sphere, particularly in Western countries. However, due to the ongoing conservative backlash in the developed world, the positions toward gender ideology are formed differently, especially with the anti-gender forces gaining prominence in many countries, including right-wing populist parties as well. It is found that not every right-wing populist party is against gender ideology. Right-wing populist parties in Western Europe tend to take a more liberal approach toward the issues, whereas right-wing populist parties in Eastern Europe mobilize against gender ideology aggressively. A country with strong democratic institutions where liberal values and gender equality are primarily disseminated in mainstream public discourse results in right-wing populist parties that are more tolerant of feminist discourse and policy. This may explain the case of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe with their moderate position toward gender ideology. Central and Eastern Europe have more fragile democratic institutions and their culture is rooted in conservatism, which is derived from Christianity, including the influential role of the Church in politics. As a result, they form the strong opposition of right-wing populist parties to gender ideology across the region. Observing the studies of anti-gender politics in Eastern Europe and the anti-gender discourse in the case of Hungary and Poland, it is reasonable to expect that right-wing populist parties (i.e., Fidesz and PiS) frame the anti-gender discourse based on their core ideological features and particularly through the construction of 'Us' and 'Them'. However, the topics prioritized within each party depending on how they are politicized in a specific context. Most importantly, the adoption of anti-gender discourse serves them as an instrumental means to achieve their electoral goals rather than to defend their intrinsic ideology and agenda.

## **Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework**

The chapter discusses two main frameworks, that is; the right-wing populism framework and the conceptual framework of gender as symbolic glue. They serve as a basis of the research in order to grasp a better understanding of how right-wing populist parties frame the discourse on gender ideology. With the main goal to observe whether right-wing populist parties primarily frame the discourse on gender ideology through their ideological core features, the first part explains how populism is conceptualized in the literature. The special attention is given to the debate on populism as an ideology (i.e., ideational approach), rather than a political strategy or style since the shift toward populism of Fidesz and PiS has become an inherent ideology (Dobos and Wineroither, 2020; Lipiński, 2020). It then elaborates on the specific type of populism, particularly right-wing populism. It mainly sets out the other core ideological features of the parties (i.e., thick-centered ideologies) that have been found to be attached to populist ideology in this family party. The next part focuses on the conceptual framework of ‘gender as a symbolic glue’. A concept explains how right-wing populist parties deploy the misleading terms ‘gender ideology’ in mobilizing against the progressive actors, encompassing from gender enemy figures to (neo)liberal representatives. I aim to include the latte framework in order to enhance the understanding of how the term gender is instrumentalized by right-wing populist parties with the goal to undermine liberal democracy, especially Fidesz and PiS, who represent the most distinctive illiberal regime in the CEE region.

### **2.1 The Right-wing Populism Framework**

To understand the essence of Fidesz and PiS, it is important to define what kind of ‘populist’ party they are since the conceptualization of ‘populism’ in fact determines the following attributes of each party. In the last decade, the topic of ‘populism’ has gradually received more attention among academic debates due to the rise of right-wing populist forces across regions, especially in European politics where they have become one of the main features in the last fifteen years (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas, 2022). However, ‘populism’ is still a contested concept; many scholars have published their work of different approaches in conceptualizing it.

Interestingly, the study of populism in particular regions contributes to the characterization of the phenomenon differently. For instance, the analysis of populism in Latin America forms two main approaches, that is, Laclau’s theory of populism and the socioeconomic approach. The former proposed by the theorist Ernesto Laclau defines populism as a political articulation mobilizing social marginalized groups, later referred as emancipatory forces, challenging the elites with the aim to improve their status quo (Ballacci, 2017; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019) The latter instead focuses

on populism in the economic aspect, introduced by Jeffrey Sachs and Rüdiger Dornbusch. Sachs (1990) and Dornbusch and Edwards (1991) conceptualize populism as a type of expansionist economic policies implemented by an irresponsible populist government initially engaging with substantial public spending financed by foreign borrowing (Aslanidis, 2021). It later leads to periodic economic crises, in which a country experiences significant hyperinflation and requires harsh economic adjustment (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Another framework of populism referred to by many historians in the United States is called ‘the popular agency approach’. It defines populism as the democratic means of popular forces engaging and contributing to decision making in politics (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Yet, another more recent and popular approach among scholars in Latin America and non-western countries is the ‘strategic approach’. It explains populism as a political strategy adopted by charismatic leaders, who aspire to gain and retain power from the support of their followers through direct and unmediated connections (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Hawkins et al., 2019; Kenny, 2021). Accordingly, populism lasts only for a period of time considering the leaders’ lifetime. The replacement of the previous leader later takes place.

However, I contend that for this research, it is most useful to understand the concept of ‘populism’ according to the ideational approach, the most prominent way of conceptualizing populism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Hawkins et al., 2019). It defines populism as a thin-centered ideology, which attracts thick-centered ideology depending on how each party projects its role in the public sphere. Hence, populist parties’ ideology can be found at the different left-right political spectrum such as Fidesz and PiS as right-wing populist parties in this case. The next section then elaborates on the approach in more detail, and the crucial ideological features of right-wing populist parties. Understanding the core characteristics of them helps to build coding frames in the analysis, and to contribute to the data interpretation in the later process.

### **2.1.1 The Ideational Approach to Populism: Populism as Thin-centered Ideology**

As mentioned earlier, the research conceptualizes the term populism according to the ideational approach as it provides the suitable theoretical framework to build upon case studies, and most importantly, it yields the specific tenets of populist ideology to contribute to the process of coding frame construction and theme identification in discourse. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) introduce populism through the lens of ideational approach and perceive populism as a discourse, an ideology, or a worldview. More concretely, populism is defined as “a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite,” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the

people” (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 44). Accordingly, populist forces are able to construct ‘the people’ in a way that suits their demands and appeals to different groups of voters. The elites include an array of powerful people within political, economic, cultural and media sectors. Employing moral justification, populist actors claim to speak for the ‘pure people’ against ‘the corrupt elite’ (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Hisarlıoğlu, Yanık, Korkut and Civelekoğlu, 2022). The distinctive feature of populism as a thin-centered ideology is that it usually appears to attach to a variety of thick-centered ideologies (e.g., nationalism, neoliberalism, and socialism). Hence, the position of populist forces can be found on various political spectrums from the left to right, or even center.

However, the study of the ideational approach to populism conducted by Hawkins et al. (2019, p. 3) give more precise definition of populism as “a unique set of ideas, which comprise three mains parts: 1) a Manichean and moral cosmology; 2) the proclamation of ‘the people’ as a homogenous and virtuous community; and 3) the depiction of ‘the elite’ as a corrupt and self-serving entity”. The study provides the updated populism notion of the approach, whereas the previous work carried out by Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017, p. 40) only refers to the main attribute of populism including “some kind of appeal to “the people” and a denunciation of “the elite””. Although authors explicitly distinguish the definition of populism into a discourse developed by Ernesto Laclau, and an ideology introduced by Cas Mudde, which is in focus of the research, they still share the common features to the most extent. Firstly, elitism and pluralism are considered the opposite ideas to explain the phenomenon of populism. Secondly, the phenomenon of populism can be understood as a simpler set of ideas which necessarily appears in combination with other ideologies, depending on how to adopt to the particular ideological shapes as a result of relevant social grievance politicized by populist parties (Taggart, 2000; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Therefore, this generates different kinds of populism on every side of the political spectrum.

Although both versions conceptualize similar notions of populism, I still emphasize the points of adhering to the notions of populism as a thin-centered ideology. As it is the most useful when the research investigates populist parties’ tendency to attach the other worldviews. Correspondingly, it allows the study of subtypes of populism, which links populism to other ‘thick-centered’ or ‘full’ ideologies. This research subsequently aims to set out the specific tenet of right-wing populism. Another interesting feature that should be taken into account is that populism as an ideology always challenges the liberal democracy (Hawkins et al., 2019). I agree that it describes the case of Fidesz and PiS the best as they have strong illiberal characteristics (Dobos and Wineroither, 2020; Lipiński, 2020). Fidesz and PiS explicitly project the feature of illiberal appeal through parties’ programs and

rhetoric, and attack the judiciary system and other institutional checks and balances contributing to the erosion in the quality of democracy in EU member states.

### **2.1.2 Populist Typology: Right-wing Populism**

Although this part aims to explain the nature of right-wing populist parties, it is difficult to define clear-cut features of right-wing populist parties and classify them into a single political family, mainly due to their unique national characteristics, such as political system, history and culture (Scott, 2019; Greven, 2016). Yet, they share common elements. I then specify distinctive and common features of right-wing populist parties that are frequently referred to in academic research. It is worth noting that it focuses on the attributes of right-wing populist parties, particularly in Europe, as parties take different forms across regions.

Right-wing populist parties are sometimes called nationalist populist parties primarily due to their distinctive nationalistic and authoritarian traits. (de Lange and Mügge, 2015; Scott, 2019; Merelli, 2019). Accordingly, Eatwell and Goodwin (2018) distinguish nationalist populist parties into extreme right and radical right parties. While the former fully rejects democracy and encourages the ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ situation in the nation, the latter criticizes some aspects of liberal democracy, but not to overthrow it (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018). I agree that Fidesz and PiS represent populist radical right parties considering their illiberal features, and their shared ultimate goal of building illiberal states. In line with Mudde (2019, p. 206), he refers to Fidesz and PiS as populist radical right parties that entered into power in a liberal democracy and attempted to push their national politics in an illiberal direction by “undermining the independence of courts and the media, snubbing minority rights, and weakening the separation of powers”. Hence, the term ‘right-wing populist party’, ‘nationalist populist party’, and ‘(populist) radical right party’ are used interchangeably in the following. They are also characterized as authoritarian parties, in the sense of the adherence to a strictly ordered society. Mudde (2019) additionally explains that the parties consider that the law-and-order approach (i.e., to employ harsh enforcement and penalties) should be taken into account in most problem including gender matters such as sexual deviation. Moreover, they also share strongly Eurosceptic convictions. They are actively against the EU’s programs, particularly in the matters of national security, including all the range of territorial and cultural ones. According to Kende and Krekó (2019), it is a result of the fear of losing a nation, especially in the Central and Eastern European context, as they experienced the national identity crisis, and limited or no sovereignty during Communist era (Minkenberg, 2017). In addition to defending national identity, they often claim to protect the ‘European identity’, or specifically, in the sense of Western ‘Christian’ civilization (Pelinka, 2013). However, not every party includes religious belief in their ideology. Some may only instrumentalize it only to attack the enemy (e.g. Muslim migrants).

The term ‘nativism’ is introduced as a dominant feature of this family party by many scholars (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018; Mudde, 2019). It can be understood as a ‘new racism’, which shifts the focus from racial aspect to the cultural one by identifying the threat to “cultural distinctiveness of the national group, to national values, identity and way of life” (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018, p.61). Mudde (2019, p. 52) provides a clear definition of ‘nativism’ as “a combination between nationalism and xenophobia; it is an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (the nation) and that non-native (or “alien”) elements, whether persons or ideas, are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state”. The parties characterize ‘others’, mainly as Muslims, whose religious beliefs and attitudes are incompatible to Western lifestyle, consequently they cannot assimilate to Western societies. Within nativism, ‘Islamophobia’ plays a significant role in growing support for right-wing populist parties in Europe in the current wave (Mudde, 2019). Lastly, ‘conservatism’ is considered as an ideology contributing to right-wing populism when it is intertwined with populist ideology (Gwiazda, 2021). In right-wing populist context, conservatism is defined as the emphasis on preservation of values of customs, and traditional practices and society, as well as national identity (McCullough, 2010). Accordingly, Hloušek and Kopeček (2010) distinguish parties with conservative stance in East and Central Europe into conservative-liberal and national-conservative parties. The former share the common feature of embracing a more liberal approach towards social issues, as appeared in many parties in Western Europe. The latter, representing the case of Fidesz and PiS, emphasizes the national interests, the preservation of national identity both culturally and ethically, and the promotion of law and order policies. Although only a few studies include conservatism as a thick-centered ideology of right-wing populist parties (Gwiazda, 2021), I contend that this feature should be taken into account. According to Kováts (2017), the equality of human rights including gender equality and LGBT rights are declining, particularly in the developed world, in parallel with the growing conservative backlash. In line with the study of Celis and Childs (2018), they state that the ‘conservative moment’ has taken place in many parts of the world, consequently undermining women’s rights. Considering right-wing populist party’s significant role in this new conservative wave and its distinctive socially conservative (gendered) claims, the party proves to consist of ‘conservatism’ in its nature. And since the essence of this research concentrates on gender matters, through this lens, I agree that it encourages to extract relevant themes to the most extent.

## **2.2 Right-wing Populism and Gender: Gender as Symbolic Glue**

This section introduces a framework explaining the phenomenon of right-wing populist parties engaging in gender politics. The conceptual framework of ‘gender as symbolic glue’ is chosen to elucidate dynamics of right-wing populist parties targeting gender ideology as ‘a

modus operandi of the illiberal transformation’ (Kováts and Põim, 2015; Grzebalska, Kováts and Pető, 2017; Grzebalska and Pető, 2018). Its essence explains that the demonization of gender ideology by right-wing populist parties serves merely a surface. Instead, the term ‘gender’ allows them to condemn a number of progressive actors whom they view as a failure of democratic representation under one umbrella term (i.e. the social grievances of failed neoliberalism). I contend that this conceptual framework should be taken into account as the illiberal state transformation has become the new paradigm that Fidesz and PiS have promoted, alongside their intensified anti-gender programs, in the last decade (Buzogány and Varga, 2021).

The notion of ‘gender as symbolic glue’ functions as a strategy of illiberal populist forces using ‘gender talk’ to mobilize the supporters against (neo)liberal democracy (Kováts and Põim, 2015; Grzebalska, Kováts and Pető, 2017). One may contend that the aim of right-wing populist parties’ anti-gender ideology or anti-genderism discourse is to attack the progressive opposition, particularly ones involved with gender matters, which they believe to violate their conservative values. However, the term ‘gender’ has actually enabled them to create an array of enemies beyond the gender enemy figure, and instead signify the failure of democratic representatives, mainly to attack the liberal elites. This phenomenon challenges the democratic stability as it decreases the democratic satisfaction of the wide audience.

The metaphor of ‘gender as symbolic glue’ captures how right-wing forces exploit the term gender in a number of ways. Firstly, it concentrates on the term ‘gender’ itself. They perceive ‘gender’ as a harmful concept. At the same time, they use the term ‘gender’ to ‘glue’ contested issues which contribute to the progressive agenda together under one umbrella term (Grzebalska, Kováts and Pető, 2017). The opposition to gender ideology, therefore, has become a means to reject various aspects of the current socioeconomic status, particularly the rejection to the attachment of social and political elites, and the influence of transnational institutions on nation states, and global economic initiatives. The awareness of a ‘weak state’, due to increasing numbers of threats to social, cultural and political security, is emphasized as well. Secondly, the parties turn the false narrative of gender ideology into the main rhetorical tool within the concept of ‘common sense’; the consensus on what is normal and legitimate (Grzebalska, Kováts and Pető, 2017). Secondly, in addition to demonizing gender ideology and its relevant liberal worldviews, they offer alternative appealing ways such as the concepts of family, nation, religious values and individual rights, which are related to the claims of freedom of speech and freedom of choices, etc. Accordingly, in parallel to other-negative representation, they construct the self-positive representation by attaching to positive attributes and portraying themselves as a defender of cultural and moral values, national interest, identity and authority (Rydgen, 2005). Thirdly, the mobilization against gender politics has led to the cooperation of various actors building new alliances, such as different

Christian Churches, mainstream conservatives, far right parties, fundamentalist groups, etc (Grzebalska, Kováts and Pető, 2017).

Acknowledging how the parties utilize the term 'gender', anti-gender discourse can be viewed as an influential one, and a part of wise political mobilization strategy. The next part aims to provide more details on the roles of Fidesz and PiS engaging in anti-gender politics through the conceptual framework of gender as symbolic glue.

### **An Overview of Fidesz and PiS' Anti-gender Politics Through the Conceptual Framework of Gender as Symbolic Glue**

Fidesz is considered one of the main political actors in Hungarian anti-gender politics, considering its anti-gender discourse and agenda, and the implementation of legal reforms supporting the regressive gender norms (Kováts and Põim, 2015). Gender issues have polarized Hungarian political landscapes into 'liberal' and 'conservative' camps. Consequently, Fidesz, as a part of conservative camps, have demonized the term 'gender' to explicitly attack both domestic liberal forces, the elites, and progressive actors in transnational institutions (e.g. EU, Soros network) mainly through the narratives of national security. They perceive gender ideology as an imposed-threat from outside and a 'worldwide conspiracy' introduced by the liberal opposition to weaken national security (Kováts and Põim, 2015). Another issue surrounding gender topics in the party's concern is the demographic crisis, which is directly connected to the EU's immigration policy in tackling this dilemma. Criticizing the EU's program, the party, at the same time, promotes natural reproduction to increase the population growth with the financial incentives in family planning policy. Their anti-gender discourse usually refers to the politics of exclusion, and the claim of traditional rightist-Christian values in the justification for their position towards any gender-related issues.

In the case of PiS, they mainly mobilize against the topics surrounding the ratification of Istanbul Convention and the implementation of sex education in schools (Grzebalska, 2015). Pertaining to the former, interestingly, PiS portrays itself as a pro-women party opposing violence against women and vocalizing the situation of women, including the role of women in motherhood and the equal treatment of women. However, the party rejects the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention in combating violence against women. They condemn the essence of the convention that it recognizes the term gender through cultural aspects, rather than the biological facts, which violates the natural orders. PiS also views the latter issues as a threat and the sexualization of children. The education instead should be based on the social teachings of the Catholic Church. The other issues raised by PiS are similar to Fidesz such as the attention to demographic decline and the emphasis on traditional family values. They adopt nationalist and populist rhetoric to vocalize their position against the elites

and liberal ideology, mainly through the narrative of threats to national identity and the suppression of Polish culture.

In summary, according to the conceptual framework, gender denotes multiple roles which the parties employ to mobilize against (neo)liberalism. Apart from acknowledging parties' ideological characteristics which helps to understand the meanings of their stance toward gender ideology in the discourse, I believe that to acknowledge the parties' dynamics in utilizing the term gender in their discourse encourages the in-depth analysis of discourse to extract themes which may be overlooked in some cases. The framework perceives the phenomenon of right-wing populist parties instrumentalizing the term 'gender' for the purpose beyond the mobilization of the anti-gender movements, but in fact to strengthen its illiberal regime. Pertaining to this understanding, it helps to capture new or unanticipated information during the data analysis process. This, at the same time, removes the issue of excluded data that might arise as qualitative content analysis emphasizes the focus only on the selected aspects of the discourse, in order to deal with a lot of very rich material (Schreier, 2012). This aspect is elucidated more in the methodological framework section. It then enriches and contributes to the further development of coding frames. Moreover, acknowledging the complexity of the parties in generating anti-gender discourse, it helps to identify the multiplicity of meanings that may be inherent in a particular content, including enhancing the interpretation of those meanings in particular contexts.

### **Chapter 3. Methodological Framework**

This chapter provides the methodological justification for the research. It first looks at the case selection by initially providing a brief history of Fidesz and PiS in order to get clear views of parties' ideological transformation and other major changes that shape their current political positions. It then explains why these two parties were selected as a case study of right-wing populist parties with respect to their discourse on gender ideology. Examining the Fidesz and PiS' experience, I contend that both parties serve as suitable case studies for the research when compared to other right-wing populist parties or ruling right-wing populist governments in the region such as North Macedonia and to lesser extent Romania, where they promote the regressive gender norms rhetorically and legislatively as well (Beyer, 2021). In my view, to achieve the research objective, it is important to examine right-wing populist parties which are representative of the larger population of right-wing populist parties in the region, and Fidesz and PiS serve that purpose well. The chapter then discusses the choice of qualitative content analysis (QCA) over other methods, the selected strategy for building coding frame, which constitutes a heart of QCA, and including the use of MAXQDA software in supporting qualitative content analysis. It also looks at the choice of sources, i.e., EP plenary debates contributed by party members, PiS' party programs, and Orbán political speeches, and specifies an appropriate timeframe for data collection. The study of discourse delivered by both parties at domestic and European levels aims to provide a comprehensive in-depth analysis of their anti-gender discourse which is currently in attention across Europe. The last part of this chapter lists research limitations, mainly challenges posed by limitation of language knowledge, and, most importantly, the potential contributions in removing such barriers.

#### **3.1 Case Selection**

As stated prior, the research begins from the acknowledgement of the intensified anti-gender discourse articulated by right-wing populist parties in the Central and Eastern European region. However, I focus on the discourse of two parties, i.e. Fidesz and PiS as they primarily share common characteristics in the family of right-wing populist parties, similar trajectories in pursuing the discourse and campaigns attacking gender ideology, and most importantly they serve as one of the most active protagonists in the battle over gender ideology. Correspondingly, they successfully mobilize the regressive gender norms rhetorically and legislatively within the prerogatives of the governments in the CEE region (Kováts, 2020; Beyer, 2021).

### 3.1.1 A Brief History of Fidesz

Hungarian Civic alliance (Magyar Polgári Szövetség; Fidesz) is a right-wing populist and national-conservative party in Hungary, currently led by Viktor Orbán. It was initially founded in 1988 in the name of Alliance of Young Democrats (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége) as a liberal movement against the ruling Marxist–Leninist government, which supported democratic transformation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Fidesz was founded as a political party in 1988, and its first leader was Victor Orbán. It entered the National Assembly the first time following the 1990 parliamentary election. The political position of Fidesz has changed consistently and drastically throughout its history. After the 1994 parliamentary election, the party moved towards liberal-conservative stance, leading to a number of liberal members leaving the party and joining the Alliance of Free Democrats. Since then, Fidesz attempted to forge a connection with conservative parties, and successfully formed center-right government after the 1998 election. In the early 2000s, the party's ideology began to evolve radically as it adopted nationalism. However, after one parliamentary cycle, the party lost its governing position, and performed as opposition from 2002 to 2010. Regaining its popularity after Ferenc Gyurcsány's leaked Őszöd speech, Fidesz again won a supermajority in the 2010 election. Since coming back to power, the party has implemented national-conservative policies and shifted to the right. It retains a majority of seats after the 2014, 2019 and 2022 elections. Fidesz has fully pursued right-wing populist positions and embarked on anti-immigrant programs, particularly during the migration crisis, and is currently known as a right-wing populist party. Viktor Orbán has recently promoted the establishment of a Christian illiberal democracy, opposing Christian liberal democracy models that are commonplace in Western Europe (Lieggi, 2022).

In the European Parliament, Fidesz was initially a member of the Liberal International until 2000. It then joined the European People's Party, a center-right political bloc, and left the group in 2021. Fidesz currently serves with the Non-inscrits group in the European Parliament.

### 3.1.2 A Brief History of PiS

Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość; PiS) is a right-wing populist and national-conservative party in Poland. The current chairman is Jarosław Kaczyński.

The party was founded in 2001 by Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński after splitting from the Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS). The party won the parliament and presidential elections in 2005, and Lech Kaczyński became the President of Poland. It ranked second in the parliament and remained in opposition until 2015. The party won the presidency in the 2015 election, and gained a majority of seats in parliament. PiS also maintained their positions in the 2019 parliamentary and the 2020 presidential elections.

Regarding the party's ideology, it initially positioned itself as a centrist Christian democratic party. However, later Kaczyński started to promote the national-conservative and law and order agenda, coupled with the adoption of principles of economic interventionism. At the same time, the party developed a closer relation with the Catholic Church. During the 2010, PiS explicitly shifted to the right, including their more culturally conservative attitudes, and embraced right-wing populism. The party rose in popularity, particularly after implementing its policy of family assistance payments and child support. However, it has recently received wide criticism domestically and internationally for undermining the principles of checks. PiS is characterized as a party with strong illiberal and authoritarian characteristics (Kubát and Mejstřík, 2020; Piotrowski, 2020; Surowiec and Štětka, 2019).

It is currently a member of the European conservatives and Reformists Group, a center-right political group in the European Parliament.

### **3.1.3 The Choice of Fidesz and PiS**

By considering parties' characteristics of right-wing populism, a role as ruling government, and political battle over gender ideology, the choices are made purposefully. The research first takes into account the core features of populist parties identified by Kubát and Mejstřík (2020) in the study of populist parties in contemporary Europe. Fidesz and PiS initially emerged as non-populist parties and transformed to populist conservative parties due to outside forces in 1995 and 2005 respectively (Minkenberg, 2017; Kubát and Mejstřík, 2020). Accordingly, their shift toward populism is not mere political style or strategy, but it becomes their inherent ideology (Dobos and Wineroither, 2020; Lipiński, 2020). Their populist ideology contains right-wing characteristics, which are, anti-elitism, anti-liberalism, cultural conservatism, nationalism partially connected to Catholicism in the case of PiS. By focussing on their populist features within the frame of anti-gender mobilization (Kubát and Mejstřík, 2020), Fidesz and PiS can be defined as real actors who are nationally and transnationally against so-called 'gender ideology'.

The first explanation focuses on their strong exclusionary features based on their antagonism to the liberal progressive agenda. In line with their characteristics of anti-elitism, and anti-liberal attitude, Fidesz and PiS share a very similar position of protecting the nation or the 'people' from 'gender ideology', which is viewed as a national threat and a pressure from outsider elites. Fidesz's anti-elitist feature does not imply the attack against Hungarian elites, but in fact against always-changing groups of elites (Dobos and Wineroither, 2020). Accordingly, the current targeted elites are the international economic and cultural establishment such as the EU, NGOs and George Soros. Hence, the term 'natural order of things' is used to justify their attack on liberal forces or any progressive actors for the purpose of national protection from gender ideology (Dobos and Wineroither, 2020).

Secondly, due to a strong ethnic nationalism as a part of post-Communist identities and of the political system in Central and Eastern Europe, both parties show a strong nativist appeal. It frequently appears as nativist rhetoric. For instance, Fidesz delivers the ‘freedom fighter’ narrative in their anti-gender discourse as a fight for freedom of Hungary, implying the need for preserving ‘our tradition’ (Kováts and Põim, 2015, p. 69). Similarly, PiS emphasizes the cultural narrative and a concept of national conservative heartland (Kubát and Mejstřík, 2020). The legacies of Communist rule also invoke the parties to assert the narrative of reconstruction and protection of national identity. As a result of the national-building difficulties before and after the first World War, coupled with their history which was long suppressed by the Communist regimes, they hence refer to the nostalgia for the time when they triumphed over enemies and significantly contributed to ‘ethnic and territorial conception of national identity’ (Minkenberg, 2017, p.144). It is worth noting that in the case of PiS, a strong tie between the party and Catholicism is emphasized in order to preserve nationhood. PiS’ favoritism towards Ultra-Catholicism plays a significant role in intensifying the culture war against gender ideology (Fomina and Kucharczyk, 2016). As mentioned in chapter 1, the role of the Catholic Church serves as a key actor in mobilizing and shaping the anti-gender discourse of right-wing populist parties. Hence, the issues regarding gender ideology and gender matters are the central attention of both parties as they perceive them as a threat to their national identity as well. This proves that the populist features to some extent contribute to their attitude and position toward gender ideology.

In addition, special attention should be given to the situation of the battle over gender ideology at national level, particularly the counter-strategies of progressive actors in Hungary, and Poland. Apparently, the left parties in Hungary are considered to lag behind the right-wing government. Although gender equality programs are on some of the left parties’ agenda in Hungary, they do not challenge and confront the rightists’ anti-gender discourse and campaigns enough (Kováts and Põim, 2015). The civil society in Hungary, at the same time, is also weak. For instance, women’s organizations are divided into three umbrella organizations causing a big burden for them to form common counter-reactions (Petõ and Vasali, 2014). However, in the case of Poland, different progressive actors from academics to social movements and NGOs in Poland participate in counter-campaigns with various creative strategies such as providing concrete information about gender studies and policies to publics, putting pressure on state institutions against anti-gender campaigns, and initiating dialogue between the supporters and opponents of campaigns (Kováts and Põim, 2015). I see that progressive organizations and civil society partly shape the anti-gender discourse and campaigns in countries, hence this aspect should not be neglected. The weaker oppositions can lead to more opportunities for right-wing populist parties to strongly produce narratives, or even implement policies promoting their regressive gender norms.

Moreover, the action of Fidesz and PiS in the attempt to weaken civil society is also related to one of their distinctive right-wing populist characteristics, that is, illiberalism. To give a clearer explanation, PiS and Fidesz share the illiberal characteristics and goals of establishing the illiberal regimes in the region (Grzebalska and Pető, 2018). Becoming a ruling government with large majorities, Fidesz and PiS attempt to replace the previous progressives with the pro-government NGOs (Grzebalska and Pető, 2018). They significantly start funding the conservative and religious projects. For instance, in Hungary, the numbers of conservative women's organizations has significantly increased in the last decade, whereas the progressive organizations are left to rely on foreign donations, and gradually lose their influence to mobilize against any regressive policy (Pető, 2015). Likewise in Poland, "PiS also attempts to demonize and securitize civil society and human rights issues by elevating these problems as an existential threat to nation's well-being or the most vulnerable members – children – in danger" (Grzebalska and Pető, 2018, p. 3). In addition, the parties are witnessed to be able to turn their anti-gender discourse into state policies. In Hungary, Orbán signed a government decree of banning gender studies effectively at all universities in the country. In Poland, the Constitutional Court mainly consisting of judges appointed by PiS, has passed a near-total ban on abortion except in cases where the pregnant person's life is endangered. In addition, by focussing on the policy which is related to gender issues, Fidesz implements the idea of 'family mainstreaming' that emphasize 'family friendly politics' instead of pursuing gender mainstreaming program which they view as 'worldwide conspiracy' or 'liberal madness' (Kováts and Põim, 2015). The government also embarks on the policy rewarding 'parents of Hungarian children' with cash and tax treatment in order to overcome the challenge of demographic decrease. Despite the state's previous poor-oriented family policy, once PiS entered into power without coalition, they immediately pursued the cash incentive system inspired by the Hungarian family mainstreaming project (Kozma, 2021). In this aspect, despite the fact that PiS has followed Fidesz's roadmap to some extent, the role of Fidesz and PiS as ruling governments, and the current situation of civil society and progressive organizations has become gradually weaker facilitates parties to explicitly mainstream their rightist cultural position and ideas through discourse.

Overall, Fidesz and PiS share similar features and embrace distinctive characteristics of good examples of right-wing populist parties in the battle over gender ideology. Firstly, they share the similar trajectory in history as transformed right-wing populist parties which adopt the strong nationalism, nativism, conservatism, and successfully become governments ruling the countries. Following their victory, they embarked on a program of fundamental reform encouraging democratic backsliding in the countries, including the attempt to rebuild national right forces in order to weaken the civil society and progressive actors in the field of gender matters. While the public and media recently witnessed the parties' furious attacks on gender

and sexuality discourse and legislation, Fidesz and PiS gained high popularity in the midst of culture war against gender ideology. Finally, both parties correspond to the starting point of the research to the most extent as I initially aim to examine right-wing populist parties in the CEE region, which implement anti-gender discourse in the opposite direction to the ‘gender turn’ trend in Western countries. The study of Fidesz and PiS might serve as an indicator of a wider regional trend, or Eastern Europe at large, and contribute to the future scholarly research and debates in the fields of the rise of right-wing populism and gender politics in Europe.

### **3.2 The Choice of Qualitative Content Analysis**

The choice of qualitative content analysis (QCA) is based on a research question and research objectives. According to the research question ‘How do right-wing populist parties frame their discourse on gender ideology’, the study expects the answer of key themes or topics right-wing populist parties introduce and frame their discourse in order to achieve more public visibility. The results are then interpreted based on the theoretical framework of right-wing populism, mainly to understand whether the parties primarily frame their discourse on gender ideology through their ideological core features.

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278), qualitative content analysis is defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”. The main feature of this approach is describing the meaning of material by applying selected aspects to the categories of coding frame, which comprehensively covers all the meaning and interpretation of material (Schreier, 2012). With QCA focusing on the particular aspects, it helps identify the practical data and capture full meaning through adjusting the coding frame. Beyond merely quantifying the occurrence of certain words or phrases as in the nature of its quantitative counterpart (Luo, 2019), the analysis through QCA filters the rich qualitative data by selecting only the successive parts of researcher’s interest, and extract unique themes explaining the full meaning of particular phenomenon (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2016). Accordingly, I agree that QCA is a suitable method for the research, particularly in the case that the research question mainly specifies the angle from which the data is examined, i.e. discourse surrounding gender ideology.

Regarding this, it also clarifies the question why qualitative content analysis is chosen over discourse analysis. Discourse analysis explains the use of language in contributing to the construction of discourse, which is perceived to be a form of social practice (Fairclough, Mulderrig and Wodak, 2011). It focuses more on the analysis of language and the relationship between language and the process in conducting, receiving, and promoting the product of language, and the context (Schreier, 2012). To have a clearer picture, applying discourse

analysis to the research, it would emphasize the examination of the language ‘beyond the sentence’ and provide the understanding of how it functions in a social context (Tannen, n.d.). The analysis would answer the question ‘how do right-wing populist parties use the language to frame the debate and discourse on gender ideology?’ instead. In this sense, the QCA is considered to be superior to discourse analysis as it serves the research purpose better.

Due to various kinds of materials collected in the research, I have used the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) to support in analyzing the qualitative materials. MAXQDA software is chosen for this research as it is designed particularly for the qualitative research process and offers the package which allows researchers to create hierarchical frames that can go down many levels which better support QCA (Schreier, 2012). Using MAXQDA with qualitative content analysis, I build the coding frame in creating the categories and subcategories inductively based on the examination of data, i.e. data-driven strategy (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2016; Schreier, 2012). Data-driven strategy provides the investigation of the material in more depth when compared to concept-driven strategy. The concept-driven strategy helps create the coding frame upon the existing theory, but cannot capture new concepts or phenomena beyond the existing knowledge of theory. Hence, I initially identify relevant parts of the discourse on gender ideology for pertinent concepts, and structure them into categories and subcategories through grounded theory of right-wing populism (see table 1. and 2). I first capture the evaluative statements by focusing on their relevance to gender issues. The range of gender-related topics is elaborated more in the 3.3 Sources section. The gender-related statements are then investigated to identify whether they comprise the core features of right-wing populism (e.g. ‘nationalism’, ‘anti-elitism’, and ‘conservatism’), which I construct as main categories. However, the statement, which purely consists of gender-related issues and does not show distinctive relevance to ideological features, is classified into the main categories of particular issues (e.g., the Istanbul Convention, sexual and reproductive rights, and demography). These particular issues are later interpreted into the other core ideological features in the analysis part. I agree that employing this approach is helpful in the interpretation and analysis stage as it provides the answers to guiding questions (“What concepts or themes do right-wing populist parties adopt in contributing to their anti-gender discourse?” and “Is right-wing populist parties’ anti-gender discourse primarily framed through their ideological features?”) to contribute to the answer to the main research question.

<b>Code System</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Code System	139
Nationalism	20
Nationalism\Christianity	18
Nationalism\Pan-European identity	8
Anti-elitism	15
Anti-elitism\EU	4
Anti-elitism\EU\immigration policy	11
Anti-elitism\Soros networks	7
Anti-elitism\liberalism	7
Traditional family model	13
Traditional family model\Family-oriented policy	13
Traditional family model\Conservative view of marriage	1
Traditional family model\Children's status	6
Istanbul Convention	1
Sexual and reproductive rights	3
Demography	7
Violence against women	3
Violence against women\Accusation of Muslim	2

**Table 1.** Code system of the analysis of Fidesz's discourse

<b>Code System</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Code System	194
Anti-elitism	10
Anti-elitism\European Union	13

Anti-elitism\European political correctness	5
Anti-elitism\Istanbul Convention	12
Anti-elitism\Gender ideology	19
Nationalism	3
Nationalism\Pan-European identity	5
Nationalism\Christianity	11
Traditional family model	17
Traditional family model\traditional family	4
Traditional family model\family-oriented policy	11
Traditional family model\gender role	14
Traditional family model\gender role\Parenthood	8
Traditional family model\conservative view of marriage	2
Sexual and reproductive health rights	8
Sexual and reproductive health rights\LGBT rights	9
Sexual and reproductive health rights\Reproductive rights and abortion	18
Sex and gender education	9
Demography	7
Violence against women	5
Violence against women\Accusation of Muslim	4

**Table 2.** Code system of the analysis of PiS' discourse

### 3.3 Sources

The research objective is to analyze the key themes used by Fidesz and PiS to frame their discourse on gender ideology, hence the analysis is based on primary resources consisting of the party electoral programs and the EP parliamentary debates. The data is collected in the period between the year 2014 to 2019, which is marked to be the period when anti-gender

discourse appeared and developed densely in these two cases (Grzebalska, 2015; Kováts and Pető, 2017; Gwiazda, 2021). The range of topics of selected discourse aims to include five main areas; that is,

1. same-sex marriage and civil partnership and the others triggered issues related to LGBT rights such as joint same-sex adoption, the access to assisted reproductive technology, surrogacy, and the other legislation scheme for same-sex couples.
2. reproductive rights primarily referring to the concerns of abortion, contraception and reproductive technologies which violate their idea of ‘natural order of things’.
3. sex and gender education, particularly in school. It focuses on the debate against the implementation of gender perspectives in education, and the claim to protect the children from the distortion of the vision of sexuality and the psychosexual deviations.
4. gender notions and relations which mainly target gender violence, gender mainstreaming and gender studies. I additionally include the term ‘family mainstreaming’ in parallel to the term gender mainstreaming. Family mainstreaming is a popular term adopted by right-wing forces in calling for the consideration of family as a central subject in implementing the process and major activities in politics and administrations (GenderKompetenzZentrum, 2010). And debates on gender studies cover the topics of gender curriculum and department of gender studies at university.
5. gender conspiracy theory, particularly a characterization of gender ideology as a threat to democracy, or the claim to defend religious freedom by denouncing the force on Christians to embrace an ideology against their beliefs.

According to Paternotte and Kuhar (2018), these topics are regarded as what anti-gender campaigners usually adopt to mobilize the fight against their progressive oppositions. I agree that referring to these topics as criterion in selecting discourse provides the comprehensive data to analyze for the dissertation.

The first empirical research material is EP parliamentary debates on gender ideology contributed by Fidesz and PiS’ representatives for the 2014-2019 parliament term (the 8th legislature). Considering the EP plenaries as a stage where the speeches are ultimately targeted by media and national audiences, and gender ideology perceived by conservatives as ideological offensive concept proposed by elites and liberals at the European level (Brack, 2018), the plenary debate is considered a valuable source which allow to identify core consistencies and meanings of Fidesz and PiS’ performance in projecting their ideas to attack on gender ideology.

After observing plenary debates from the period mentioned above contributed by Fidesz’s and PiS’ representatives, a high proportion of debates is explicitly delivered by PiS’

representatives (50 debates), especially by Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Beata Gosiewska and Urszula Krupa who repeatedly insist their stance against gender ideology. Interestingly, Fidesz's representatives play their roles in contributing to the debate equally and the frequency of the participation in the debates regarding gender ideology (12 debates) is lesser than PiS' representatives. Fidesz's distinguished members delivering discourse on gender ideology include Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, Andrea Bocskor, and Ádám Kósa.

Another source is party programs, specifically the party programs of PiS in the year 2014 and 2019. They are chosen as reliable sources to explore the position of parties regarding gender matters, and whether the anti-gender discourse transforms over time. It must be noted that Fidesz has not published the official party program since the EP election in 2014. According to the Facebook post of Fidesz, Viktor Orbán stated that 'I am now going to disappoint you because our program can be summarized in a single word: we will "continue" or more modestly, "we would like to continue"' (Fidesz, 2014). This is regarded as Viktor Orbán's confidence of victory. The strategy and campaigns in the 2014 EP election is completely different to the 2009 EP election when the party published a very detailed party program (Karasz and Smale, 2014; Koller, 2017). However, since then the party has published only a list of their candidates. Hence, the research instead opts for investigating Orbán's political speeches, particularly discourse surrounding the prior-mentioned topics of gender matters. I view that the use of PiS' party programs in the analysis is comparable with the analysis of Orbán's political speeches because as a president of the party, his speeches then serve as a true ideology of the party as well. The research analyzes 14 Orbán's political speeches between 2014-2019 mainly retrieved from the website [miniszterelnok.hu](http://miniszterelnok.hu) where the speeches are collected and published up to date, and available in English.

### **3.4 Research Limitations and Potential Contributions**

A major limitation of this research is the use of all non-English resources, i.e. plenary debates and PiS' party programs. Given the number of data collected and the limited time, I decided to use Machine Translation (MT) in translating the data from Hungarian and Polish to English, instead of opting for the choice of human translation, which requires more time and costs. One can contend that an outcome of the manual translation yields a better grasp on nuances of language and culture in a particular area, compared to machine translation. However, in recent years, the Machine translation quality has been greatly improved thanks to the emergence of neural machine translation (NMT), which allows the machine to use their own logic to correct a word or phrase similar to humans (Wang et al., 2021; Wyant, n.d.). Accordingly, I conducted the test of using MT in translating the transcript of plenary debates with the supervisor, we agreed that it gives a translated content that is acceptable to be analyzed further. In addition, my knowledge of Hungarian and Polish politics helps in

understanding the context of each debate and party program when translating as well. However, EU plenary debate transcripts are partially translated by the use of MT as the channel already provides English subtitles in some videos of the debates.

In the aspect of analysis, the use of MT does not significantly affect the analysis process as well as the quality of results. As stated earlier, the nature of qualitative content analysis primarily requires the understanding of content's meanings to identify the patterns and themes. It then focuses on the correct translation of individual words which contribute to the meanings of the discourse which is the main part of the analysis. Pertaining to this, it then removes the issues that might arise from the use of MT in terms of grammatical expressions, which is more essential in the study of language and discourse analysis.

## **Chapter 4. The Analysis of Fidesz and PiS' Anti-gender Discourse**

### **4.1 Research Findings**

It can be said that the stigmatization of gender ideology has become the central element of political discourse in Hungary and Poland. Fidesz and PiS have subsequently introduced various discourses on gender matters. Anti-gender discourse is identified more intensely among PiS representatives' speeches in the European Parliament and party's programs, compared to the Fidesz case. Both parties, however, integrate their anti-gender rhetoric with other themes, such as Muslim immigrants or the demographic crisis. PiS directly attacks gender ideology and shows many concerns surrounding gender topics, particularly the accession to the Istanbul convention as it serves as EU's ideological enforcement and the interference with human nature. Furthermore, the social teachings of Catholic Church are frequently employed to demonize the opposition and their discourse (e.g., access to safe and legal abortion and LGBT rights) while also strengthening the party's position in promoting traditional family values, the traditional roles of men and women, and the irreplaceable role of motherhood. PiS' enemy perception is predominantly found at the international level, particularly transnational institutions such as EU elites, feminists, and left-wing parties in the European Parliament. According to the post-Communist legacy, they disseminate anti-elite discourse through collective narratives of national heartland and national identity, which frequently include a strong interrelationship with the religious themes. They argue that the liberal approach toward gender issues proposed by the opposition leads to the destruction of national identity and invokes various risks to national security.

Fidesz's distinct themes in anti-gender discourse are devoted to the politics of resentment. The party's opponents can be found at various levels, ranging from national opposition to transnational institutions such as the EU or the Soros network. The attack on gender issues is found more in Viktor Orbán's speeches, compared to the contributions of Fidesz's representatives in the European Parliament. Orbán emphasizes the party's role in engaging in family-friendly politics, including the promotion of family-building policies and natural reproduction, to tackle demographic decline. The party touches upon gender ideology sporadically. Instead, they combine the stigmatization of gender ideology with nationalist rhetoric, claiming to protect national, cultural, and religious values from 'outside pressure'. For example, they subsequently disseminate the narrative of the protection of Hungarian and European identities, and the narrative of the protection of children from progressive gender norms, which they believe distort children's gender identity and sexual orientation. Another

distinctive theme is the EU's immigration policy. Fidesz argues that the policy instead causes gender violence and undermines European values as Muslim migrants lack the ability to integrate into Western societies. However, the contribution of Fidesz's representatives in the European Parliament is quite moderate toward gender issues, such as the support of the EU's efforts to eliminate violence against women, gender-based violence, and gender inequality through the implementation of the Istanbul convention (Bocskor, 2016).<sup>3</sup> Despite this, other issues, such as the emphasis on the traditional family as a fundamental unit of society, the perception of Muslims as a threat to women, and the prioritization of family policy over immigration policy in resolving Europe's demographic dilemma, are portrayed in a similar manner to Orbán's speeches. However, whereas the nationalist narratives as an argument against liberal attitudes regarding gender issues can be found in Orbán's speeches, they are absent in the speeches of Fidesz's members of the European Parliament.

## **4.2 The Comparison between Fidesz and PiS**

As mentioned earlier, through the qualitative content analysis, various themes, including ones surrounding gender matters and irrelevant ones, which the parties employ to frame their anti-gender discourse have been identified. In addition to the previous findings overview, this section provides the analysis of the results. While the qualitative content analysis is descriptive in nature, I analyze and illustrate the results on the basis of the right-wing populism framework as already discussed in chapter 2. by comparing and identifying the similarities between the two cases. The analysis aims to answer the main research question along with the observation of whether those themes express the parties' core ideological components.

### **4.2.1 Populism and the Construction of Enemies**

It cannot be denied that the construction of enemies is one of the main elements of this party family, considering its perception of society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite' (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). In line with the feature, Fidesz and PiS have adopted the strategy of constructing fear by linking the term 'gender ideology' to threats and dangers, especially to national security, to legitimize their arguments in demonizing the opposition who support gender ideology. Wodak (2015) defines 'the construction of fears' in which populist parties

---

<sup>3</sup> EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women (2016.11.24)

tend to employ real or imagined fears that are related to danger or frightening scenarios to trigger ‘the Manichean idea of dualism - us and them, perpetrators and victims, and so forth’ (Stráth and Wodak, 2009; Angouri and Wodak 2014). Accordingly, they attach ‘good’ attributes to themselves, while ‘bad’ attributes are used to describe the opposition. The positive self- and negative other-presentation explicitly appear in two cases.

### ***Gender Ideology as the Contemporary Polarization of Societies to the Left and Right of Politics***

As mentioned earlier, the term ‘gender ideology’ and gender matters have been politicized by Fidesz and PiS densely during the years between 2014 and 2019. It is worth noting that both parties mainly perceive gender ideology as a liberal pressure which outsiders want to force into the country. Hence, the attack of progressive actors at a domestic level occurs less frequently and relevantly compared to how they discredit the opposition at an international political stage. The anti-elite feature is explicitly adopted to condemn ‘the elites’ for imposing the leftist gender ideology, particularly on countries where traditional identity and culture are rooted in Christianity.

Surprisingly, on the European level Fidesz does not demonstrate much discourse in attacking gender ideology. Although they recognize the issues (e.g., LGBT rights) that gender ideology promotes as a part of liberal agenda, the party rarely touches upon them. It can be said that anti-gender discourse is marginalized in the Fidesz case. They do not regard gender ideology and the issues surrounding gender terms in their central attention. Accordingly, they blame the elites, often referring to the European Union, for unnecessarily ‘giving much time, attention, energy, and money to alien things and debates like the marriage of homosexuals.’ (Orbán, 2015).<sup>4</sup> The strong adherence to traditional families is frequently utilized to vilify a specific group, such as sexual minorities. For instance, Orbán (2017) states that ‘the marriage and family is still a core values of people who believe in Christian freedom, whereas the counterparts who believe in liberal freedom tend to popularize seme-sex relationships’.<sup>5</sup> He also adds how Fidesz is negatively misperceived due to its strong conservative positions, which are obviously inconsistent with the expectations of mainstream politics and the media at his speech on the 61st anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight:

People who believe that Europe needs external borders that can be physically protected have been branded as closed-minded. Those who believe that immigration

---

<sup>4</sup> Opening of the International Demographic Forum (2015.11.05)

<sup>5</sup> Opening of the 2nd Budapest World Congress of Families (2017.05.25)

poses a threat to our culture have been branded as racists, and those who have spoken up for the protection of Christianity have been branded as exclusionists. Those who have stood up for the protection of families have been branded as homophobes (2017.10.23).<sup>6</sup>

He additionally contends that liberal ideology is embedded in current European political identity, which is difficult for conservatives:

In Europe the political and media mainstream is driven more by liberal ideology, which relativises values and which traditional families find so offensive (2017.05.25).<sup>7</sup>

Without the direct accusation of gender ideology, the construction of ‘the people’ (i.e., conservatives) and its antagonistic ‘others’ (e.g., liberals, feminists, homosexuals) is still explicit in Fidesz’s anti-gender discourse. Another relevant debate pertaining to gender issues is the demographic crisis. Fidesz enthusiastically participates in the debates as it provides them with the opportunity to attack the European Union and its immigration policy. The party subsequently employs the narrative of migrants as a threat to national security to condemn the European Union and alternatively presents itself as a defender of the nation by encouraging the natural reproduction of the population. They activate the xenophobic, conservative, and anti-multicultural discourse through the aforementioned argumentation.

George Soros and his network are also influential actors in Fidesz’s politics. The party claims that George Soros and his network currently infiltrate European decision-making. They weaken the Member States’ sovereignty with the Soros plan of creating a mixed population in Europe and impose the liberal ideology, which significantly undermines Christian culture. Orbán employs the conspiratory explanation in asserting what Soros plan does and how it reconceptualizes and changes the society which for a long time was ‘simple and clear’:

Although the Soros troops use somewhat more refined methods, they nonetheless want to tell us what to do, what to say, what to think – and even how we should see ourselves. (...) Today they want to force us into a world in which these natural and clear outlines have been erased. Such a world has no definite points of reference, it is unclear who is a man and who is a woman, what family is, and what it means to be Hungarian and Christian. They are creating a third gender, they are ridiculing faith, and they regard families as redundant, and nations as obsolete (2017.11.12).<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> The 61th anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight (2017.10.23)

<sup>7</sup> Opening of the 2nd Budapest World Congress of Families (2017.05.25)

<sup>8</sup> The 27th Congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union (2017.11.12)

He additionally compares the similarity of how Soros network operates with the activists of the Soviet Communist Party. Interestingly, the concept of regionalism is applied to the construction of self and enemy as well. Identifying Hungary with Central Europe, Fidesz perceives that Western Europe is morally inferior to them. While Central European countries successfully secure the Christian culture and share the common ultimate goal of building a future of families, work, and the reunification of the nation, Westerners with their liberal ideology are fighting in the culture war (Orbán, 2018).<sup>9</sup>

Although gender ideology is absent in Fidesz's discourse and in its use in the construction of the enemy, the party creates an array of enemies from the other issues, mainly from its adherence to traditional families. They also utilize gender issues in activating the other core ideological features and produce discourse on various topics that are sometimes irrelevant to gendered subjects. Accordingly, they belong to the right with conservative ideas, whereas the left consists of liberal and progressive figures (e.g., the elites in the European Union, Brussels, the Soros network, Westerners, feminists, globalists, and internationalists).

PiS distinctively attacks gender ideology as gender ideology is mentioned in both the 2014 and 2019 PiS party programs. They perceive gender ideology as an ideological offensive, which serves the leftist worldview, particularly imposed by progressive actors or 'outsiders' (e.g., the European Union, the elites in Parliament, Westerners, the extreme leftists, radical feminists, and sexual minorities). According to PiS party programs, gender ideology is perceived to be a very harmful idea disseminated by external forces and significantly intervening social structures, such as family and marriage institutions:

The spread of gender ideology is also dangerous for the family and parenthood in Poland. Its dissemination is artificial, mainly conditioned by the streams of financial resources, largely external. Nevertheless, its impact is growing, especially among young people, and contributes to the spread of attitudes unfavorable to starting a family and having children. It is important to put up barriers to the spread of gender ideology. More important, however, are actions to strengthen the family, defend parenthood, the special role of the mother and respect for motherhood, which should be treated not as a burden, but as a distinction and privilege (PiS party program, 2014, p.14).

The party disagrees with the approach that the opposition propagates the gender term based on socio-cultural understanding and attempts to break gender stereotypes (Wiśniewska,

---

<sup>9</sup> The inauguration of the renovated House of Traditions (2018.10.04)

2015).<sup>10</sup> This ‘worldview madness’ is manipulated by the leftists to fight against traditional values, which consequently discriminates against conservatives. For example, in left-wing circles, traditional families are portrayed as non-European and culturally backward forces (Wiśniewska, 2016).<sup>11</sup> PiS frequently accuses the EU of violating the principle of subsidiarity by imposing an ‘alien ideology’ on member states and interfering in areas of law that are solely the responsibility of the Member States.

The condemnation of gender ideology is also linked to progressive practices; that is, the promotion of sexual reproductive health rights, specifically legal abortion, LGBT rights, sexual education in school, and the ratification of the Istanbul convention in tackling violence against women. The party asserts that a human life begins at conception, in support of the right to life. Accordingly, abortion is considered to be a ‘murder’ and is not a fundamental right of women, as the leftists claim (Gosiewska, 2015).<sup>12</sup> LGBT rights are elaborated on various kinds of issues. They oppose same-sex marriage and LGBT parenthood by arguing it to be a violation of ‘natural order of things’ and a discrimination against heterosexuals as the actions in favor of LGBT people are always prioritized in the European parliament (Piotrowski, 2019).<sup>13</sup> A huge criticism is given to the proposals in the European parliament which promote the implementation of gender perspectives on the curriculum in schools as well. The party calls this agenda ‘the sexualization of children’ and potentially leads to the distortion of sexual orientation and sexual deviation (Wiśniewska, 2016).<sup>14</sup> Instead, education should be based on Christian principles, allowing children to experience genuine love, which is morally superior to sexually demoralized education (Krupa, 2017).<sup>15</sup>

The ratification of the Istanbul Convention is one of the topics to which the party often refers to discredit the progressive actors. Positioning itself as a pro-woman party, the party recognizes the widespread violence and mistreatment against women and expresses its willingness to end the issue. However, PiS does not agree on the access to the Istanbul Convention by arguing that it cannot combat violence against women. The convention instead introduces the new term gender, which distorts the view of reality and erodes traditional gender roles. PiS emphasizes that the sources of violence against women are embedded in other social issues (e.g. alcoholism), rather than ideological differences in

---

<sup>10</sup> Progress on equality between women and men in the EU in 2013 (debate) (2015.03.09)

<sup>11</sup> New Strategy for gender equality and women's rights post-2015 (debate) (2016.02.02)

<sup>12</sup> Progress on equality between women and men in the EU in 2013 (2015.03.10)

<sup>13</sup> The future of the LGBTI List of Actions (2014-2019) (2019.02.14)

<sup>14</sup> New Strategy for gender equality and women's rights post-2015 (debate) (2016.02.02)

<sup>15</sup> Implementation of the directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography (2017.12.14)

family, tradition, and religion, as the Istanbul Convention points out (Wiśniewska, 2015).<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, the EU's ideological shifts toward gender mainstreaming are inefficient to address the concern and cause more problems for Member States where they share different values, particularly the conservative ones. Pertaining to this, the party states its strong stance in rejecting political correctness, particularly European correctness, which requires 'a full acceptance of gender ideology and other cultural and moral changes' (PiS party program, 2014, p.28). The party accordingly asserts that it endangers fundamental human rights (e.g., freedom of expression and opinion) and the national sovereignty of Member States, especially when the EU imposes a set of beliefs through its institutional measures. Adopting identity politics, PiS insists on defending Polish identity and values against harmful foreign influences which aim to replace the culture and civilization rooted in Christianity.

#### **4.2.2 Nativism and The Survival of Nation and Civilization**

Following the definition of nativism introduced by Mudde (2019), Fidesz and PiS illustrate their strong position as nationalist and xenophobic parties through anti-gender discourse. This theme covers three main topics: 1) the nation 2) identity 3) immigration, which are utilized to mobilize against gender ideology and other gender-related issues. However, it is worth noting that on the subject of 'immigration', the parties exploit gender issues by portraying themselves as defenders of women's rights. Addressing the problem of violence against women and gender inequality, which they claim to be found in Muslim society, coupled with the idea that social teachings of Christianity and Islam cannot be reconciled, the parties activate the fight against Islamisation narrative. This position is intrinsically embedded in the right-wing populist party family. Through the lens of nativism with nationalism as its ideological background, Fidesz and PiS form two main frames in their anti-gender discourse: 1) national survival and a way to eternity and 2) the battle against Islamization.

##### ***The National Survival and a Way to Eternity***

As mentioned earlier, following the politics of fear, Fidesz and PiS perceive gender ideology as a threat to national core values and identity and occasionally state sovereignty. The parties subsequently assert nationalist arguments, particularly the emphasis on the countries' Christian faith and national identity as a foundation of the nation, to defend the nation from 'the loss of the nation' caused by gender ideology promoted by liberal actors. In addition, the promotion of the traditional family model is emphasized in the discourse, stating that the

---

<sup>16</sup> Progress on equality between women and men in the EU in 2013 (debate) (2015.03.09)

family serves as the foundation stone of society and significantly contributes to national development. They then touch upon the ‘demographic crisis’ which occurs across the CEE region. The parties repeatedly produce the family-centric rhetoric by portraying the roles of traditional family models in addressing the issues and offering the best solution through natural reproduction over the approach of ‘replacement migration’ introduced by the European Union and the leftists.

### ***(1) Christianity and Pan-European Identity***

Fidesz and PiS share similar patterns in conducting nationalist discourse in order to discredit gender ideology. Pointing out the incompatibility of gender ideology with national values, they illustrate the argumentation of the defense of the national faith community, namely, Christianity. PiS adopts the social teachings of Christianity in explaining why gender ideology and liberal attitudes towards gender-related issues are harmful to national security. In the European parliament, many PiS representatives assert Christian principles to attack various subjects and agendas proposed by the European Union and leftist parties. The party displays its position strongly against the adoption of the Istanbul Convention in solving gender equality issues or contributing to positive changes in women’s rights. Pointing out the problems such as gender inequality and violence against women, which cannot be solved through ideological shifts as proposed in the Istanbul Convention, the party instead accuses it of being a part of the leftist and feminist agenda in enforcing their ideology on other nations’ beliefs, particularly in Poland, where Christianity is rooted in national building and civilization. As Jadwiga Wiśniewska, a member of the European Parliament (MEP) for Poland’s PiS, denounces the Istanbul convention and the EU’s decision in supporting it in the plenary debate on EU accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence:

Any violence against a woman is a pathology that must be fought against. However, let us not pretend that the Istanbul Convention is a magic wand that will set us free from this problem. The Istanbul Convention, in its essence, is unfortunately an ideological crowbar which, under the guise of supporting victims of violence, makes social relations a victim of gender ideology and radical feminism (2017.09.11).<sup>17</sup>

Accordingly, PiS staunchly criticizes the European Union for promoting and advancing other liberal agendas toward gender-related issues, such as the EU’s support in establishing the fund for financing access to legal abortion, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender mainstreaming programs, etc. For example, Urszula Krupa, a member of the

---

<sup>17</sup> EU accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (debate) (2017.09.11)

European Parliament (MEP) for Poland's PiS, describes the pressure of Christians in Europe who are forced to embrace liberal ideas that contradict their faith in the plenary debate:

However, also as Christians living in the European Union, we are forced to defend ourselves, especially due to regulations and documents issued by the United Nations and the European Parliament, promoting the so-called sexual and reproductive health with forcing child sexual education, legalizing abortion, contraception and accepting same-sex relationships, which for Catholics are unacceptable as contrary to nature and God (2019.03.11).<sup>18</sup>

Poland in the European sense introduced by PiS cannot be related to Europe in the view of the European Union, but to Europe with the adoption of Christianity establishing 'human rights, family rights, the common good and democracy' (Ujazdowski, 2017).<sup>19</sup> It implies the party's strong commitment to Christianity and, at the same time, its self-identification with the Western world. They subsequently identify the real 'Polish tradition' through the linkage between the political identity of the nation and Europeanness with strong appeal to Christian values, as it is written in the 2019 PiS party program that 'Poles are still European in the Christian sense' (PiS party program, 2019, p.19).

The argumentation for the defense of Christianity in anti-gender discourse conducted by Fidesz takes a different approach to the PiS. Unlike PiS, Fidesz does not adopt the argumentation of Christianity to justify its demonization of gender ideology. Moreover, whereas PiS associates the defense of Christianity with national identity, Fidesz disseminates the discourse of Christianity with the narrative of the fight against liberal freedom embedded in various progressive political actors. Viktor Orbán, once addressing himself as a 'Hungarian Christian man' at his speech on the the 12th Congress of the Federation of Christian Intellectuals (KÉSZ), refers to the need for the country to achieve the goals of 'Christian freedom' consisting of:

'self-reliance and work; the ability to create and sustain a livelihood; learning; a healthy lifestyle; the payment of taxes; starting a family and raising children; the ability to orient oneself in the affairs and history of the nation; and participating in the nation's self-reflection' (2019.09.14).<sup>20</sup>

According to the speech, 'starting a family and raising children' are included in the goals corresponding to the party's family-centric position. Apart from encouraging society to achieve the goals of Christian freedom, Fidesz develops its own concept of family defense based on Christian politics. Regarding this, political parties are obliged to defend 'a foundation for life which originated from Christianity' in modern society, and the family

---

<sup>18</sup> One-minute speeches on matters of political importance (2019.03.11)

<sup>19</sup> The refoundation of a Europe based on values, anchored in effective democratic institutions and promoting a prosperous economy in a fair and cohesive society (topical debate) (2017.06.14)

<sup>20</sup> The 12th Congress of the Federation of Christian Intellectuals (KÉSZ) (2019.09.14)

constitutes a foundation for life as well as a nation and faith community (Orbán, 2017).<sup>21</sup> The party implies that the role of defending traditional family values is as important as the defense of the nation and Christianity, and it should be a mission for every political party in the country.

Asserting ‘Christian freedom’, Fidesz also introduces its counterpart, namely ‘liberal freedom’. While Christian freedom is understood in the concept of an organized community with the members bound collectively with shared guidance, liberal freedom is represented as ‘an aggregation of competing individuals who are held together only by the market, economic self-interest, and laws’ (Orbán, 2019).<sup>22</sup> Orbán then specifies the attributes of ‘Christian freedom’ versus ‘liberal freedom’ in his speech at the 28th congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union:

...And we can also call this second political transformation a Christian transformation, because, instead of liberal freedom, we configured it in the spirit of Christian freedom. In politics Christian freedom is not something abstract. It is very specific, understandable and tangible: patriots instead of citizens of the world; love of country instead of internationalism; marriage and family instead of popularising same-sex relationships; protecting our children instead of drug liberalisation; Hungarian children instead of immigrants; Christian culture instead of a multicultural confusion; order and security instead of violence and terrorism; unification of the nation instead of the 5 December (2004) betrayal of the nation. This is Christian freedom. (2019.09.29).<sup>23</sup>

Interestingly, the party includes various kinds of practices in the concept of ‘Christian freedom’ beyond its theological and dogmatic sense. At the same time, it reveals the attributes of the opposition, which the party perceives to be ‘dangerous and not desirable’. Fidesz strongly adopts the politics of exclusion and legitimizes them through the belief in Christianity. It is also found that Fidesz utilizes the Christianity with the concept of regionalism to activate another antagonism between Central and Western Europe. Orbán initially identifies the establishment of a Christian democratic state, that is; ‘a Central European and Hungarian Christian democratic state’, including Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians, and Hungarians (Orbán, 2019).<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the European left, Western countries, and transnational institutions are targeted as ideological imposers (i.e., liberalism and gender ideology), which is perceived as an ideological suicide for Central Europeans. They are also condemned for introducing another enemy into the region, namely Muslim immigrants. Fidesz views that Muslim principles are incompatible with the fundamentals of

<sup>21</sup> The 11th national congress of the Alliance of Christian Intellectuals (2017.09.16)

<sup>22</sup> The 12th Congress of the Federation of Christian Intellectuals (KÉSZ) (2019.09.14)

<sup>23</sup> The 28th Congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union (2019.09.29)

<sup>24</sup> The 28th Congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union (2019.09.29)

Christianity, coupled with Islamophobia, which increases their bias in conducting the vilification of Muslim people in the discourse. Correspondingly, Fidesz sporadically identifies Hungarian identity with European roots, or to a lesser extent, compared to PiS. It preferably refers to the shared roots culturally and historically with countries in the Central European region, while recognizing Hungary as having European values, mainly with the ideal Europe that existed in the days before multiculturalism.

## ***(2) Traditional Family Model***

Fidesz and PiS have shown a strong family-oriented position in their discourse. Accordingly, the common values and subjects regarding traditional family models are found among them. They share a common view of the family as the most fundamental unit of society. Fidesz's family-centric rhetoric is formed around the topics: the traditional family's role, family-centered policy, the conservative view of marriage, the distinctive population decline in Europe, and the defense of children as the future builders of the nation. The subjects in PiS' discourse evolve similarly, but it additionally emphasizes the issues of gender roles, particularly parenthood. The themes found in this part of the analysis are, therefore, a combination of the narrative of national survival (e.g., demographic crisis) and the narrative of the eternity of a nation (e.g., the role of the traditional families and children as the nation's future).

Fidesz's discourse regarding traditional family values is derived from its strong conservative position. Apart from perceiving family as a fundamental unit of society, they regard the family as 'a center of Hungarian government's vision of Hungarian future' (Orbán, 2017).<sup>25</sup> The party also asserts the family's role in 'preserving cultural identity, traditions, morals and the values of society' (Bocskor, 2016).<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, Fidesz's discourse predominantly revolves around 'family mainstreaming' agenda in the battle against its counterpart 'gender mainstreaming' introduced by the European Union. Unlike PiS, they do not employ the family discourse in attacking or discrediting 'gender ideology' explicitly. The discourse is framed with the positive attributes of the party itself and its pro-family stance, and the relations between family and nation. The former is performed when the party praises its success in achieving many of its family-oriented policies, and the goal of turning Hungary into a 'family-friendly' Hungary. They narrate their devotion to strengthening the family institution and refer to their experience as a government in pursuing the family-centered policy. For instance, Andor Deli, a member of the European Parliament (MEP) for Hungary's Fidesz, admires Fidesz's strategy in encouraging the family-building benefit plans to tackle the demographic crisis in the plenary debate:

<sup>25</sup> Opening of the 2nd Budapest World Congress of Families (2017.05.25)

<sup>26</sup> The role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values (2016.01.19)

...I believe that it is completely wrong to think that European regions that are lagging behind should catch up with migration measures. On this issue, immigration policy cannot be placed before active family policy. Rather, the EU should look for answers to how to revitalize the traditional family model and how to promote family-building and family support measures at EU level. I would cite Hungary as a positive example, where these measures have been an integral part of government policy for some time. (2017.11.13).<sup>27</sup>

Or, In his opening speech at the 2nd Budapest World Congress of Families, Orbán attempts to be a government model supporting family policy and making positive changes beyond the nation but the CEE region:

The Hungarian government, the Government of the Christian Democrats and Fidesz, has therefore decided that 2018 will be the Year of Families. Our new action plan – which is so fresh that the ink is still not dry on it, as we adopted it at yesterday’s Cabinet meeting – is not the first of its kind, nor the last. I sincerely hope that it will have an impact not only on Hungary, but, as a good example, also on the entire region (2017.05.25).<sup>28</sup>

The discourse of family and nation inherently derives from the party’s conservative ideology but is also backed by the issues of demographic crisis and aging society in the country. The issue is presented with the construction of fears, especially the fear of losing the nation. Orbán (2018) states that the only way to solve this problem is to encourage natural reproduction in the country, or ‘unless we strengthen Hungarian families unless more children are born, sooner or later we will disappear – and so will the Hungarian people’.<sup>29</sup> Fidesz subsequently encourages Hungarian people to build big families with many children. In parallel with this, they condemn the European Union for proposing an immigration policy to tackle the demographic dilemma. It is frequently found that while the party claims that having children is the way to serve and strengthen the nation, the EU’s immigration policy is used to exaggerate the fear of threat to national security or the fear of losing Europe to migrants. At the same time, the narrative of ‘children as the future builders of the nation’ is heavily disseminated. The party states their ultimate goal is ‘to have as many children in Hungary as possible; because if there are children, there is a future’ (Orbán, 2017).<sup>30</sup> According to Fidesz’s view, children constitute a positive force in strengthening the family, nation, country, and civilization (Orbán, 2015).<sup>31</sup> Most importantly, they will secure the future of the nation and become the main actors in ‘renewing the communities’ and ‘carrying on the

<sup>27</sup> Deployment of cohesion policy instruments by regions to address demographic change (debate) (2017.11.13)

<sup>28</sup> Opening of the 2nd Budapest World Congress of Families (2017.05.25)

<sup>29</sup> Opening the fall parliamentary (2018.09.17)

<sup>30</sup> Opening of the 2nd Budapest World Congress of Families (2017.05.25)

<sup>31</sup> Opening of the International Demographic Forum (2015.11.05)

heritage' (Orbán, 2015).<sup>32</sup> Hence, having children is a gift to the nation. Luckily, Hungarians and Central Europeans share the common value of having children. Beyond Hungary, Fidesz stresses the need for cooperation from every nation in Europe in solving demographic issues by restoring natural reproduction instead of replacing them with immigrants because 'we want a Hungarian Hungary and a European Europe' (Orbán, 2017).<sup>33</sup>

PiS has a clear position in adhering to the traditional family model. It emphasizes the true definition of family as a 'permanent relationship between a woman and a man', subsequently, 'children are born in the family' to serve the purpose of continuity of humankind (PiS party program, 2014, p.8). The argumentation appearing in PiS' discourse is primarily based on the concept of 'natural order of things'. They usually point out the natural differences between men and women. Hence, the natural identity of the family and the gender vision of society are supposedly based on genetic facts (Wiśniewska, 2018).<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, 'marriage' is defined clearly as 'a union of a woman and a man' with reference to the Polish constitution (Gosiewska, 2015; Wiśniewska, 2015).<sup>35</sup> The term 'gender', centered on the socio-cultural views promoted by the left, is then considered to dangerously undermine the natural identity of a family. Moreover, another distinguished subject popularized by the party is 'gender stereotypes'. PiS also promotes gender stereotypes based on the equal position of men and women in social life. Regarding this, they emphasize the important role of parenthood, or more specifically, motherhood, which is partially related to women's rights. The position in promoting parenthood is framed by PiS' priority of the proper environment for raising children in the family. To strengthen the family institution, children deserve the love and care of their father and mother as long as possible. Considering the burden of professional roles, the party repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the government investing in pro-family policies, particularly policy supporting family allowances and extending parental leave to ensure the child's well-being. For PiS, motherhood constitutes a privileged position and is irreplaceable. For instance, Urszula Krupa, a member of the European Parliament (MEP) for Poland's PiS, primarily encourages combining the professional and family roles for women. However, later she emphasizes the role of women as mothers by asserting that no one's love is comparable to the love of a mother:

...we should pay attention to the psychophysical differences between men and women and legally help women reconcile their vocation of wife and mother with professional work or scientific ambitions, thanks to counting the period of maternity and parental

---

<sup>32</sup> Opening of the International Demographic Forum (2015.11.05)

<sup>33</sup> The 11th national congress of the Alliance of Christian Intellectuals (2017.09.16)

<sup>34</sup> The fight against violence against women and girls and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by EU Member States (debate) (2018.03.12)

<sup>35</sup> Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world 2013 and the EU policy on the matter (debate) (2015.03.11)

<sup>36</sup> Situation of fundamental rights in the EU (2013-2014) (2015.09.08)

leave to working time and paying childcare equivalents, which would guarantee a similar pension amount for women and men, instead of sending women to work in favor of paternity leave, because even the most committed father or a well-paid nanny, nursery or kindergarten will not replace a child loving mother... (2017.03.13).<sup>37</sup>

Another example is from the 2019 PiS party program:

...we want to create a friendly working environment for parents, regardless of gender. However, it is women who more often take responsibility for family life (p.64).

This implies that PiS still holds a very strong view of gender stereotypes, although they currently attempt to portray themselves as a pro-woman party. Another example demonstrates that the party still preferably perceives the role of women as wives or mothers rather than pursuing a career as promoted in modern times. Urszula Krupa, the same member of the European Parliament (MEP) for Poland's PiS, disagrees with the proposals in the European Parliament which introduce women-friendly measures to increase the proportion of women in the workforce. She opposes the development of women's professional roles by claiming that it causes the weak family ties, and linking this gender equality in all areas of public and private life to the unpleasant experience under Communist rule:

I voted against because the presented provisions and tendencies are in fact directed against femininity and women, reducing their role to one of the elements driving the economic machine and GDP. The proposals, apart from weakening family ties and discrediting motherhood, disapprove of women. In addition, there are many other controversial provisions, for example the term reproductive health instead of the dignified term procreation. The best care for a child is provided by a loving mother, and no one and nothing can replace her. I remember exactly from the communist era, when, despite the psychophysical differences between men and women and their special calling, Polish women were persuaded to get on tractors (2017.10.03).<sup>38</sup>

Like Fidesz, the current demographic crisis happening in Europe is in the center of PiS' attention as well. PiS recognizes the severely decreasing fertility rate of the Polish population. They primarily accuse the spread of 'gender ideology' in disseminating the hostile ideas toward family building and having children (PiS party programs, 2014, p.14; PiS party program, 2019, p.11). Beyond the violation of Christian values, abortion is heavily condemned in the party's discourse due to its contribution to the demographic dilemma as well. The fear of the collapse of civilization is frequently referred to when the party touches upon the issues. Conducting the self-positive representation of the party as a defender of the nation, it provides the solutions to the problem, such as offering incentives to promote family

---

<sup>37</sup> Equality between women and men in the EU in 2014-2015 - Equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services - Report on EU funds for gender equality (debate) (2017.03.13)

<sup>38</sup> Women's economic empowerment in the private and public sectors in the EU (2017.10.03)

planning and implementing a policy that removes the barrier for young people to start a family and have children.

### ***The Battle against Islamization***

It is well known that the right-wing populist party family displays strong xenophobic features. They strongly oppose the concept of multiculturalism promoted by the West and the adoption of an immigration policy to tackle the demographic decline. Unsurprisingly, gender issues are exploited by Fidesz and PiS in deframing Muslim migrants, specifically the portrayal of Islam as a religion of violence. However, the anti-Muslim discourse is found more widely among Fidesz's representatives, compared to PiS'.

As mentioned in the preceding analysis, Fidesz has always criticized every agenda and policy introduced by the European Union that facilitates the arrival of migrants or offers them benefits. Stating that Europe is encountering Muslim invasion, Fidesz blames Muslim migrants for undermining the European identity, which could result in a 'transformation beyond recognition' (Orbán, 2016).<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, the party points out that Islam and Christianity cannot be reconciled, which implies the impossibility of their integrating into Hungarian society. Regarding gender-related issues, Fidesz believes that Islam is a source of discrimination and violence against women. Fidesz's representatives exemplify their argumentation by referring to the 2015–16 New Year's Eve sexual assaults in Germany, in which hundreds of women were reported to have been sexually assaulted during celebrations in Cologne. They repeatedly utilize the incident in attacking the leftists, the 'elites' in the European parliament, and their liberal ideology for allowing Muslim migrants to enter Europe. It subsequently leads to an increasing number of serious crimes, especially 'in Europe's immigrant countries, violence against women has escalated' (Orbán, 2017).<sup>40</sup> For instance, Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, a member of the European Parliament (MEP) for Hungary's Fidesz, condemns the mayor of Cologne for blaming the victims and additionally asserts how women are treated in the European Christian community, to emphasize Islam's incompatibility with European and Christian culture and values:

I can't comprehend how the mayor of Cologne really meant to keep an arm's length away, for girls not to wear short skirts and not to use perfume. Nonsense! Let's not be naive! The rapists in Cologne knew exactly where the border was, just trying. They are currently winning. It is an unfortunate fact that I have to say that this is the reality.

---

<sup>39</sup> Opening the fall parliamentary session (2016.09.12)

<sup>40</sup> The 27th Congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union (2017.11.12)

Women have always been respected in European Christian culture. We cannot maintain this (2016.02.03).<sup>41</sup>

The prejudice against Muslims also appears in PiS' discourse. Although the party primarily perceives that major sources of violence against women originate from alcoholism, drug addiction, and other social problems, they recognize Islam as a cause of violence against women, like Fidesz. The sexual assault incidents in Cologne are mentioned by Jadwiga Wiśniewska, a member of the European Parliament (MEP) for Poland's PiS, similarly as other Fidesz's representatives do. Besides, she sarcastically reacts to the mayor of Cologne's statement and complains about how Europeans or European women become vulnerable living in their own homes:

The massive sexual assaults taking place in European cities compromise the EU's multicultural policy. It is no coincidence that on New Year's Eve the German police did not react and the German media remained silent. The Imam of Cologne stated that the victims themselves were to blame for the attacks, because they provoked them with clothes and perfumes. In our own home, in Europe, we are forced to conform to someone else's rules (2016.02.03).<sup>42</sup>

The parties take an opportunity to activate their anti-Islam agenda, which, firstly, allows them to blame the European Union for encouraging people to attempt the journey to Europe and, secondly, attacks Muslim people, who they generally perceive as enemies. The discourse is framed by the features of Euroscepticism and xenophobia, which are inherently embedded in this party family. It can be said that the position and discourse of parties are adjustable. Holding a very conservative view of women's role in society, but criticizing liberal ideas that benefit women in modern times, the parties are now portraying themselves as defenders of European women in order to discredit the opposition and broaden the constituencies. However, their discourse is still based on exclusionary politics. The construction of in- and outgroups is dependent on how they can attach themselves to the positive attributes best in a given context.

#### **4.2.3 Illiberalism and Gender: the Instrumental Use of Gender toward Illiberal Regime**

According to Kubát and Martin Mejstřík (2020), Fidesz and PiS are considered right-wing populist parties with distinctive illiberal characteristics, which consist of strong nativist attitudes and pose a central challenge to liberal democracy. Hence, this part of the analysis employs the conceptual framework of 'gender as symbolic glue' to identify how Fidesz and

---

<sup>41</sup> Ending sexual harassment and violence against women in public spaces (debate) (2016.02.03)

<sup>42</sup> Ending sexual harassment and violence against women in public spaces (debate) (2016.02.03)

PiS frame their anti-gender discourse that contributes to the development of illiberal regimes. According to the data of the two cases, it is shown that Fidesz has a clearer feature of illiberalism, such as their discourse of prioritizing Christian freedom over liberal freedom. PiS illustrates a more moderate position in contributing to illiberal democracy in their anti-gender discourse. The analysis applies three main functions of how right-wing forces utilize 'gender ideology' as 'a modus operandi of the illiberal transformation', explained in the conceptual framework of 'gender as symbolic glue', to the anti-gender discourse of Fidesz and PiS, respectively (Kováts and Põim, 2015; Grzebalska, Kováts, and Pető, 2017; Grzebalska and Pető, 2018). It reveals the attempt of both parties in disseminating and exploiting anti-gender discourse to undermine liberal democracy to some extent.

Firstly, the term gender is utilized by right-wing forces as an umbrella term to glue various actors who they perceive as enemies. It also serves to criticize, not only gendered figures but also actors who they regard as being a result of the failure of democratic representation (Grzebalska, Kováts, and Pető, 2017). Accordingly, Fidesz illustrates this function in its anti-gender discourse more explicitly, compared to PiS. Although Fidesz does not directly stigmatize gender ideology in producing the discourse, they usually associate the progressive gendered figures with other actors who contribute to the progressive agenda on other kinds of contested issues. The party attempts to identify the opposition with liberal ideology together, although they engage in promoting their liberalism in different fields. For instance, Orbán frequently asserts the concept of 'Christian freedom versus liberal freedom' and lists many attributes of liberal freedom, mainly based on liberalism, which are obviously the opposites to Christian freedom's attributes:

In politics Christian freedom is not something abstract. It is very specific, understandable and tangible: patriots instead of citizens of the world; love of country instead of internationalism; marriage and family instead of popularising same-sex relationships; protecting our children instead of drug liberalisation; Hungarian children instead of immigrants; Christian culture instead of a multicultural confusion; order and security instead of violence and terrorism; unification of the nation instead of the 5 December (2004) betrayal of the nation. This is Christian freedom. (2019.09.29).<sup>43</sup>

Orbán characterizes people who popularize same-sex relationships in the same group as people who adhere to the concepts of 'citizens of the world', 'internationalism', 'multiculturalism', and labels them as 'liberal freedom forces'.

---

<sup>43</sup> The 28th Congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union (2019.09.29)

Or, in his speech at the 12th Congress of the Federation of Christian Intellectuals (KÉSZ), he points out the main actors who contribute to liberal freedom;

According to the teachings of liberal freedom, liberal democracies must eventually merge and create a world government: a global government in the spirit of liberal internationalism. This conception sees the European Union as the European pillar of this new world government, linked to a United States following the principles of Soros and the Clintons. This would be the liberal empire built solely on common sense as advocated in his time by Kant, by Immanuel Kant (2019.09.14).<sup>44</sup>

Accordingly, liberal freedom, including progressive gendered figures and their agenda, is a part of the EU and its liberal forces' (e.g., Soros network) plans to build the 'liberal empire'. Another distinct example of how Fidesz links the progressive actors to the party's other opposition beyond gender-related issues is found in Orbán's ceremonial speech on the 170th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. He categorizes people who support the new forms of the family with other groups (e.g., supranational and anti-democratic forces):

We, the millions with national feelings, are on one side; the elite "citizens of the world" are on the other side. We who believe in nation states, the defense of borders, the family and the value of work are on one side. And opposing us are those who want open society, a world without borders or nations, new forms of family, devalued work and cheap workers – all ruled over by an army of shadowy and unaccountable bureaucrats. On one side, national and democratic forces; and on the other side, supranational and anti-democratic forces (2018.03.15).<sup>45</sup>

Although Fidesz's anti-gender discourse does not directly serve the role of gender terms in uniting the opposition, as explained in the study of 'gender as symbolic glue', it still demonstrates the party's strategy in identifying progressive gendered figures with other liberal actors. In parallel with the promotion of Christian freedom in strengthening their ideal nation, the concept of liberal freedom is then adopted to define an array of liberal actors to criticize liberal democracy.

As mentioned earlier, PiS rarely utilizes this function. The party asserts that gender ideology is a harmful ideology promoted by outsiders, which mainly refers to the European Union, the left-wing parties in the European Parliament, extreme liberals, and feminists. They evolve the topics in discourse directly connected to the misleading term gender ideology and gender-related issues (e.g. the Istanbul Convention, LGBT rights, legal abortion, sex

---

<sup>44</sup> The 12th Congress of the Federation of Christian Intellectuals (KÉSZ) (2019.09.14)

<sup>45</sup> The 170th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 (2018.03.15)

education in schools). Hence, their anti-gender discourse precisely attacks the main tenets of gender ideology. It subsequently refers to a limited number of enemies. The party does not provide conspiratory explanations of gender ideology to undermine the neoliberal actors as much as they appear in Fidesz's anti-gender discourse.

Secondly, right-wing forces usually offer alternative convincing arguments, specifically regarding family, nation, religion, and the fundamentals of human rights, to contribute to the more effective stigmatization of gender ideology and liberal worldviews (Grzebalska, Kováts, and Petó, 2017). This function is directly related to the party's adoption of self-positive and other-negative representation. Demonizing gender ideology through the politics of fear, Fidesz and PiS create the narratives of gender ideology as a national threat and subsequently portray themselves as defenders of the nation. While Fidesz's argumentation is centered on the concept of the defense of the nation and the traditional family from foreign influence, PiS attempts to overcome gender ideology by producing counterarguments based on traditional families, religious values, and the narratives of European and national identities. PiS frequently asserts the authority and law (e.g. the right to life, freedom of expression, and opinion) and morality (e.g. abortion as a murder) to legitimize their anti-gender discourse. Fidesz legitimizes their anti-gender rhetoric by exaggerating fears of losing the nation to international economic and cultural institutions (e.g., the EU and George Soros), and instead asserts that the way to strengthen the nation is through the power of Hungarian families and, occasionally, adherence to Christian principles. Both parties' arguments are mainly in favor of nationalism and conservatism, which intrinsically constitute the core ideological features of the party family.

Lastly, right-wing forces utilize gender politics in establishing new alliances from different fields in attacking their opposition (Grzebalska, Kováts, and Petó, 2017). This function is absent in Fidesz and PiS' discourse. Since they strongly adopt self-positive representation, the parties give attention only to their parties when referring to the contribution to the agenda fighting against gender ideology. Although Fidesz sporadically asserts the establishment of a Christian democratic state (i.e., a Central European and Hungarian Christian democratic state) to illustrate the unity of Central European countries in sharing common values based on the reconstruction of Christianity and democracy in politics, it is not considered as a new alliance in gender politics. Similarly, it can be said that the politicization of the Church is accelerating by PiS, particularly in this period of war on gender. However, the alliance between the Catholic Church and the PiS government is not a new phenomenon either, since

Christianity is embedded in Polish identity and the Catholic Church has had an influential role in Polish politics for a long time.

Overall, according to the conceptual framework of gender as symbolic glue, a few functions are found in Fidesz and PiS' anti-gender discourse. However, the comparison shows that Fidesz has a stronger characteristic of illiberalism. Fidesz's subjects and content in anti-gender discourse intentionally contribute to the criticism of liberal democracy, particularly through the attacks of an array of (neo)liberal actors. PiS takes a more moderate stance and only focuses on gender ideology and its gendered opposition. They do not employ vague mobilization like Fidesz, which allows them to capture various enemies. It can be said that Fidesz, to some extent, exploits the anti-gender discourse to facilitate illiberal transformation. PiS' discourse is instead characterized by a strong conservatism and an appeal to Christianity, implying less attempt by the party to establish an illiberal regime through the employment of misleading terms of gender.

## Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

### 5.1 Results' Discussion

According to the analysis, the anti-gender discourse of Fidesz and PiS is framed based on right-wing populist parties' core ideological features. In line with the studies of anti-gender discourse in Hungary and Poland, as elaborated in Chapter 1., the analysis provides similar results in terms of how Fidesz and PiS mainly produce anti-gender discourse through the construction of 'Us' and 'Them', and the employment of politics of fear, which helps their discourse to reach public visibility successfully. Apart from identifying how the parties frame their anti-gender discourse as illustrated in the analysis section, I aim to specify some distinct points deriving from both parties' discourse.

Firstly, how Fidesz and PiS participate in debates on gender ideology implies their attention to particular issues. According to the investigation of Orbán speeches and debates at European level, Fidesz rarely mentions gender ideology in their discourse, although they acknowledge the emergence of gendered figures in political spheres. Fidesz representatives do not contribute to the debate on gender ideology as much as PiS representatives do. This is inconsistent with the party's actions in reinforcing various regulations in fighting against gender ideology, such as the release of the new Family Protection Act that emphasizes the heteronormative concept of marriage or the state bans on master's degrees in gender studies programs. On the contrary, Fidesz does not directly accuse the dissemination of gender ideology as well as other gender-related issues (e.g., access to abortion, and sex education in schools). Moreover, the stance toward gender issues of Fidesz representatives in parliament is more moderate, compared to their party's leader. For instance, Andrea Bocskor, Fidesz MEP, agrees with the proposal supporting access to the Istanbul Convention. On the contrary, PiS enthusiastically participates in debates on gender ideology and regards the term 'gender ideology' in their party programs. It implies that gender ideology is at the center of the party's attention. I contend that the different stances of two parties can be explained by how they construct the enemy, or the party's 'real enemy' in a particular period. Although the liberal gendered figures and sexual groups are considered enemies of Fidesz, they are not the arch-enemies as perceived by the party. According to the period of this study, Fidesz's attention is devoted to the issues of immigration. Hence, their true enemies are transnational institutions, like the European Union, and Muslim immigrants. The analysis subsequently illustrates how Fidesz utilizes gender-related issues as an argument in contributing to their main anti-European and anti-migrant rhetoric, such as the promotion of the strong 'traditional

family makes a strong nation overcome the demographic decline and the Islamic invasion’, and the accusation of ‘Islam as a cause of violence against women’. Regarding the anti-European rhetoric, Fidesz perceives the EU as an elite institution that upholds liberal ideology, which is considered a threat to Hungary. However, they do not employ anti-gender discourse in attacking the EU directly or blame the EU for imposing the ideology on the state. They instead identify various liberal concepts or ideologies of the EU, which include gender ideology, and label them as ‘bad’ attributes to intensify the anti-European rhetoric. However, it is worth emphasizing that these results appear only in the realm of my investigation. Apart from my investigation, Fidesz recently disseminates their anti-gender discourse, which directly attacks gender ideology through the narrative of culture wars. Moreover, Orbán has become a role model for American conservatives with his staunch Christian nationalism and opposition to gender ideology (Tharoor, 2022). The demonization of gender ideology is frequently mentioned as a part of culture wars to create fear, while the EU is still accused of being an existential threat in spreading liberal ideologies that undermine Christian values and European civilization.

Considering PiS’ enemies, it is obvious that the liberal gendered figures are constructed as the main enemies of the party. PiS’ anti-gender discourse appears less frequently associated with anti-immigrant rhetoric. The party attacks precisely the EU for disseminating gender ideology and on gendered figures (e.g., feminists, LGBT groups) for eroding national values as they violate Christianity’s social teachings. As a result, PiS has a limited number of enemies with regard to gender issues, while Fidesz generates an array of enemies beyond gendered figures in their anti-gender discourse. Both parties employ gender ideology as a rhetorical tool in attacking the opposition, but it can be said that it is more relevant in the case of PiS than in Fidesz.

Secondly, Fidesz and PiS refer to the role of Christianity in their anti-gender discourse differently. PiS emphasizes their adherence to Christianity as it is inherently embedded in national faith and party ideology. They mainly argue that gender ideology and liberal gender-related attitudes and practices violate the social teachings of Christianity, such as abortion and same-sex marriage. Another role of Christianity perceived by PiS is its contribution to national identity. The party claims that Polish civilization is rooted in Christianity. Therefore, gender ideology, at the same time, undermines national identity as well. Fidesz instead utilizes Christianity in the discourse more in a sense of constructing in-and-outgroups. The party frequently conceptualizes its in-group based on Christian faith, such as the group of people who aim to achieve Christian freedom and the Christian

democratic states. Christianity is not intrinsically rooted in the party's ideology. At the same time, the Church is weakly institutionalized in Hungary and, consequently, is not the main actor in mobilizing against gender ideology (Grudzinska, 2021). Fidesz embraces Christianity in their political agenda to legitimize their concept of Christian illiberal democracy to attack a variety of (neo)liberal actors, including gendered figures, but primarily to discredit its Western liberal democratic counterpart.

Thirdly, Fidesz and PiS are considered strong pro-natalist governments. Both parties claim that it is urgent to solve Europe's demographic decline, hence demographic issues significantly contribute to their gender discourse. Consequently, traditional family models and gender roles are promoted as one of the main plans to achieve their goal of boosting fertility rates. They encourage women to engage in the roles of wives or mothers, or sometimes the support for a full-time mother also appears in their political agenda. Although Fidesz and PiS attempt to portray themselves as pro-women parties by addressing the issues of violence against women or gender inequality, they preferably adhere to women's traditional roles, which are considered a major barrier to women's advancement in the contemporary society. Apart from their conservative stance, it can be explained by the idea of patriarchal attitudes within the family party that men dominate society. The perception of masculinity as superior to femininity is rooted in the family party's culture. In parallel with the structure of the family, a man is the head of the family, while a woman is perceived as 'morally pure and physically weak' (Mudde, 2019, p. 217). Hence, women are physically and emotionally suitable for the role of raising children. The narrative regarding family building and having children, hence, mainly relies on women instead of men due to the role of motherhood. As a result, the parties strongly emphasize in their discourse regarding their commitment to financially supporting full-time mothers and large families. Perceiving women as the 'womb of the nation', the responsibility for increasing numbers of children is considered to be a responsibility for women. At the same time, the immigration crisis and the EU's immigrant policy multiply the parties' efforts to encourage women to have as many children as possible to overcome the EU's multicultural society, which is considered a threat to the nation.

Lastly, it is important to project how anti-gender discourse will be developed by Fidesz and PiS in the future. According to the parties' role as ruling governments, they introduce and implement laws and policies advancing their regressive gender norms in countries, coupled with their ability to prioritize and propagate their anti-gender ideology through the state-owned media, specifically in the case of PiS (Žuk and Žuk, 2019). Moreover, they

weaken the influence of progressive gendered institutions and organizations within countries by reducing funds or withdrawing entirely. They instead increase the financial support for organizations serving the parties' ideology. These actions allow them to intensify the anti-gender discourse easily and, at the same time, to build a strong foundation for the anti-gender movements in countries. Because the opposition is weak, it lacks comprehensive counter-strategies for combating governments' anti-gender discourse and programs. They contribute to the suitable conditions for the parties to exploit anti-gender discourse and deepen the gender war in their countries or the region. It can be expected that anti-gender discourse will potentially turn into policies, which consequently paves the way toward illiberal democracy in Hungary and Poland.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

This dissertation contributes to the scholarly debates on right-wing populism and gender politics by recognizing the need to investigate right-wing populist parties' anti-gender discourse in Central and Eastern Europe, which has been intensified recently. The dissertation begins with the observation of different approaches toward gender ideology among right-wing populist parties in Eastern and Western Europe. It subsequently focuses on the analysis of the anti-gender discourse of right-wing populist parties in the CEE region (i.e., Fidesz and PiS) since they successfully disseminate the misleading term of gender ideology and other gender-related issues into national discourse and increase public visibility. The dissertation opts to investigate the anti-gender discourse of Fidesz and PiS, two distinct cases of right-wing populist parties in the CEE region, to understand how they frame their discourse and position in mobilizing against gender ideology. Through the frameworks of right-wing populism and gender as symbolic glue, the dissertation also aims to investigate whether the themes framed in parties' gender discourse express their core ideological features. Applying the qualitative content analysis to the parties' anti-gender discourse, the results show that the parties frame their anti-gender discourse based on three main ideological features; populism, nativism, and illiberalism. Various subjects regarding gender issues are found in discourse based on the parties' populist, nativist, and illiberal stances, with the arguments being mainly contributed by the parties' conservative and nationalist characteristics. Fidesz and PiS hold similar views on gender ideology as a harmful foreign influence and mobilize against it by vilifying the opposition and offering audiences other appealing ways, primarily within the concepts of nation and religious values (i.e., the positive-self and negative-other representation), as well as the adoption of politics of fear.

The themes formed by the parties are predominantly based on the nativist feature, as the parties frequently include the nationalist discourse by claiming gender ideology threatens national civilization and sovereignty and the conservative discourse by emphasizing the traditional values and practices that are embedded in national culture and tradition. The analysis of anti-gender discourse also reveals that the parties utilize the demonization of gender ideology to create an array of enemies beyond gendered figures, including many (neo)liberal actors. In accordance with the framework of gender as symbolic glue, the attack on gender ideology is considered a part of the parties' contribution to illiberal regimes. The dissertation also reaffirms that right-wing populist parties in government positions potentially contribute to more discourse and agendas that undermine progressive gender norms. It appears that parties freely produce discourse that is completely incompatible with liberal or universal worldviews and gain full attention or considerable support on domestic and international stages. Moreover, the results reveal that the parties propose and encourage anti-gender mobilization in the CEE region by claiming their shared historical and cultural roots and the unity of the region in fighting against Western influences. Hence, the dissertation might serve as an indicator of anti-gender trends potentially occurring in the region.

However, due to time limitations, this dissertation is unable to analyze the scale of the comparison of anti-gender discourse between right-wing populist parties in Eastern and Western Europe in accordance with the dissertation's starting point. Further research might take part in this. The comparison between regions will give a better understanding of the context of Eastern and Western Europe and answer the question of why parties in the same family employ different approaches toward gender ideology. Another suggestion is the research on the linguistic and discursive strategies of right-wing populist parties in contributing to anti-gender discourse, as the analysis results of this research reveal particularly the aspect of the themes formed in discourse and the meanings of the parties' stance toward gender ideology. Considering the well-known right-wing populist communicative performance, the study of how the right-wing populist parties construct the language in anti-gender discourse might develop a greater understanding of how the parties successfully disseminate their anti-gender discourse and become prominent anti-gender regimes in the region.

Lastly, due to the time restraint, the dissertation also cannot address the new developments following the war in Ukraine, particularly gender issues arising amid the war. The public has shown concerns about the Ukrainian refugees gaining access to reproductive health care,

especially abortion in Poland, as many Ukrainian women have been sexually assaulted by Russian soldiers. Although according to Polish law, abortion is permitted in the case of a crime, rape victims still have to engage in severely strict procedures in the criminal investigation before gaining the termination of pregnancy. However, the investigation is unlikely to open to Ukrainian refugees (Grandjean, 2022). Another concern is that the LGBT refugees fleeing Ukraine have encountered anti-LGBT measures in Hungary and Poland. They are potentially excluded from the state's aid as their families are not qualified as a household according to the state's definition and they are exposed to harassment in public spaces (Carlisle, 2022). These issues could be included in further research, and demonstrate the position of both parties in different contexts as it shows another side of how parties in the role of the states respond and help the refugees who are gender-based violence victims, beyond the role of governments in propagating their anti-gender agenda in the countries.

## Reference

- Abi-Hassan, S., 2017. Populism and Gender. *Oxford Handbooks Online*, 1.
- Akkerman, T., 2015. Gender and the radical right in Western Europe: a comparative analysis of policy agendas. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 49, pp.37-60.
- Akkerman, T. and Hagelund, A., 2007. 'Women and children first!' Anti-immigration parties and gender in Norway and the Netherlands. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 41(2), pp.197-214.
- Althusser, L., 1970. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*.
- Angouri, J. and Wodak, R., 2014. 'They became big in the shadow of the crisis': : The Greek success story and the rise of the far right. *Discourse & Society*, 25(4), pp.540-565.
- Aslanidis, P., 2021. The Red Herring of Economic Populism. In: M. Oswald, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of Populism*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.245-261.
- Ballacci, G., 2017. The Creation of the 'People' in Laclau's Theory of Populism: A Critical Assessment. *Filosofický časopis (Philosophy Journal)*, 57, pp.51-69.
- Barát, E., 2020. Stigmatization of Feminism: Gender Studies as "Gender Ideology" in right-wing populist political discourse in Hungary. *Baltic Worlds*, 13(1), pp.21-29.
- Bell, D., 1980. Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, 93(3), pp.518-533.
- Beyer, J., 2021. Immoral morality: gender and sexuality politics, right-wing populism and church-state relations in Macedonia under Nikola Gruevski (2006–2016). *European Politics and Society*, pp.1-17.
- Bilge, S., 2012. Mapping Québécois Sexual Nationalism in Times of 'Crisis of Reasonable Accommodations'. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 33(3), pp.303-318.
- Brack, N., 2018. *Opposing Europe in the European Parliament*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bracke, S. and Paternotte, D., 2016. Unpacking the Sin of Gender. *Religion and Gender*, 6(2), pp.143-154.

Buzogány, A. and Varga, M., 2021. Illiberal thought collectives and policy networks in Hungary and Poland. *European Politics and Society*, pp.1-19.

Carlisle, M., 2022. *After Fleeing Ukraine, LGBTQ Refugees Search for Safety in Countries Hostile to Their Rights.* [online] Time. Available at: <<https://time.com/6156672/lgbtq-ukraine-refugees-russia/>> [Accessed 16 August 2022].

Carnac, R., 2014. L'Église catholique contre 'la théorie du genre' : construction d'un objet polémique dans le débat public français contemporain. *Synergies Italie. Les discours institutionnels au prisme du "genre": perspectives italo-françaises.*, pp.125-143.

Celis, K. and Childs, S., 2018. Conservatism and Women's Political Representation. *Politics & Gender*, 14(1), pp.5-26.

Colella, D., 2021. Femonationalism and anti-gender backlash: the instrumental use of gender equality in the nationalist discourse of the Fratelli d'Italia party. *Gender & Development*, 29(2-3), pp.269-289.

DeHanas, D. and Shterin, M., 2018. Religion and the rise of populism. *Religion, State and Society*, 46(3), pp.177-185.

de Lange, S. and Mügge, L., 2015. Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 49(1-2), pp.61-80.

Dobos, G. and Wineroither, D., 2020. Populist Parties in Contemporary Europe. *Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe*, pp.11.

Donà, A., 2021. Radical right populism and the backlash against gender equality: the case of the Lega (Nord). *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 13(3), pp.296-313.

Dornbusch, R. and Edwards, S., 1991. The Macroeconomics of Populism in Latin America. *the National Bureau of Economic Research*, pp.7-13.

Eatwell, R. and Goodwin, M., 2018. *National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy.* London: Pelican.

Einhorn, B., 1993. *Cinderella goes to market: Citizenship, Gender, and Women's Movements in East Central Europe.* London: Verso.

Fairclough, N., Mulderrig, J., and Wodak R., 2011. Critical Discourse Analysis, in *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE. pp. 357-378.

Farris, S., 2017. *In the name of women's rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*. Durham and London: Duke University press.

Fidesz. (2014) *Fidesz* [online] 2 March Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/FideszHU> [Accessed 26 May 2022].

Fodor, É., 2006. A Different Type of Gender Gap: How Women and Men Experience Poverty. *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures*, 20(1), pp.14-39.

Fomina, J. and Kucharczyk, J., 2016. Populism and Protest in Poland. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(4), pp.58-68.

Gal, S. and Kligman, G., 2000. *The politics of gender after socialism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

GenderKompetenzZentrum. 2010. *Family Mainstreaming*. [online] Available at: [http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Strategy/Family%20Policy/family\\_mainstreaming.html](http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/gender-competence-2003-2010/Gender%20Mainstreaming/Strategy/Family%20Policy/family_mainstreaming.html) [Accessed 26 May 2022].

Graff, A., 2014. Report from the gender trenches: War against ‘genderism’ in Poland. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 21(4), pp.431-435.

Grandjean, M., 2022. *Poland's Anti-Abortion Laws Obstruct Humanitarian Assistance to Ukrainian Pregnant Refugees and Rape Survivors - Impakter*. [online] Impakter. Available at: <https://impakter.com/poland-anti-abortion-laws-obstruct-humanitarian-assistance-to-ukrainian-pregnant-refugees-and-rape-survivors/> [Accessed 16 August 2022].

Greven, T., 2016. The Rise of Right-wing Populism in Europe and the United States: A Comparative Perspective. *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, pp.1-8.

Grudzinska, A., 2021. Make Misogyny Great Again. “Anti-gender” Politics in Poland 23 Anna Grudzinska. In: M. Mejstřík and V. Handl, ed., *Current Populism in Europe: Gender-Backlash and Counter-strategies*. Prague: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, pp.23-36.

Grzebalska, W., 2015. Gender as Symbolic Glue: Poland. In: E. Kováts and M. Pöim, ed., *Gender as Symbolic Glue: The Position and Role of Conservative and Far Right Parties in*

*the Anti-gender Mobilization in Europe*. Foundation for European Progressive Studies. pp.83-103

Grzebalska, W. and Pető, A., 2018. The gendered modus operandi of the illiberal transformation in Hungary and Poland. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 68, pp.164-172.

Grzebalska, W., Kováts, E. and Pető, A., 2017. *Gender as symbolic glue: how 'gender' became an umbrella term for the rejection of the (neo)liberal order – Political Critique [DISCONTINUED]*. [online] Politicalcritique. Available at: <<http://politicalcritique.org/long-read/2017/gender-as-symbolic-glue-how-gender-became-an-umbrella-term-for-the-rejection-of-the-neoliberal-order/>> [Accessed 10 May 2022].

Gwiazda, A., 2021. Right-wing populism and feminist politics: The case of Law and Justice in Poland. *Symposium: Populism and feminist politics*, 42(5), pp.580-595.

Halikiopoulou, D. and Vlandas, T., 2022. *Understanding right-wing populism and what to do about it*. [online] EUROPP. Available at: <<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2022/06/01/understanding-right-wing-populism-and-what-to-do-about-it/>> [Accessed 4 June 2022].

Hawkins, K. A. and Rovira Kaltwasser, C., 2019. Introduction: The ideational approach. In: K. A. Hawkins, R. E. Carlin, L. Littvay and C. Rovira Kaltwasser, ed., *The Ideational Approach to Populism: Concept, Theory, and Analysis*, 1st ed. London and New York: Routledge, pp.1-24.

Hawkins, K. A., Carlin, R. E., Littvay, L. and Rovira Kaltwasser, C., 2019. *The Ideational Approach to Populism Concept, Theory, and Analysis*. 1st ed. London and New York: Routledge.

Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2015. *Anti-Gender Movements on the Rise? Strategising for Gender Equality in Central and Eastern Europe*.

Hisarlıoğlu, F., Yanık, L., Korkut, U. and Civelekoğlu, İ., 2022. Contesting the “Corrupt Elites,” Creating the “Pure People,” and Renegotiating the Hierarchies of the International Order? Populism and Foreign Policy-Making in Turkey and Hungary. *International Studies Review*, 24(1).

Hloušek, V. and Kopeček, L., 2010. *Origin, Ideology and Transformation of Political Parties: East- Central and Western Europe Compared*. New York: Routledge.

Hsieh, H. and Shannon, S., 2005. Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), pp.1277-1288.

Jaskułowski, K., Majewski, P. and Surmiak, A., 2017. Teaching the nation: history and nationalism in Polish school history education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 39(1), pp.77-91.

Karasz, P. and Smale, A., 2014. *Election in Hungary Tests Nation's Tilt to the Right*. [online] The New York Times. Available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/06/world/europe/election-in-hungary-tests-nations-tilt-to-the-right.html>> [Accessed 26 May 2022].

Kende, A. and Krekó, P., 2019. Xenophobia, prejudice, and right-wing populism in East-Central Europe. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 34, pp.29-33.

Kenny, P., 2021. The Strategic Approach To Populism. In: D. B. Subedi, A. Scott, H. Brasted and T. Lynch, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Populism in the Asia Pacific*. London: Routledge, pp.1-17.

Koller, B., 2017. European and National Agendas in the 2014 EP Elections in Hungary. *Political Communication and European Parliamentary Elections in Times of Crisis*, pp.167-183.

Korolczuk, E., 2016. 'The purest citizens' and 'IVF children'. Reproductive citizenship in contemporary Poland. *Reproductive Biomedicine & Society Online*, 3, pp.126-133.

Korolczuk, E., 2020. The fight against 'gender' and 'LGBT ideology': new developments in Poland. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 3(1), pp.165-167.

Korolczuk, E. and Graff, A., 2018. Gender as "Ebola from Brussels": The Anticolonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 43(4), pp.797-821.

Kováts, E., 2017. The Emergence of Powerful Anti-Gender Movements in Europe and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy. In: M. Köttig, R. Bitzan and A. Pető, ed., *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.174-189.

Kováts, E., 2020. Post-Socialist Conditions and the Orbán Government's Gender Politics between 2010 and 2019 in Hungary. *Right-Wing Populism and Gender*, pp.75-100.

Kováts, E., 2022. Only ! know my gender: The individualist turn in gender theory and politics, and the right-wing opposition. 8(1), pp.110-127.

Kováts, E. and Pető, A., 2017. Anti-gender movements in Hungary: A discourse without a movement?. *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe: mobilizing against equality*, pp.117-131.

Kováts, E. and Põim, M., 2015. *Gender as symbolic glue: the position and role of conservative and far right parties in the anti-gender mobilizations in Europe*. Foundation for European Progressive Studies and Friedrich-Ebert- Stiftung, Brussels and Budapest.

Kozma, B., 2021. *Familisation, Ideology, and Populism: Investigating Reform-making Patterns in Central- European Family Policy Trajectories*. Master degree. Central European University.

Krizsan, A. and Roggeband, C., 2019. *Gendering Democratic Backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe. A comparative agenda*. Budapest: Central European University.

Kubát, M. and Mejstřík, M., 2020. Populist Parties in Contemporary Europe. *Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe*, pp.4-24.

Kuhar, R. and Paternotte, D., 2017. *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe : mobilizing against equality*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, pp.99-116.

Lieggi, N., 2022. *EIP Blog — The Electoral Integrity Project EIP*. [online] The Electoral Integrity Project. Available at: <<https://www.electoralintegrityproject.com/eip-blog>> [Accessed 25 May 2022].

Lipiński A., 2020. Populist Parties in Contemporary Europe. *Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe*, pp. 12.

Luo, A., 2019. *Content Analysis | A Step-by-Step Guide with Examples*. [online] Scribbr. Available at: <<https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/content-analysis/>> [Accessed 27 May 2022].

Mayer, N., 2012. From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 66(1), pp.160-178.

- McCullough, B., 2010. *Political Ideologies*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.
- Mepschen, P. and Duyvendak, J., 2012. European sexual nationalisms: The culturalization of citizenship and the sexual politics of belonging and exclusion. *Perspectives on Europe*, 42(1), pp.70-76.
- Merelli, A., 2019. *The state of global right-wing populism in 2019*. [online] Quartz. Available at: <<https://qz.com/1774201/the-global-state-of-right-wing-populism-in-2019/>> [Accessed 21 May 2022].
- Meret, S. and Siim, B., 2013. Gender, Populism and Politics of Belonging: Discourses of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Denmark, Norway and Austria. In: B. Siim and M. Mokre, ed., *Negotiating Gender and Diversity in an Emergent European Public Sphere*, 1st ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.78-96.
- Minkenber, M., 2017. *The Radical Right in Eastern Europe: Democracy under Siege?*. 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Pivot.
- Mishtal, J., 2012. Irrational non-reproduction? The ‘dying nation’ and the postsocialist logics of declining motherhood in Poland. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 19(2), pp.153-169.
- Morris, R. and Spivak, G., 2010. *Can the subaltern speak?*. Columbia University Press.
- Mudde, C., 2009. *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge [i pozostałe]: Cambridge University Press.
- Mudde, C., 2019. *The Far Right Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mudde, C. and Rovira Kaltwasser, C., 2017. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Orbán, V. 2022. *Speech by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the opening of CPAC Texas*. [online]. 4 August, Dallas, Texas. Available at: <<https://miniszterelnok.hu/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-at-the-opening-of-cpac-texas/>> [Accessed 13 August 2022].
- Paternotte, D. and Kuhar, R., 2018. Disentangling and Locating the “Global Right”: Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe. *Politics and Governance*, 6(3), pp.6-19.

Pelinka, A., 2013. Right-Wing Populism: Concept and Typology. In: R. Wodak, M. Khosravini and B. Mral, ed., *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*. London: Bloomsbury, pp.3-22.

Pető, A., 2015. "Anti-gender" Mobilisational Discourse of Conservative and Far Right Parties as a Challenge to Progressive Politics. *Gender as Symbolic Glue: The Position and Role of Conservative and Far Right Parties in the Anti-Gender Mobilisation* in Europe, pp.126-131.

Pető, A. and Kováts, E., 2017. Anti-Gender Movements in Hungary. A Discourse without a movement?. In: R. Kuhar and D. Paternotte, ed., *Anti-Gender Campaign in Europe: Mobilizing against Equality*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International, pp.117-131.

Pető, A. and Vasali, Z., 2014. *The 'laboratory' called Hungary: a challenge for understanding protest movements*. [online] openDemocracy. Available at: <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/laboratory-called-hungary-challenge-for-understanding/>> [Accessed 10 March 2022].

Perugini, N. and Gordon, N., 2015. *The human right to dominate*. Oxford: Oxford Studies in Culture and Politics.

Piotrowski, G., 2020. Civil Society in Illiberal Democracy: The Case of Poland. *Politologický časopis - Czech Journal of Political Science*, 27(2), pp.196-214.

Rydgen, J., 2005. Is extreme right-wing populism contagious? Explaining the emergence of a new party family. *European Journal of Political Research*, 44(3), pp.413-437.

Sachs, J., 1990. Social Conflict and Populist Policies in Latin America. *Labour Relations and Economic Performance*, pp.137-169.

Sata, R., 2021. In the Name of the Family: The Populist Turn against Gender in Hungary. In: M. Mejstřík and V. Handl, ed., *Current Populism in Europe: Gender-Backlash and Counter-strategies*. Prague: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, pp.37-52.

Schreier, M., 2012. *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. London: Sage.

Scott, P., 2019. Under Siege: The Rise of Right-Wing Populism or has the Demos Become Crazy?. *Galáxia (São Paulo)*, (42), pp.5-22.

Stråth, B. and Wodak, R., 2009. Europe — Discourse — Politics — Media — History: Constructing ‘Crises’?. *The European Public Sphere and the Media*, pp.15-33.

Surowiec, P. and Štětka, V., 2019. Introduction: media and illiberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. *East European Politics*, 36(1), pp.1-8.

Szelewa, D., 2020. Recurring ideas: Searching for the roots of right-wing populism in Eastern Europe. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23(6), pp.989-997.

Taggart, P., 2000. *Populism*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Tannen, D., n.d. *Discourse Analysis—What Speakers Do in Conversation* | *Linguistic Society of America*. [online] Linguisticsociety.org. Available at: <<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/discourse-analysis-what-speakers-do-conversation>> [Accessed 27 May 2022].

Tharoor, I., 2022. *Orban at CPAC brings the ‘far-right international’ into focus*. [online] The Washington Post. Available at: <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/04/orban-hungary-far-right-international-cpac-conservative/>> [Accessed 16 August 2022].

Towns, A., Karlsson, E. and Eyre, J., 2014. The equality conundrum. *Party Politics*, 20(2), pp.237-247.

Vida, B., 2019. New waves of anti-sexual and reproductive health and rights strategies in the European Union: the anti-gender discourse in Hungary. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*, 27(2), pp.13-16.

Wang, H., Wu, H., He, Z., Huang, L. and Ward Church, K., 2021. Progress in Machine Translation. *Engineering*.

Wierzcholska, A., 2018. Gender in the Resurgent Polish Conservatism. In: K. Bluhm and M. Varga, ed., *New Conservatives in Russia and East Central Europe*. London: Routledge, pp.198-222.

Wodak, R., 2015. *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. SAGE Publications Ltd, pp.1-24.

Wyant, L., n.d. *Machine Translation vs Human Translation*. [online] Smartling. Available at: <[https://www-smartling-com.translate.google.com/resources/101/machine-translation-vs-human-translation/?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=th&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=th&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=op,sc](https://www-smartling-com.translate.google.com/resources/101/machine-translation-vs-human-translation/?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=th&_x_tr_hl=th&_x_tr_pto=op,sc)> [Accessed 28 May 2022].

Zhang, Y. and Wildemuth, B. 2016. Qualitative Analysis of Content. *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*, pp.318-329.

Żuk, P. and Żuk, P., 2019. 'Murderers of the unborn' and 'sexual degenerates': analysis of the 'anti-gender' discourse of the Catholic Church and the nationalist right in Poland. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 17(5), pp.566-588.

## Appendix

The analyzed speeches, debates and party's programs, ordered chronologically:

### Viktor Orbán's political speeches

- September 21 2015**                    Opening the fall parliamentary session  
<https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-address-to-parliament-before-the-start-of-daily-business>
- November 5 2015**                    Opening of the International Demographic Forum  
<https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-beszede-a-budapesti-demografiai-forumon>
- September 12 2016**                    Opening the fall parliamentary session  
<https://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-address-in-parliament-before-the-start-of-daily-session-full-text-in-english>
- May 25 2017**                            Opening of the 2nd Budapest World Congress of Families  
<https://miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-opening-speech-at-the-2nd-budapest-world-congress-of-families/>
- September 16 2017**                    The 11th national congress of the Alliance of Christian Intellectuals  
<https://miniszterelnok.hu/viktor-orbans-address-at-the-congress-of-the-federation-of-christian-intellectuals/>
- September 18 2017**                    Opening the fall parliamentary session  
<https://abouthungary.hu/prime-minister/orban-address-20170918>
- October 23 2017**                    The 61th anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight  
<https://miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-on-the-61st-anniversary-of-the-1956-revolution-and-freedom-fight/>
- November 12 2017**                    The 27th Congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union  
<https://miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-27th-congress-of-fidesz-hungarian-civic-union/>

**March 15 2018** The 170th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848  
<https://miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktors-ceremonial-speech-on-the-170th-anniversary-of-the-hungarian-revolution-of-1848/>

**September 17 2018** Opening the fall parliamentary session  
<https://miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-in-parliament-before-the-start-of-daily-business/>

**October 4 2018** The inauguration of the renovated House of Traditions  
<https://miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-inauguration-of-the-renovated-house-of-traditions/>

**September 14 2019** The 12th Congress of the Federation of Christian Intellectuals (KÉSZ)  
<https://miniszterelnok.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-12th-congress-of-the-federation-of-christian-intellectuals-kesz/>

**September 29 2019** The 28th Congress of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union  
<https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-28th-congress-of-fidesz-hungarian-civic-union>

**October 21 2019** Opening the fall parliamentary session  
<https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-address-to-the-hungarian-parliament-before-the-start-of-daily-business>

### **PiS' party programs**

2014 PROGRAM Prawa i Sprawiedliwości <https://pis.org.pl/dokumenty>

2019 PROGRAM Prawa i Sprawiedliwości <https://pis.org.pl/dokumenty>

### **Plenary debates of the European Parliament**

**July 15 2014** Withdrawal of the maternity leave directive (debate)  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2014-07-15-ITM-011\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2014-07-15-ITM-011_EN.html)

**November 25 2014** Combating violence against women (continuation of debate)  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2014-11-25-ITM-014\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2014-11-25-ITM-014_EN.html)

**March 9 2015** Progress on equality between women and men in the EU in 2013 (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-03-09-ITM-013\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-03-09-ITM-013_EN.html)

**March 10 2015** Progress on equality between women and men in the EU in 2013

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-03-10-ITM-012-10\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-03-10-ITM-012-10_EN.html)

**March 11 2015** Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world 2013 and the EU policy on the matter (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-03-11-ITM-015\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-03-11-ITM-015_EN.html)

**March 12 2015** Annual report on human rights and democracy in the world 2013 and the EU policy on the matter

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-03-12-ITM-011-06\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-03-12-ITM-011-06_EN.html)

**May 19 2015** Maternity leave (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-05-19-ITM-015\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-05-19-ITM-015_EN.html)

**May 27 2015** Ending the practice of early, forced marriage of girls (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-05-27-ITM-013\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-05-27-ITM-013_EN.html)

**June 8 2015** EU Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015 (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-06-08-ITM-012\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-06-08-ITM-012_EN.html)

**June 9 2015** EU Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-06-09-ITM-006-02\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-06-09-ITM-006-02_EN.html)

**September 8 2015** Situation of fundamental rights in the EU (2013-2014)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-09-08-ITM-006-06\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-09-08-ITM-006-06_EN.html)

**October 8 2015** Equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-10-08-ITM-002\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-10-08-ITM-002_EN.html)

**October 8 2015** Equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-10-08-ITM-010-06\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-10-08-ITM-010-06_EN.html)

**November 25 2015** Elimination of violence against women in the EU (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-11-25-ITM-013\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2015-11-25-ITM-013_EN.html)

- January 19 2016** The role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-01-19-ITM-006-05\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-01-19-ITM-006-05_EN.html)
- February 2 2016** New Strategy for gender equality and women's rights post-2015 (debate)  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-02-02-ITM-011\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-02-02-ITM-011_EN.html)
- February 3 2016** Ending sexual harassment and violence against women in public spaces (debate)  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-02-03-ITM-018\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-02-03-ITM-018_EN.html)
- February 3 2016** New Strategy for gender equality and women's rights post-2015  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-02-03-ITM-009-09\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-02-03-ITM-009-09_EN.html)
- March 8 2016** Gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-03-08-ITM-007-06\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-03-08-ITM-007-06_EN.html)
- May 12 2016** Framework Agreement on parental leave (debate)  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-05-12-ITM-006\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-05-12-ITM-006_EN.html)
- May 26 2016** Poverty: a gender perspective  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-05-26-ITM-007-08\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-05-26-ITM-007-08_EN.html)
- July 5 2016** Social and environmental standards, human rights and corporate responsibility  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-07-05-ITM-005-05\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-07-05-ITM-005-05_EN.html)
- October 5 2016** Women's rights in Poland (debate)  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-10-05-ITM-017\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-10-05-ITM-017_EN.html)
- November 23 2016** EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women (debate)  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-11-23-ITM-014\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-11-23-ITM-014_EN.html)
- November 24 2016** EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-11-24-ITM-009-05\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-11-24-ITM-009-05_EN.html)
- December 14 2016** Situation of the rule of law and democracy in Poland (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-12-14-ITM-014\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-12-14-ITM-014_EN.html)

**February 14 2017** Priorities for the 61th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-02-14-ITM-009-05\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-02-14-ITM-009-05_EN.html)

**March 13 2017** Equality between women and men in the EU in 2014-2015 - Equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services - Report on EU funds for gender equality (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-03-13-ITM-013\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-03-13-ITM-013_EN.html)

**March 14 2017** Equality between women and men in the EU in 2014-2015

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-03-14-ITM-007-07\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-03-14-ITM-007-07_EN.html)

**April 3 2017** Women and their roles in rural areas (short presentation)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-04-03-ITM-023\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-04-03-ITM-023_EN.html)

**June 14 2017** The refoundation of a Europe based on values, anchored in effective democratic institutions and promoting a prosperous economy in a fair and cohesive society (topical debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-06-14-ITM-015\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-06-14-ITM-015_EN.html)

**June 15 2017** Observance of the International Day of the Family: promoting the role of parents in safeguarding good-quality education for their children

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-06-15-ITM-011-01\\_EN.htm](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-06-15-ITM-011-01_EN.htm)

**July 5 2017** EU action for sustainability - High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-07-05-ITM-014\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-07-05-ITM-014_EN.html)

**September 11 2017** EU accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-09-11-ITM-019\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-09-11-ITM-019_EN.html)

**October 3 2017** Women's economic empowerment in the private and public sectors in the EU

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-10-03-ITM-005-03\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-10-03-ITM-005-03_EN.html)

**October 25 2017**                      Combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-10-25-ITM-004\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-10-25-ITM-004_EN.html)

**November 13 2017**                      Deployment of cohesion policy instruments by regions to address demographic change (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-11-13-ITM-019\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-11-13-ITM-019_EN.html)

**December 14 2017**                      Implementation of the directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-12-14-ITM-009-08\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-12-14-ITM-009-08_EN.html)

**March 12 2018**                      The fight against violence against women and girls and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by EU Member States (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2018-03-12-ITM-016\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2018-03-12-ITM-016_EN.html)

**May 29 2018**                      Minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2018-05-29-ITM-019\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2018-05-29-ITM-019_EN.html)

**May 30 2018**                      Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020 (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2018-05-30-ITM-027\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2018-05-30-ITM-027_EN.html)

**July 4 2018**                      Towards an EU external strategy against early and forced marriages

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2018-07-04-ITM-010-03\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2018-07-04-ITM-010-03_EN.html)

**January 14 2019**                      Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-01-14-ITM-018\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-01-14-ITM-018_EN.html)

**February 12 2019**                      Experiencing backlash in women's rights and gender equality in the EU (debate)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-02-12-ITM-021\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-02-12-ITM-021_EN.html)

**February 14 2019**                    The future of the LGBTI List of Actions  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-02-14-ITM-011-07\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-02-14-ITM-011-07_EN.html)

**March 11 2019**                    One-minute speeches on matters of political importance  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-03-11-ITM-025\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-03-11-ITM-025_EN.html)

**April 4 2019**                    Work-life balance for parents and carers (debate)  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-04-04-ITM-003\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-04-04-ITM-003_EN.html)